

# THE Freethinker

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*We mortals, men and women, devour many a disappointment between breakfast and dinner-time; keep back the tears and look a little pale about the lips, and in answer to inquiries say, "Oh, nothing!" Pride helps us; and pride is not a bad thing when it only urges us to hide our own hurts—not to hurt others.*

—GEORGE ELIOT.

## The One Above.

It used to be a common expression of piety that "the One above sees all." The eye of God was over all his creation. He saw everything, even before it happened. He knew what had been, what was, and what was to be. Being infinite and eternal, there was to him neither past, present, nor future, but one everlasting Now. Of course, this was rather difficult to understand, but that was no real objection to it. The man who believes only what he understands will have a remarkably slender creed. What is the use of faith if it only endorses the conclusions of reason? It is the triumph of faith to believe the incredible, to embrace the impossible, to reverence the absurd. Many a Christian—old Sir Thomas Browne, for instance—has wished that the mysteries of his religion were still more staggering, in order to draw forth the full powers of his sublimest faculty. This is why the Catholic Church has such a strong and perennial fascination. It makes no compromise with reason, but offers the world a number of supernatural dogmas, which must be accepted by the grace of God in the spirit of faith. Practically, it believes, with the sceptic Hobbes, that religion is like a pill, and that the man who chews it will never swallow it. One of the most magnificent statements of Catholic dogma—which, by the way, is subscribed by the majority of Protestants—is the Athanasian Creed. This was no more the work of Athanasius than it was of the present writer. It was never heard of until centuries after Athanasius closed his long and stormy career, in which he fought like a Trojan against all supporters of the horrid and blasphemous doctrine of the existence of one God. Athanasius was the great protagonist of Trinitarianism, but it was the Catholic Church that formulated the so-called Athanasian Creed. And what does that Creed say? It says that there are three personalities in one deity; that if you divide the substance, or confound the persons, you are eternally lost. You must steer a miraculously straight course between Sylla and Charybdis. But it has the candor to admit that what it tells you to believe, and damns you for not believing, is utterly unintelligible. It says that the Father is incomprehensible, the Son is incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost is incomprehensible; and superbly adds that yet there are not three incomprehensibles, but one incomprehensible. That is the grand style—the style we like. And it is all so true! We accept every bit of it. We say "Amen!" to it all. The whole thing is incomprehensible, and if you are fond of incomprehensibility you could not be better suited. It is a lovely pillow for Faith to sleep on, while Reason takes a walk in the fresh air and daylight, or strolls in the cool night, under the everlasting

stars, that seem to twinkle merrily at human folly, or to calmly rebuke human impertinence, according as you are a humorist or a sober philosopher.

It is only by faith that men believe in the One above. Reason has never been able to reconcile the existence of God with the facts of nature. The apologists of religion, who set about proving the doctrines of Theism, argue very plausibly—however fallaciously—until they come to what is called the problem of evil. There they find themselves in the midst of insuperable difficulties; and, after many comical attempts to extricate themselves, they nearly always give in, and confess that faith must come to their rescue. It is all a mystery, they say; we must wait until we are dead for the solution.

If there were One above who looked down upon the affairs of this world, he would certainly interfere if he possessed a spark of goodness. To begin with, he would contradict the lies that are told of him by his professional priests. They contradict each other, and therefore it is necessary that he should contradict them if we are to know the truth. In the next place, he would compel them to practise what they preach, and prevent them from grasping wealth, honors, privileges, and powers, at the expense of the dupes whom they first misled and then plunder. Then he would turn his attention to the malignant disputes and bloody quarrels of his children. He would put down war and bring about the reign of peace. A man who keeps a cat and a dog in the same house does not allow them to scratch and bite each other as they please. He enforces a certain discipline upon them, until they leave each other alone, and find time to contract a mutual respect, or even a certain liking for each other. Why does not God act in the same way? Then, again, God would surely take the various Governments of the world in hand, and make them realise that the arts of diplomacy and the scuffle of international politics, are mean and contemptible beside the great question of the social welfare of the people.

Any time during the past three weeks God might have intervened in the great quarrel of the coal strike. Owners and miners have been fighting each other according to what may be called "parliamentary" methods. There is no bloodshed, there are no wounds; but the non-combatants, as is the case in all wars, suffer all sorts of miseries. The pinch of want comes first—then the wretchedness of sheer starvation, and though there is no killing the death-rate is increased. Mr. Asquith tried in vain to bring about peace. What a chance it was for God!

We are not exactly quarrelling with God, for the simple reason that we do not believe in his existence. What we are quarrelling with is the doctrine of priestcraft. The black army of faith, all over the world, employ the One above as their grand agent for deluding, defrauding, and terrifying mankind. He is only an idea; but, while people believe in him, he is as good as a reality. Mr. Punch, in the street show, is only a puppet; his manipulator is concealed, and his speech is all done by proxy; yet the illusion is complete to the simplest little children, and their *blase* elders will watch it half-cheated in spite of knowledge and common sense. Anyhow, there comes the collection at the finish; and in this also the priests resemble the Panch-and-Judy showmen.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Religious Education.

WHAT is the object of religious education? The simple and plain answer would appear to be, to teach religion. But like a great many other things that are simple and plain on the surface, a little study shows that this answer is not exhaustive, and for that reason is misleading. It lays too great emphasis on the positive side of the subject, and ignores what is, in this connection, most important: the negative aspect. For religious education nowadays is made up even more of endeavors to guard the pupil against learning certain things than it is of positive instruction. And the negative aspects are of growing importance. For once they are ignored the positive instruction fails in its effect. Religious instruction certainly aims at putting before children certain positive teachings, but if these are to be effective great care must be taken that other teachings do not get first hold. If they do, religious instruction is doomed to failure. The clearest and most obvious recognition of this truth is the Roman Catholic claim for a suitable "atmosphere" which shall permeate the whole of the school life. It is a frank recognition of the truth that the primary aim of the religious instructor must be to guard the children from the destructive influences of contemporary life.

Religious education is the topic of an article by "J. B." of the *Christian World*, who, as usual, writes without recognition of the full implications of all he says. He tells us that "the nation has been for years in a turmoil over the religious culture of young people—up to the age of thirteen. That for the years between five and thirteen they should be religiously trained in a certain way and under certain auspices, has been the subject of endless Acts of Parliament, of endless controversies between Church and Dissent, the cause of Passive Resistance, and heaven knows not what else." Quite so; but the turmoil has been about *religious* education, not over the education that was not religious. There has been no quarrel over the substantial value of education, however unduly optimistic some may have been, and are, concerning its results. There has been no claim for special atmosphere. The only claim has been for the brains and the bodies of children to be kept clear and healthy so that they may be able to assimilate what is set before them. There has been no endeavor to guard children from the impingement of current knowledge and of current life. Far from this being so, the best teachers expose their pupils to such influences. The turmoil is only about religion. Why is this?

Before answering this question, let us note that acute phases of the subject belong to modern times. In an age where religious belief is natural and general, the tumult could not exist. The atmosphere now asked for in the schools is then existing throughout human society. Any religious instruction given in a school is only an echo of the religious belief outside the school. There is no direct and obvious conflict between life in the school and social life. The one is a reflex of the other. There is no need for elaborate safeguards, because there is no attacking force. And if one traces the history of education, one can see that the struggle—such as there was—was of quite an opposite character. The cry of the teacher—whether he taught children or adults—was for an atmosphere that should permit available secular knowledge to express itself freely. It was not asked that this knowledge should be protected from the competition of religious teaching, only that it should be permitted to compete. Safeguards for the teaching of religion only arise in an age when life outside the school has served to discredit the teachings in question. The demand for a religious atmosphere is a demand for something so artificial that it cannot be supplied by the normal operation of normal social forces.

A change of environment produces a new situation. Instead of the school forming, as it should form, an

integral portion of life, for religious purposes it is something separate and distinct. Social life no longer enforces religious claims. The priest no longer stands as the acknowledged intermediary between man and some supernatural power. He becomes a professional practitioner whom men may either notice or ignore, honor or despise, at their pleasure. The movements of nature no longer unmistakably declare the power and providence of God. That becomes at best a mere speculation, and at worst a discredited superstition. Religious doctrines no longer appear as teachings that emerge from life, but as teachings which a section of the community is trying to force on life. To allow the school under such conditions to remain in complete harmony with the highest developments of life is to make it a force antagonistic to established religion. To serve religious purposes, the school must be, as far as possible, kept free from the disintegrating influences of contemporary knowledge. And thus, with the growth of civilisation, the struggle for the maintenance of religion in the schools really becomes a contest as to whether or not schools shall be fully and completely affiliated to the best knowledge current in the outside world.

It is just this circumstance that causes so large a part of religious education to be made up of attempts to guard pupils against external influences. All the time the teacher of religion is engaged in impressing upon children religious doctrines, he is haunted by the consciousness that none of them receive support from current knowledge, while many are in direct conflict with it. And, as a consequence, no small portion of his energies must be given to erecting round children a wall that will shield them from adverse influences. This is at the bottom of the Catholic cry for "atmosphere"; it is at the root of the Anglican and Nonconformist cry for religious instruction; it animates even religious instruction in Sunday-schools and elsewhere. It is even responsible for the cry that religious subjects need to be treated with special reverence. No one is anxious to insist upon a reverent manner when dealing with any part of "secular" knowledge, or with any phase of secular life. In such matters it is felt that the subjects of instruction may well be left to look after themselves. And this is so because current life enforces their truth and value. Religion alone demands a special method of teaching, a specially cultivated tone, a special mental attitude. All of which is an admission of the truth that religious teaching can only take root in a specially cultivated soil, and that, if subjected to the influences of a free life and a free thought, they are bound to disappear.

"J. B." notes that the Churches are most anxious to give young people from five to thirteen years of age religious instruction; but, he asks plaintively, what becomes of them after that age? What becomes of them in the following period "when the passions awake, when the whole process of character-forming is taking place?" The inquiry is pertinent, but it ill becomes a clergyman to find fault with his fellow-priests. They would, if they could, cheerfully keep the growing boy and girl in the same path that they have kept the child. But they cannot. In its younger years the human animal is a comparatively dependent and docile being. He clings to parents and guardians, and is willing to be guided by them. Nor is it the weakest count against religious education that it forces parents to become often the greatest enemies to the child's mental health. But at a later age the boy or girl tends to lean less and less upon his or her parents. Companionships are formed outside the home; paths of investigation, leading none can quite tell where, open and are followed. The larger life of the race begins to call to youth; it is subjected to the influence of those vital forces from which a combination of parent and priest has hitherto shielded it. Neither parent nor priest have less interest in keeping young men and women religious, but they have less power. And the truth of what has been said as to the inability of religion

to withstand the pressure of life is shown by the fact that so soon as young people become subjected to its influence religious doctrines lose their power.

Not always, I admit. Indeed, in one sense, it is only during this period of adolescence that personal religious conviction begins to show itself. But deeper analysis shows this to be on all-fours with the mere parrot-like religious utterances of the young child, just as it shows the religious teacher employing substantially the same method of instruction. Up to thirteen—it is an arbitrary age, but it will do—the work of the religious instructor is to impress certain formulæ on the child, and to see that it is kept apart from disturbing influence. After that age, when the child begins to live more of a life that is its own, his work is to supply a religious interpretation of experiences that can be neither denied nor evaded. Adolescence brings each one into touch with the larger life of the race. That is the whole significance of the changes, physical and mental, that make up the adolescent life of each individual. And, left alone, there is no reason for supposing that anyone would discover in this transformation any peculiarly religious significance. But at this point the work of religious instruction re-commences. He cannot prevent the impact of new developments at this stage, but he can mistranslate them. The development of sex-life, the flowering of the social side of human nature, becomes the “stirrings of God within the soul,” the “divine call to a higher life.” It is the material upon which every professional revivalist builds. The misinterpretation and consequent misdirection of man's social nature is the capital of every Church in the civilised world.

Religious education, we are told, consists in drawing out and strengthening all that is best and highest in us. It is to make human nature strong, courageous, true, and pure. The aim of religious education is nothing of the kind. The main practical aim of religious education is to keep the present generation a servile copy of past generations. It is to keep alive the old faith, the old beliefs; to perpetuate the past, to guard the present from the full appreciation of all the truths that science and literature and life would force upon us. It is because religious instruction involves these things that the controversy over religious instruction exists. Religion to-day is something divorced from the real life of to-day. It is an artificial culture, to be perpetuated only by the maintenance of artificial conditions.

C. COHEN.

### Martyrs.

ETYMOLOGICALLY “martyr” is the Greek word for witness, and historically means one who is put to death for his religion. The Christian Church glories in her martyrs, and points to them as one of the chief evidences of her divinity. It is often asserted that a man must have an exceptionally vivid sense and blessed experience of God's love in Christ and of the hope of a blessed hereafter before he can become a martyr. The Rev. Professor Denney, of Glasgow, ventures to affirm that, however paradoxical it may seem, “it is literally true that historically immortality and martyrdom are correlative terms,” which means that unbelievers in immortality are incapable of martyrdom. When driven into an argumentative corner, Christian apologists fall back upon their roll of martyrs, saying, “Think of the innumerable men and women who have been beheaded, burned, and hanged because of their loyalty to Jesus Christ. Nothing short of an enrapturing experience of the mighty love of the Redeemer in their hearts could have enabled them to meet their untimely end with such imperturbable serenity and triumphant joy.” This is an emotional appeal which even a non-Christian is supposed to be quite unable to resist. There is such an air of solemnity about it that the only reasonable effect of being faced by it is expected to be a humble and reverential acknowledgment of

its truth. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was looked upon for a long time as furnishing an unanswerable argument for the truth of Protestantism as against Catholicism. By the way, a careful perusal of the *Book of Martyrs* opens our eyes to the real significance of Christian martyrdom. Strictly speaking, the Christian religion has had, in her whole history, but an infinitesimally small number of genuine martyrs. The persecution of Christians by Pagans pales into utter insignificance when compared with the persecution of Christians by one another. In the history of the Spanish Inquisition, for example, the most conspicuous feature is the fact that it represented the stronger sect of Christians in its resolute determination to exterminate, at all cost, all the weaker ones. It was the same in England under Mary when, in the space of four years, 286 persons were burnt at the stake; but these martyrs were all Christians, some five or six of them bishops, who were executed by their brethren in the Lord who at the time constituted the sect in power.

The point to be emphasised is that all the martyrs of the Christian Church have been put to death by Christianity itself, by the version or section of it which chanced at the time to be the more powerful. That is to say, the martyrs boasted of by either Protestantism or Catholicism died, not for religion as such, but for a form of it frowned upon by the authorities; not out of loyalty and love to the Savior, but for a specific view of his person, or of the nature of his death, which was condemned by the regnant party. In short, ever since Christianity came to power under the Roman Empire, no Christian has suffered martyrdom for being loyal to Christ, but for being loyal to a heretical conception of Christ. This is why there are two sets of martyrs, the Catholic set and the Protestant set, and why the one Church does not recognise the other's set. In this connection, the full title of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the first English edition of which appeared in 1563, is sufficiently illuminating to be reproduced:—

“Acts and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes, touching matters of the Church, wherein are comprehended and described the great Persecutions and horrible Troubles that have been wrought and practised by the Romishe Prelates, especiallye in the Realme of England and Scotland, from the yeare of our Lord a thousand to the time now present. Gathered and collected according to the true Copies and Writings certificatorie as well as of the Parties themselves that Suffered, as also out of the Bishops' Registers, which were the Doers thereof, by John Foxe.”

Dr. Denney is evidently of opinion that only those who have “an overpowering experience of the redeeming love of God,” and who make “a response to that love so absolute and unreserved that it does not count life itself dear to be true to it, can become martyrs.” In his *Factors of Faith in Immortality* (pp. 77, 78), he says:—

“How can a man believe in immortality if he does not know something which is better than life, if he is not identified with a cause and an interest to which life itself may well be surrendered? He cannot do it. He cannot evade the conditions under which the faith in immortality, as true religion knows it, was born, and by which it is sustained, and still believe. The man who has nothing in life he would die for has nothing in life worth living for; and the life which is not worth living will never believe in its own immortality. A great moral possession, like faith in immortality, must always be bought with a great moral price; a man must sell all that he has to buy it.”

Only an ecclesiastic, who looks at the outside world through theological spectacles, could write in that strain. On his own showing, to believe in immortality is the most difficult task conceivable, and only a few succeed in doing it. If he knew mankind, especially the non-churchgoing portion, better, and were a little less prejudiced, he would soon discover that he is surrounded by thousands of unbelievers in immortality, who yet cherish convictions and ambitions in the service of which they would cheerfully sacrifice life itself. Up and down the country there are men of science who, though seeing no light

beyond the tomb, are governed in all their actions by the noblest ideals and the purest motives. Is not the reverend gentleman aware of this? If not, is he so ignorant of history as not to know how true it has always been? Has he not read the story of Thomas Aikenhead, a studious lad of eighteen, of the most irreproachable moral character, who allowed himself to be arrested and sentenced to death rather than deny his principles? Even Macaulay admits that the young Edinburgh student was much superior in almost every respect, except age, to the man who prosecuted him for blasphemy. His prosecutor, says the great essayist (*History of England*, vol. iii., p. 508), "the Lord Advocate, was that James Stewart who had been so often a Whig and so often a Jacobite that it is difficult to keep an account of his apostasies"; and yet this man, who was "as cruel as he was base," was a sound believer in God and immortality. And wherein consisted poor Aikenhead's offence? Not in having committed any act of immorality, or theft, or murder, but simply in having called the Old Testament "Ezra's Fables" and maintained that God and Nature were the same, an offence of which many a Professor of theology is guilty to-day.

What on earth does Dr. Denney mean by the statement that "faith in immortality must always be bought with a great moral price," or that "a man must sell all that he has to buy it"? The Professor's use of the adjective "moral" is most ambiguous. He calls faith in immortality "a great moral possession," and yet affirms that it "must always be bought with a great moral price," or, in other words, that "a man must sell all that he has to buy it." That is to say, in order to obtain this pearl of great price, known as faith in immortality, a man must sell all the moral pearls he has succeeded in picking up in the field of life; and yet he is assured that, having parted with all the moral wealth he ever had, he shall receive "a great moral possession," to wit, faith in immortality. If this is not juggling with words, what in reason's name is it? No wonder unbelievers in immortality are on the increase! No wonder that Christians are becoming fewer and fewer every year! The Professor himself is convinced that such is the case, for he puts the question:—

"Is it not worth while to ask, in a generation in which faith is feeble and doubters many, whether it is possible for some people to believe in immortality, or rather whether they have any right to believe in it? It is a stupendous idea, when we really take it in; and to grasp it as not merely an idea but a reality implies spiritual strength on a corresponding scale" (*Factors of Faith in Immortality*, pp. 76, 77).

Nothing in the world is easier than to answer that question. It is *not* possible for some people to believe in immortality, and such people have *no right* to believe in it. But this is by no means "a stupendous idea," but a very simple one, and a reality of common occurrence. The amusing thing is that Dr. Denney looks down with pity, if not contempt, on such people, as if they lacked some great treasure which he and his brethren possess. Well, we readily grant that Christians do possess something we Secularists do not—*faith*, in default of all knowledge, and a certain emotional exaltation induced by that faith, which knowledge condemns as abnormal and injurious. The more people know the less they believe, as history abundantly demonstrates. There are multitudes of people who exult in their inability to believe in a God that never does anything and in a future life of which there is no evidence. They rejoice in the fact that they have shaken off the incubus of superstition, and awakened out of all their dreams, which they now clearly see were but interludes which fancy wove while monarch reason slept.

Looking into the past, Freethinkers can see a great host of martyrs, genuine martyrs, who, because they could not believe the dogmas of the Church and said so, had to endure all sorts of indignity, humiliation, insult, torture, and often death itself in its most horrible forms. But those martyrs of

yesterday are the heroes of to-day. Think of Giordano Bruno, who from his youth was an unbeliever, becoming a Unitarian, then a Deist, then a Pantheist of the Spinoza order. As a boy he was placed among the Dominicans at Venice; but his heresies developed so quickly that he had to run away to save his skin. Think of him as a fugitive, with "the hounds of the Lord" hot on his scent, for many weary years, dropping Freethought seed in every city and town he visited on the continent and in England, which was bound sooner or later to germinate and come to fruition. He wrote, taught, and conversed at each city of refuge as long as he thought the blessed hounds were not on his track. After some thirty years of such itinerant ministry he was by treachery delivered into the hands of his enemies, who having once secured him never lost him again. How they tortured him in the hope of forcing a recantation out of him, and how utterly futile were all their contemptible intrigues. From Venice he was sent to Rome, where he remained a tortured prisoner for eight years; and when at last the death-sentence was pronounced upon him, with unsurpassed heroism he said to his judges, in words that will go down, gloriously ringing, to the end of time, "With more fear, perchance, do you pass sentence on me than I receive it." Such heroes make history, history so made means progress, and progress so won makes for the intellectual emancipation and social uplifting of the human race.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Modern Materialism.—II.

(Continued from p. 187.)

"Give me matter, and I will create the world."—IMMANUEL KANT.

"Matter is the general seedcorn of the universe wherein everything is involved that is brought forth in subsequent evolution."—SCHELLING.

"And if the inscription on the ancient pyramid of Saïs says, 'I am all that is, that was, and that will be; no mortal has yet raised my veil,' it might be replied thereto: Modern science has removed the veil, and has discovered that Force and Matter were, are, and will be."—F. J. PESKO.

I THINK it was Professor Huxley, who, being invited by another professor to deliver a lecture, inquired, before commencing, as to what he could take for granted his audience knew about the subject, and received the somewhat unexpected reply, "Nothing."

So, if some of our more advanced readers, to whom the theory of Materialism is familiar, are inclined to be impatient as of a "twice-told tale," we must remind them that we are not writing for those who have already found salvation in science, but for those who wish to find it, for the truth-seeker. "The world is to the young," says the Eastern proverb, and it is to the young we address ourselves, that they may go forth to swell the great and increasing army of Freethought, and so we discharge the debt we owe to those valiant dead-and-gone Freethinkers who before us, in the long ages of violence and superstition, unfurled the standard of that most glorious of all causes, the "Liberation War of Humanity." If we did not think we were furthering "the good old Cause" in this way, we would not write another line. What we have to say, we shall state as clearly and concisely as possible, for we are of the opinion of Ludwig Buchner, that—

"Philosophical disquisitions which cannot be understood by every educated man are not, in our opinion, worth the printer's ink that is spent on them. What is thought clearly can be expressed clearly and without circumlocution. The philosophical mist which enshrouds the writings of learned men seems rather intended to hide, than to reveal, thoughts."\*

We shall take the liberty of explaining any scientific or technical terms we may meet with, more especially when dealing with living matter, for

\* Buchner, *Force and Matter*, 1884, p. 22.

the benefit of those who are not familiar with such terms.

Modern Materialism may—for all practical purposes—be said to date from the theory of the birth of Evolution.

In the popular mind the idea of Evolution is inseparably associated with the work of Charles Darwin, who, indeed, is popularly regarded as its founder, and the whole theory of Evolution is supposed to stand or fall according to the soundness or unsoundness of his arguments for the origin of species. Now, if Darwin had never lived, the theory of Evolution would have been expounded in much the same terms as it is to-day. Darwin was a Naturalist; his work was limited to plant and animal life; with the general doctrine of Evolution at large it had nothing whatever to do. It was Herbert Spencer who worked out the laws of Evolution as a universal process, which, commencing with the formless matter of the gaseous nebula, traces the formation, by an orderly process of natural laws, of stars and planets, of plants and animals, of man and the marvellous mind of man, even down to our systems of government and religion. This system, known as the *Synthetic Philosophy*, from "synthesis," a gathering together, was first drawn up by Herbert Spencer in January, 1858, and Darwin's *Origin of Species* was not published until November, 1859.

Nevertheless, it was Darwin's book which was effectual in bringing the theory of Evolution into general circulation. As Spencer published his philosophy in parts, Darwin's work appeared before Spencer had reached the stage dealing with the origin of species, which was dealt with in his book on *Biology*, published in 1864, and in which the Darwinian theory falls into its appointed place in the *Synthetic Philosophy* as a part of Evolution at large, and explained in physical terms as resulting from the redistribution of matter and motion everywhere and always going on. The very phrase, "Survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence," which most people attribute to Darwin, belongs to Spencer. In his *Autobiography*, Spencer tells us that any mortification he might have felt that he had not carried further the idea, which he had expressed in 1852, of the survival of the fittest as a cause of development was swallowed up in the gratification he felt at seeing the theory of organic Evolution justified.

It will not be amiss here to say a few words as to Charles Darwin and his great work. Born in 1809 of wealthy parents, he was educated for the Church, but becoming acquainted at Cambridge University with Professor Henslow, Dr. Whewell, and Professor Sedgwick—with whom he studied geology—turned his attention to natural science; and the reading of Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* created in him a great desire to travel, which was gratified by Professor Henslow getting him appointed, at the age of 21, Naturalist, in an honorary capacity, to the scientific expedition being sent round the world by the Government, under Captain Fitzroy, in the *Beagle*. To the widening influences of this five years' voyage, and the collections he made, may be attributed the fame he afterwards attained. He himself speaks of it as "by far the most important event in my life." At this time Darwin was still a believer in the literal truth of the Bible and was laughed at by the officers of the *Beagle* for quoting it as an unanswerable authority upon a point of morality.

Now, Darwin was not the only naturalist who was brooding over the solution of the mystery of the origin of species. It was the great problem that was puzzling every naturalist of the time. The fact is that the old theory of the Bible—that every separate species of plant and animal had been created once and for all by the act of God—had completely broken down. The discovery and classification of species had—

"reached a point which, on any theory of separate supernatural creations, required an amount of miracle which was plainly absurd and impossible. When it came to this, that 160 separate miracles were required to account for the 160 species of land shells found to

exist in the one small island of Madiera, and that 1,400 distinct species of a single shell, the *Carithium*, had been described by conchologists, the miraculous theory had evidently broken down under its own weight and ceased to be credible."\*

Bentham, in his *Handbook of the British Flora*, gives five British species of the genus *Rubus* or bramble; while Babington, in the fifth edition of his *Manual of British Botany*, published about the same time, describes no less than forty-five species; and of the willows the same two works enumerate fifteen and thirty-one species respectively!

Charles Darwin, who arrived at his theory of the struggle for existence, after reading the work of Malthus on population, and saw in it the machinery by which nature selects small variations in plants and animals which fit them to survive in the competition for existence, and which has, in the course of ages, produced the multitude of species with which the earth is now populated, knew that his theory would be violently attacked, not only by those who believed in the fixity of species, but more especially by the religious, who would not see a whole province of science removed from the hand of God and given over to the operation of natural law without a struggle; so he sat down to prepare an avalanche of evidence which would carry everything before it. For twenty years Darwin worked at his solution, collecting proof upon proof, Pelion upon Ossa, and he might have gone on for years accumulating evidence, in spite of the warning of Lyell that he would be forestalled, until, one day, Lyell's prophecy came true. In June, 1858, Darwin received a letter from far Ternate, in the Moluccas; it was from another naturalist, Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, who had also read the work of Malthus, and had arrived at exactly the same conclusion reached by Darwin, and requesting him to send the essay, in which he developed his views, on to Lyell. In great distress, Darwin wrote to Lyell lamenting that all his originality in the theory was "smashed." However, both Lyell and Hooker had read a sketch of his theory, drawn up by Darwin a dozen years previously, and it was arranged that a paper by Darwin should be read along with Wallace's essay at a meeting of the Linnean Society on July 1, 1858; Darwin following this up in 1859 by publishing the *Origin of Species*, which, though consisting of a stout book of 400 pages, embodies but a portion of the mountain of evidence he had accumulated.

Mr. Wallace magnanimously acknowledged that his strength was quite unequal to the task of producing that work. The Naturalists, who, rooted in the old ideas, came to the Linnean meeting to jeer at the new theory, were overawed by the authority of Lyell and Hooker, but the greatest opposition came, as Darwin foresaw, from the religious world. As Dr. Andrew White has remarked, "Darwin's *Origin of Species* had come into the theological world like a plough into an ant-hill," and the clergy "swarmed forth angry and confused." Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, for the English Church, declared it to be "a dishonoring view of nature," and "absolutely incompatible with the Word of God." And Cardinal Manning, for the Catholics, described it as "a brutal philosophy—to wit, there is no God, and the ape is our Adam."† Darwin bowed before the storm—and made no reply. Of a naturally mild and timid disposition, he only wished to be left alone to work out his discoveries in peace and quietness; and we should remember, in this connection, that he was a confirmed invalid; his son, Mr. Francis Darwin, tells us that—

"he never knew one day of the health of ordinary men, and thus his life was one long struggle against the weariness and strain of sickness."

Under these circumstances, who can blame him when, alarmed by the snarls of the Churches, he declared that he would not touch upon the origin of man? However, Huxley, four years later, published

\* Laing, *Problems of the Future*, p. 136.

† White, *The Warfare of Science*, 1896, pp. 70, 71.

his *Man's Place in Nature*, and Haeckel wrote upon the same subject, and, as nothing very dreadful seemed to happen to them, he plucked up courage and wrote the *Descent of Man*, thus completing his thesis by applying it to man.

As we have remarked, although Darwin did not deal with the general theory of Evolution as a whole, still it was his work which was effectual in bringing it into general circulation. The vast sweep of Spencer's generalisations, by which as with a magician's wand he evolved complex sidereal systems out of diffused matter of apparently simple composition, interested people in only a vague and wondering fashion; it needed the personal application of the theory to man to waken the public mind, to strike the public imagination. And it was round Darwin's work that the battle of science with superstition for the body of man raged. That was Darwin's contribution to Materialism.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

### Asking Christians Not To Kill.

IT has been rightly remarked that public opinion would be shocked if a British battleship were christened *The Prince of Peace* or *Brotherly Love*. The British public wish for battleships (Mr. Churchill, their eloquent spokesman, means to build two for every one built by Germany); but they are not prepared to call the Dreadnoughts by Christian names. Christians are ready to fight, but they treat war as part of the life-machine which can be conveniently detached from the religious and moral sections, and can be run by itself. That is to say, till certain ceremonial occasions, such as the celebration of a victory or of the successful termination of a conflict, when the connection is re-established, and the God of Justice is effusively thanked. A few centuries ago, indeed, different views were held; and wars were actually waged on behalf of religious doctrines and in order to support the Christian faith. Only a few reactionary Ulstermen appear willing to adopt such a course to-day in the Western world. Orthodox imagination would not now tolerate the suggestion that, if Christ were to return to the earth, he would take command of an Italian regiment in Tripoli, or assume the Admiralship of the British Fleet in a war against Germany, or even lead a squadron of cavalry in a charge against Welsh strikers. Equal objection, perhaps, would be felt at the idea of any of these military functions being exercised by the Apostle Peter or St. John the Divine. I am not at all certain, however, whether Judas Iscariot would be regarded as more suitable for such duties; for he would hardly come under the respectable category of "an officer and a gentleman."

The curious inconsistency which spends blood and wealth in war, and yet also devoutly subscribes for the maintenance of the religion of peace and goodwill, was illustrated the other day in the House of Commons. Members were discussing the right of a Syndicalist paper to call upon soldiers to forbear from shooting fellow-citizens, and the Attorney-General said that to give such advice was a very serious offence. Mr. Wedgwood then asked:—

"Does the Attorney-General consider it a serious offence to ask Christians not to kill?"

Laughter followed; but one of the journals afterwards reported that Mr. Wedgwood's question jarred upon the feelings even of some of the Labor members. But why should the expression cause distress? Everybody knows that Christians kill. Everybody knows that the original Christian Gospel forbade killing. The real offence seems to have been the suggestion that the moral department of Christianity had anything to do with the secular and political. It was considered an act of thoroughly bad taste to hint that Christ's ethics had any other purpose than to adorn unworldly hermitages. To ask

the Children of Light (for Christian members of the Regular Army are such) not to kill other Children of Light (for mobs in strike-areas, especially Wales, are sure to contain some such Children) is regarded as blasphemous impertinence. In fact, the Attorney-General affirms that it is a serious offence; and Mr. Wedgwood, M.P., is now a wiser man.

The Peace Question is afflicted with a variety of tangles. The original Christian Gospel, as Tolstoy often enough reminded us, counsels peace; but the majority of Christians practise or approve of war. Freethought, as I understand it, involves energetic advocacy of International Peace. There are, however, I greatly regret to say, some Freethinkers who do not oppose militarism and the increase of armaments. Nevertheless, speaking generally, I believe that Freethinkers as a body are more or less active Pacifists. They ought all to be so. The Enlightenment (to use the philosophical term for the modern Humanist spirit) which led Europe away from the old faiths and sects virtually abolished the worst causes of strife and war. The doctrine which divided men's souls among heaven, purgatory, and hell was a perpetual exercise in the art of quarrelling and hostility. Take away these divisions, and men are still at variance (as, for example, in the antagonism of Labor and Capital), but the very root of the antagonism is the conviction that, among men of the same flesh and blood, wealth ought to be more equitably distributed. Conflicts still occur, but the ancient absoluteness of partition between man and man has been removed. That is why I believe Freethought to be essentially necessary to the triumph of international and inter-racial peace. And I suspect it would be found, on due inquiry, that, among modern "Christian" Pacifists, the doctrine of Hell and Purgatory retained a very feeble hold.

F. J. GOULD.

### The Voice of the Lord.

In the days of King Adam the voice of the Lord  
Strolled about in the cool of the eve—  
A fact Inspiration thought fit to record,  
And which we must duly believe.  
No more is the Voice-which-has-legs seen on earth,  
But still, say the clergy, it lives,  
And issues instructions for all it is worth—  
The most that a god ever gives!

*If you have not heard it, the reason is clear:  
You haven't the lengthy, the sanctified ear!*

The Voice oft was heard by the holy of old  
Commanding its chosen to kill  
Men, women, and children; to grab all their gold  
(The latter is ever "God's will"!)  
It is said that it loved all the villains whose deeds  
The pages of Scripture pollute;  
It belongs, one perceives, if unbiased he reads,  
To some monstrous, unthinkable brute.

*God's civilised now, but he's Jah all the time,  
"Our Father in heaven"—late Master of crime.*

The Voice has grown fainter as faith has declined,  
It rages and curses no more,  
It speaks to the righteous in accents refined,  
And asks not for any man's gore.  
The sky-pilot hears it when, having obtained  
A "living" where nothing he'll lack,  
He says from deciding to "jump" he refrained  
Till the Voice whispered, "Up, man, and pack!"

*O the "Voice of the Lord" will upset no one's plan,  
For it merely expresses the wish of the man!*

JOHN YOUNG.

### THE FAIR, YET UNFAIR, DIVORCEE.

A wife, after the divorce, said to her husband:  
"I am willing to let you have the baby half of the time."  
"Good!" said he, rubbing his hands. "Splendid!"  
"Yes," she resumed, "you may have him nights."

## Acid Drops.

Many of the clergy have deplored the fact that in great labor disputes such as the present coal war, or the railway strike of last summer, churches and chapels have little or no influence. At other times they are fond of posing as the friend of the working man and—when it suits their game—dwelling on the attachment of the working man to religion. When a serious dispute really does break out the working men quietly put the parson on one side. They neither ask for nor desire his assistance. Tabernacle Dixon intends altering this, if possible. He is going down to South Wales to deliver a course of evangelical sermons—of the crude and ignorant type peculiar to himself, and is taking a large number of Spurgeon's sermons for distribution. Now, when the strike does come to an end, we shall know the cause. For the end of the strike is bound to follow Mr. Dixon's sermons, and from this only one conclusion is possible—to Dixon.

General Booth is also alive to the gravity of the situation caused by the coal strike. He has asked for increased contributions to the Army's funds.

The Wigan Free Church Council has discovered another argument against Sunday picture shows. It says that young people who are sent to church are tempted to practise deception on their parents by going to church, leaving before the sermon, attending a picture theatre, and then telling their parents the hymns sung and the name of the preacher. The remedy of the Council for this state of affairs is, of course, to close the theatres. For our part, we think a much better protection against deception of this kind would be for parents to refrain from compelling children to go to church. Those who do bring compulsion to bear where compulsion is wholly unnecessary have only themselves to blame for whatever consequences ensue. Our sympathy is with the young people.

That opponent of a State religion for adults, but staunch champion of a State religion for children, the Rev. Silvester Horne says, "Our Churches have owed nothing to the State, and they have flourished in spite of the State." Mr. Horne ought to know better—perhaps he does—but it is not politic to speak the whole truth. The "Free" Churches have received, and do receive, State aid, financially, to the extent of the rates and taxes that are remitted to them. They receive State patronage by the maintenance of legislation that favors their pretensions or protects them from legitimate attack. They are so greedy for State favor that they are always claiming representation at State functions. They take all they can get, and no Church can do more than this. If Mr. Horne means that other Churches get more State aid than the Free Churches, we agree. But we have yet to learn that a man who rifles a shop deserves credit for not stealing five pounds because there is only thirty shillings in the till.

There seems to be an impression that Nonconformists are less bigoted towards Freethought than Churchmen are. It is, however, quite a fallacy. On the whole, it is about six on one side and half-a-dozen on the other; but the scale turns, if at all, in favor of the Churchmen. At the South-place Institute protest meeting against the revival of the Blasphemy Laws at Leeds the chair was taken by the Rev. S. D. Headlam, who is a Church clergyman. He was not balanced by any Nonconformist minister. Mr. W. T. Stead is a layman, and it is fair to say that he is (we believe) a Congregationalist, also that he spoke boldly and bravely, though not more so than Mr. Headlam. We do not know of a single Nonconformist minister who has opened his lips in condemnation of the recent "blasphemy" prosecutions, nor of one who has said a word against first mobbing and then prosecuting Freethought speakers at Streatham Common. Yet to hear Nonconformist ministers airing their grievances against the Church of England you would imagine that they were the greatest friends of religious freedom in the world. But they are very far from being anything of the sort. What they mean by religious freedom is simply the freedom to be religious.

We were turning over the other day the pages of John Nichol's able monograph on Carlyle in the "English Men of Letters" series, and our eye was arrested by something we had marked on pp. 123-124 in a former reading. Carlyle was put forward as the Radical candidate (curiously enough) for the Lord Rectorship of the University of Glasgow in 1854, the Conservative candidate being Disraeli. Carlyle's nomination, Nichol says, was "received by the Press, and other exponents of popular opinion, with denunciations that

came loudest and longest from the leaders of orthodox Dissent, then arrogating to themselves the profession of Liberalism and the initiation of Reform." Pretty much the same as it is now. One journal declared that Carlyle had "thrown off every form of religious belief and settled down into the conviction that the Christian profession of Englishmen is a sham." Carlyle had done the bulk of his literary work by then, including the *Cromwell* and much of the *Friedrich*; yet the same journal had the ignorance, the stupidity, or the face to say that "Mr. Carlyle neither possesses the talent nor the distinction, nor does he occupy the position, which entitles a man to such an honor as the Rectorial Chair." The *Scotch Guardian* declared that "the most obtrusive feature" of Carlyle's works was "sneering at the solemn verities of our holy religion." He had a "malignant hostility to the religion of the Bible." He had described salvation by faith as "stealing into heaven." Was this a fit man to place in the Rectorial Chair?—a man who had spent his powers in "sapping and mining the foundations of the truth" and opening "the fire of his fiendish railery against the citadel of our best aspirations and dearest hopes." The good old style! And it still does duty. Paltry little religious scribes, nearly all hirelings, ready to lecture the greatest thinkers and writers of the age for their unpardonable heterodoxy! And the loudest of these howlers were "the leaders of orthodox Dissent." Well, is it any better now?

The *Church Times* appears to have a correspondent at Leeds, and the following is taken from one of his recent communications:—

"The Lenten campaign of street preaching, organised by the Leeds clergy, continues to attract much attention, and is undoubtedly having great influence in combating the crude attacks upon religion which form the stock-in-trade of the Secularist lecturer. Many men who frequent Secularist street-corner gatherings are learning, probably to their surprise, that on the side of the Church there is really no difficulty at all in disposing of the supposed dilemmas in regard to the Scriptures and the Christian Faith which are so triumphantly posed by the Free-Thinkers."

If there is no difficulty in disposing of the arguments of the "Free-Thinkers" why are the Blasphemy Laws resorted to in order to silence them by imprisonment? We invite the *Church Times*, its Leeds correspondent, and the Leeds clergy to explain. We may also observe that it is an easy task to reply to Freethought advocates in their absence. Would it not show more courage if the Leeds clergy were to put forward one of their best debaters to hold a public discussion with a leading Secularist? We should then see whose "stock-in-trade" was soonest damaged.

The Rev. J. M. Thompson, the gentleman who got into such trouble for the rejection of certain aspects of the miraculous, says the Christian is not ashamed to look for God where the psychologist finds nothing but the association of ideas. We daresay not; but the question is one of relevancy or justification, not whether one is ashamed or not. Dr. Thompson admits that the stories of "miraculous" conversions always admit of a natural explanation, and this being so, one wonders what justification there is for bringing in God. It is a perfectly sound and well-known scientific rule never to invoke the aid of an unknown force when a known force is adequate. And when one admits that the "miracles" of the stupid evangelist can be explained on perfectly natural lines, it is raising quite unnecessary confusion to call in "God" to account for a phenomenon that has already been explained.

The Archbishop of York says that he knows "more of the life of a miner in the bowels of the earth than that good man knows of the ceaseless toil and strain and pressure," all for the sake of other people, that the Archbishop of York has to bear. This may be true, but we fancy many a miner would be willing to change places with Dr. Lang if he had the opportunity. We are not quite so sure that Dr. Lang would be quite so agreeable to the exchange. Perhaps he prefers the "toil and strain and pressure" of an Archbishop's life—all for the sake of other people.

"An irreligious democracy will end in a state of society worse by far than has ever been witnessed in a Christian civilisation." So says the editor of the *British Weekly*, and his authority for the statement is the complete absence of facts. What a people have been and are with religion we know. What they will be without it is a matter of speculation. Devotion to religion did not prevent the development of the worst features of feudalism or of slavery. It did not prevent women and children being sent down coal pits to labor like cattle, or being ill-treated above ground in the interests of religious employers. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the strongest impulse towards a bettering

of social conditions came from those with whom religion was a minor consideration, or who were definitely opposed to it. Can anyone imagine social developments being what they are had the Freethinkers of the last century and a half not lived and worked? As a matter of fact, the great seminal minds in social theory and practice have always been Freethinkers. And another certain thing is that society will become progressively less religious, in spite of the tearful protests of Sir Robertson Nichol. And none but the professional religionist need be fearful of the consequences.

Rose Leach, a girl of fifteen, was knocked down and killed by a motor-car, while on her way to confirmation at Alconbury Church, Hunts. "Providence" couldn't have shown her less attention if she had been on her way to a whist-drive or a "hop."

Another case of "Providence." Harry Gill, six years of age, son of Frederic Gill, of 3 Manchester-road, Macclesfield, was knocked down and killed by a motor-car belonging to and driven by the Rev. H. E. Pole-Hampton. Even a driver filled with the Holy Ghost is not guarded against these misfortunes.

Father Daine, great uncle to the runaway ex-King Manuel of Portugal, has been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude at the Leeds Assizes for unnatural offences with two lads. The judge said that his pious appeal to the Almighty, dead against the evidence, was only an aggravation of his crime. The peculiar value of religion in this case is an eloquent commentary on the wisdom of sending men to prison for treating it with contempt.

Permission was recently asked of the London County Council for Sunday golf at Hainault Forest. In combating this, a memorial was sent out to various churches in and round London against the required permission being given. It is said that over 400 churchwardens signed the memorial. This seems rather a small number to be secured over so wide an area. We are surprised the number was not larger. In the end, the Parks Committee of the L. C. C. refused permission on the ostensible ground of a desire to avoid Sunday labor. The real power was, of course, either pure Sabatarianism, or the fear of offending Sabatarians.

At Leyton, the Socialists have, for some little time past, had the use of one of the local Council's schoolrooms for a Socialist Sunday-school. Quite recently, nearly all the clergy of the place, including Nonconformist preachers and Salvation Army shriekers, had the impudence to present a memorial to the Council asking that the Socialists be no longer allowed the use of the schoolroom on account of their anti-Christian teaching. We do not know what truth there is in the anti-Christian part of the indictment. We are under the impression that the majority of the Socialists in this country are too fond of pandering to church or chapel to be guilty of any direct attack on Christianity. The matter has not yet been decided, the Council still having the matter under consideration. But we hope that it will teach Socialists the lesson of how little real social liberty will ever be secured so long as Christianity remains. Judging from the local papers, the Leyton Councillors seem to be under the impression that they are elected for the purpose of protecting Christianity, and to see that none but Christians get the use of public buildings. Perhaps the Socialists of Leyton will have enough wit and courage to teach these glorified Bumbles the needful lesson. It is a question of civic justice, not one of either religion or politics.

We are glad to find that some clergymen are able to see things as they are. The Rev. Harold Brierly, of Highbury, pointed out in a recent sermon that it is not true to say that working men do not come to church because they are merely in opposition to the Church. The real truth lies deeper. The working man doesn't come to church simply because he doesn't want to come. The Church stands for nothing he cares about. He feels no need for the spiritual; and he adds that where a more liberal theology is preached, and even in cases where the whole creed of Socialism is advanced, there is no greater success to be chronicled. This endorses all we have often said. It is either stupid or knavish to pretend that church abstention is to be explained on the ground that people are disgusted with the mere organisation, while still believing in the religious teachings. If they believed in the latter they would put up with the former. The real reason why people do not attend church is because they no longer believe. Mr. Brierly puts it that people feel no need for the spiritual, with the implied inference that their natures have been coarsened, and this is the result. People have no need for the "spiritual," not because

their natures are coarsened, but because the conscious response to life is keener than it was, and because literature, art, science, and social activities rule where religion was once supreme.

"Religion," said Canon Bickersteth on March 22, "holds the key to the problem which nearly broke up the Government last night." What a deuce of a time religion is in getting the key into the lock!

"Jealous for the reputation of his party (the Socialist), the editor of the *Appeal to Reason* made telegraphic inquiry as to the political affiliations of the fifty-four Labor leaders arrested for complicity in the dynamiting conspiracy in which the McNamaras were concerned. But one Socialist was found to be implicated. 'Fifty-three out of the fifty-four are Republicans and Democrats, the latter predominating.' No Anarchist appears on the list. Incidentally, 'a considerable majority are Catholics, and the rest Protestants.' Freethinkers are not in it, but 'the Militia of Christ and the Knights of Columbus are well represented.' The Knights of Columbus is an exclusively Catholic order. The Militia of Christ, of which one of the McNamaras is a member, is also Catholic. Trade union men are alone eligible. It is affiliated with the American Federation of Catholic Societies, and its officers are officers of Labor organisations. The dynamiters are religiously, politically, and economically orthodox—a fact that will probably mitigate their sentences if found guilty, since they will have nothing to answer for but their crimes."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The *Daily News* does well to publish particulars of the horrid cruelties practised on the natives by the rubber companies' agents on the Amazon, especially in the Putumayo district, comprising no less than 20,000 square miles. The atrocities are similar to those that made a hell of Congo-land. Beheading children before their parents' eyes is common; so is burning men and women alive. "The district," says Mr. Seymour Bell, "is one of the foulest spots on the face of the earth." Then comes the bathos of this climax: "There is a great opening for missionaries." We are not told whether the missionaries are for the Indian victims or the Christian victimisers.

One of the "poor" clergy, apparently, caused "a remarkable scene" at Southwark Cathedral on a recent Sunday morning. Just as the Bishop was about to open fire from the pulpit a clergyman, seated among the congregation, rose up and exclaimed, "My lord, I wish to protest against the scandalous system of preferment in this diocese." Several wardens conducted him out into the open air, where it is to be hoped he cooled down. The Bishop hinted that the "duties and toils of life had been too much for him." But we dare say a better salary would set him right again.

"There was an ancient hostelry in the Lake district called 'The Cock,' which was older than the memory of the oldest inhabitant. When by force of circumstances it changed hands the old signboard that swung over its portals was replaced by that of a Bishop who was a patron of the new regime, and who gave his name to the renovated inn. With an eye to keeping its past glories before the notice of tourists, it was thought advisable to call attention to the name it had borne for so many years. So under the swinging head of the Bishop appeared the words, 'This is the old Cock'!"—*Daily Chronicle*.

The *Daily Chronicle* has been calling attention to what it calls the Girard Orphanage (it means the Girard College), at Philadelphia, whose founder provided that "no ecclesiastic, minister, or clergyman of any sect is to be admitted even as a visitor." Our contemporary might have mentioned, if it knew, that Christians have nobbled the endowment and actually established a divinity chair in the College.

The coal strike in Germany is not universal. There is a Christian Miner's Union whose members keep at work. Their president was attacked the other night by three strikers. He did not trouble about the Sermon on the Mount, or any other pathetic follies of the Prophet of Nazareth, but just shot one of his assailants dead in "self-defence."

Mrs. Seddon's opinion of her husband's innocence is not of much importance. You would hardly expect her to say he was guilty. One thing, however, that she says is worth noting. Her husband was "well used to speaking, and had even been a local preacher." The number of Freethinkers who get into this sort of trouble is wonderfully limited.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements

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

## To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—April 7, West Ham; 14, Queen's Hall; 28, Wood Green; 30, and May 1, Belfast; 5, Victoria Park; 12, m., Finsbury Park, a., Parliament Hill.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 31, Queen's Hall, April 21, West Ham.
- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £108 8s. 5d. Received since:—Geo. Smith, 10s.; S. Hudson, £1; Timid, 5s.; R. A. D. Forest, 4s.; A. E. Maddock, £3; "Dovre," £3 3s.
- H. CAPEL.—Regret we cannot use it.
- TALLIE WILLIAMS.—Rather behind date now.
- J. B.—Your letter was dated March 18, but must have been posted later; at any rate, it did not reach our office till Wednesday morning; otherwise, we should have been glad to make an extract from it. We hardly care to reopen the matter now. There will be other opportunities of saying something in the spirit of your last remarks.
- G. SMITH, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, hopes "this year's will exceed last year's."
- FRITZ.—Joseph Symes died on December 29, 1907.
- S. HUDSON.—We hope so too, but the loss of so many of the largest subscribers through death—subscribers who always remitted early too—seems bound to tell to some extent.
- G. BRADFELD.—Glad to see your letters in the *Cheltenham Echo*. Freethinkers might make more use of the local press than they do. It is all to the good, from our point of view, that you find the *Freethinker* so helpful.
- A. G. DALE.—You would do well to consult Professor Rhys David's little book on Buddhism, published (curiously) by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and Farrer's *Christianity and Paganism*, which deals with the social and ethical aspects of the two systems.
- E. GWINNELL.—G. J. Holyoake wrote the *Last Days of Robert Owen*, but we don't think it is obtainable now except possibly at second-hand. Owen did not go mad. Even if he did, the fact would prove nothing against his principles,—unless the orthodox lunatics in asylums disprove Christianity. Owen is "forgotten" for the reason so well stated by Mr. Cohen in a recent article. We cannot give you any news of Mr. Law, the husband of Harriet Law, the Freethought lecturer.
- M. VLASKAMP.—We are not aware of any English translation of "Multatali's" writings. Sorry, therefore, we cannot oblige you in the way suggested. Pleased to hear from a South African subscriber who has read the *Freethinker* for twenty years.
- R. A. D. FORREST.—There is no French Freethought journal "like the *Freethinker*." Ordinary journals print so much Freethought matter that there is not so much room for a journal like ours. But you might like to take Victor Charbonnell's *La Raison* while you are staying in France. Very glad to hear you say: "I enjoy my *Freethinker* so much that I number my weeks from Thursday to Thursday now."
- FELIX HERMANN.—Luther did play upon the flute. Why shouldn't he? There was a good deal of human nature about him. We said that the list of "infidel" musical composers could be extended. The names of two giants like Beethoven and Wagner were more than enough for our purpose. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.
- A. TOLLINSON.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- E. DALE.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.
- W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.
- J. W. GOTT.—This is not a favorable time for working up your business afresh. We hope to hear better news from you shortly, when the country has recovered from the coal strike.
- 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.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send halfpenny stamps.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had another fine audience at the Leicester Secular Hall on Sunday evening, and his lecture on "Thomas Hardy on 'God's Funeral'" was listened to for nearly an hour and a half with unflagging interest. Mr. Sydney Gimson, the President, occupied the chair and asked for questions or discussion relative to "Mr. Foote's magnificent lecture." He also announced that the Society's recent bazaar had yielded some £140, and when the unsold things were disposed of, as usual, there would probably be another £30. But the amount ought to have reached £200, and Mr. Gimson, in a humorous little speech that could not have given offence to the most thin-skinned, plainly invited the local "saints" to make up that figure next time.

The fine audience at Leicester on Sunday was all the finer because the tram service was totally suspended in consequence of the coal strike. A good many "saints" came in from the surrounding district, some by train, some by other conveyances, some on bicycles, and one at least walked twelve miles and had to walk that back after the lecture.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's lecture at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday last was received with the greatest interest and appreciation by a good audience. Many Freethinkers were present who had known and loved Charles Bradlaugh, as well as a fair number of the younger generation; and Mrs. Bonner's account of the "Myths" that had grown around her father's name was received with indignation by the listeners.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd occupies the Queen's Hall platform this evening (March 31). The weather and other things were against him on the occasion of his previous lecture. We hope he will have a really good audience on this occasion. Mr. Lloyd's ability and eloquence are worthy of the largest assemblies.

Queen's (Minor) Hall will be closed on Easter Sunday evening. The following (Sunday) evening there will be a lecture by Mr. Cohen, and Mr. Foote will wind up the season's propaganda there with two special lectures on April 21 and 28. This will be followed by two Sunday evening meetings at South-place Institute on the first two Sundays in May—which will conclude the indoor work of the Secular Society, Ltd., for the 1911-1912 winter.

South Place Institute has been engaged by the Secular Society, Ltd., for two Sunday evenings in May (5 and 12), so as to carry on the propaganda a little nearer to the summer and to touch fresh ground at the same time.

Freethinkers are not likely to forget Mr. W. T. Stead's noble conduct in relation to Rev. Dr. Torrey's slanders on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. Alone amongst the Christians in England, Mr. Stead stood up for truth and fairplay even towards "infidels," and powerfully seconded our indictment of the American evangelist. He was begged by fellow Christians not to undertake such a task. He was told that it was better that "infidel's" should be slandered than that the exposure of the slanders should do the slightest injury to the cause of Christ. Mr. Stead, however, was not to be intimidated or seduced; and his famous *Review of Reviews* article compelled Dr. Torrey to break silence and come out into the open, where he cut such a sorry and contemptible figure. We shall never, therefore, knowingly do the slightest injustice to Mr. Stead. But it appears that we have done so unknowingly. We received a letter from him with respect to Mr. Lloyd's article on "God and the Industrial Unrest" in the *Freethinker* of March 10, which opened with a well-toned reference to Mr. Stead's well-known book *If Christ Came to Chicago!* Having read Mr. Lloyd's article, Mr. Stead wrote us saying: "I should gather that you or your contributor have never taken the trouble to read my book about Chicago. I do not think you will find a single word in the book to justify what you say. Shall I send you a copy so that you may see, though I have said many things in that book to which you may take exception, I never said what your contributor makes me say." We replied at once that we should be sorry to do any man an injustice, and in Mr. Stead's case very sorry. We had read his book, and we believe written about it, when it was first published, nearly twenty years ago. But our memory, though a good one, was not infallible, and we said we would refer to the book itself. A copy reached us on Tuesday afternoon, March 19, too late for last week's *Freethinker*; so we are dealing with the matter now.

What did Mr. Lloyd say? Or rather what did he make Mr. Stead say? This, and this only. "His contention was," Mr. Lloyd said, "that the advent of Christ into the notorious city would cleanse it of all its impurities." We cannot pretend to have read all Mr. Stead's 464 pages again. We have glanced over them sufficiently to satisfy us that Mr. Stead never made the statement that Mr. Lloyd ascribes to him in so many words. But is not the last chapter pretty near it in substance? It is a prophetic picture of the Christ-renewed city of Chicago in the twentieth century, which had become "the ideal city of the world." True, it was not Christ personally who came to Chicago, but the Christ spirit. Is that, however, worth quarreling about? Mr. Lloyd simply used the more concrete expression as Mr. Stead did in the title of his book. It must be remembered that Mr. Lloyd did not profess to be quoting from the book (if he had he would have used quotation marks); he gave a summary of it in a single sentence, and we cannot see that he was very wide of the mark—especially after such a lapse of time. Still, if Mr. Stead retains the opinion that he has been misrepresented, we must express our regret at a quite unintentional injustice.

Another cheering extract from a correspondent's letter:—

"About four years ago I was a Wesleyan local preacher, but now (thanks largely to the *Freethinker*) I am a convinced Atheist, and with all my heart I wish you success in the noble work of sweeping the theological cobwebs from the brains of men and women."

We help to make hundreds of Freethinkers every year. How many of them do the Churches get back? Can they produce one?

Here is an extract from another encouraging letter, from a subscriber who appears as "Timid":—

"It may surprise you to learn that I am a Unitarian. I do not go the 'whole hog' with you; but my admiration and gratitude for your self-sacrifice, courage, and genius, impel me to write you this letter. I have read the *Freethinker* for two years, and what I have gained in information and mental discipline by the expenditure of twopence weekly leaves me deeply in your debt. This small contribution towards that debt leaves me conscience-stricken; it is like paying a composition of one halfpenny in the pound.....It is a pity one has to be timid about one's name appearing in perhaps the best written and most intellectual 'weekly' in the world. I am, however, a small tradesman with a wife and child, and the bigots have to be considered.....I hope this letter may give you some little satisfaction in confirming what you must already have had many proofs of,—namely, that your influence is not restricted to avowedly Atheistic circles. I have lent your books and pamphlets, and copies of the *Freethinker*, to Churchmen and Congregationalists as well as to Unitarians; and many I could mention, though not coinciding with your views, sympathise with and approve of the great stand for the furtherance of truth that you have maintained so long."

We thank this correspondent. His letter does give us "some little satisfaction"—and more.

Mr. Gott is going to publish the story of his prosecution and imprisonment in book form. An advertisement of it appears on another page of this week's *Freethinker*. It should be an interesting production. Prisoners for "blasphemy" are uncommon even in England.

#### THE SAPIENT JURYMAN.

For nearly six hours had the court been convulsed with the evidence given in a sensational action for breach of promise; the many ridiculous love letters had been read, commented upon, and heartily laughed at; counsel had spoken, the judge had summed up, and the jury had retired to consider their verdict.

"Well, gentlemen," said the foreman, "how much shall we give this young man?"

"Look here," said one of the jurymen, "if I understand aright, the plaintiff doesn't ask damages for blighted affections, or anything of that sort, but only wants to get back what he's spent on presents, holidays trips, etc."

"That is so," agreed the foreman.

"Well, then, I vote we don't give him a penny," said the other hastily. "If all the fun he had with that girl didn't cover the amount he expended it must have been his own fault. Gentlemen, I courted that girl once myself."

Verdict for the defendant.

#### Time and Tide.

EVERY hour given to God is an hour lost to oneself. God has been a bigger thief of time than procrastination; and man has been more lavish with the disposal of his wealth of hours than he was warranted in being. Away back into the darkness of distant years, deeper into their depths than the mind can penetrate, men have given to God a never-ending supply of hours. We cannot reckon the aggregate. Imagination, even, stands awed before the task. Could we but count, in years, that profitlessly spent time, we should never recover from the shock the result would certainly give us; while the Christian apologist would receive a counterblast that would petrify his verbosity and chill his hot brain. But we cannot compute the time. All we can know with certitude is that centuries upon centuries of accumulated hours have been, needlessly and heedlessly, given up to God.

With praise and prayer, with melancholy rejoicings and with mournings garmented by a shallow and feigned gladness, with shoutings and sorrowings, with wailings and spurious merry-makings, with mental dilation and bodily extravagance, with fear, hope, joy, and lust, have those innumerable hours been filled—to what purpose? How has this God rewarded his children for their devotion? What compensation has he accorded them? What has he given in exchange for the hours and years and centuries yielded up to him by his worshipers? And the answer comes, like a low, sad echo listening for a voice on the seas of silence—"Nothing! Nothing!"

We look around for some sign of recompense; and we see nothing. We listen in the dawning, when the air is cold, and the skies grey-dark, and the stillness hangs heavily upon us, when everything seems asleep but our own minds; and we hear nothing. We touch the closed eyelids of a sleeping child, and caress her hair and unruffled brow, and know that here there is purity and peace, simplicity and beauty; but the lingering touch reveals no God.

When the sun breaks through the eastern clouds we go into the awakening city, to the built-up dens, and the narrow streets, where the fresh air comes only to be contaminated by the omnipresent foulness. Our lungs contract, and the horrible human forms that pass by to renew their grim slavery, sicken and sadden us. The sleepy faces, unwashed and full of the inexpressible woe that those people cannot understand, but feel, because it is part of their lives, deepen the sickness within. Hurrying footsteps beat a monotonous music on the hard pavements, and ring in our ears like the death-knell of hope. We look into those eyes that are lightless and wrought around with hardship's wrinkles, and we see nothing but despair and despondency.

Those centuries of prayer and praise—of what value have they been? Is this one of their direct results? Where is the God to whom they were given, who, if he exists, stole them from man? Why, if he exists at all, does he remain in his paradise, surrounded by heavenly delight, by the essences of all beautiful things, by the clean spirits of all things that live and all things that know not life? Surely this is transcendental selfishness. He takes hours of supplication innumerable; he gives nothing. He is an unjust God, a heartless father, a thief of time. He knows nothing of the pain of starvation. How can he, when he lives in a land flowing with milk and honey? And milk does not burn into the racked stomach like beer, leaving it hot and sore for days afterwards. No cold draughts blow over the golden floor of heaven. No snow or sleet comes through chinks in its roof. There are no dirty clothes to wash and hang up before the fire in the living room—the only one; and there are no lungs in the spirits of the inhabitants of heaven to afford a lodging to the consumptive germs that heat and draught set free from the clothes, even if spirits

wear clothes. There is no anxious weighing of a few coppers to see how far they will go. There are no cursings and swearings. There is no need to moan when there is no money for the next week. There are no mother's ears to be deafened by the yelling of little children for bread, till the ears in time become hardened and a curse takes the place of a kiss, and a blow for a caress.

It is easier being God than the Editor of a Free-thought journal—even with a handicap. All you have to do is—nothing, except take. Take all and give nothing, if you can, and you will more resemble God than anything else.

Every time a Christian gives an hour's prayer or praise to God he loses his own self for an hour. He becomes a nonentity. If God is all-in-all the individual Christian is a millionth part of an electron. Kneeling to nothing he becomes nothing. Seeing a man stand in the street speaking quite audibly to no one, the Christian calls that man an idiot. But seeing a man stand in a pulpit speaking to the roof, the Christian calls that man an apostle of God. In actuality, there is no difference. The one man is as solemn and as fully convinced as the other that he is addressing someone, and that the words he uses are sensible and truthful. Both will try to make you believe in what they say, and both will argue till doomsday with you, if you like, in the endeavor to convert you to their way of thinking.

What vast opportunities have been buried in those unreckonable hours for God to do something in return for the expenditure of them. All the opportunities that all men have had for all past time, pale into insignificance before the many magnificent chances God has had, and ignored, to call his children children and *mean* it. And the profoundly wise man, brought up to book, for a little moment, on the thought, gravely admonishes us, saying, "The fool says in his heart there is no God."

But man begins to understand, to recognise that God, this dim idea of yesterday, is robbing him of his hours. Objections, strong and unsubduable, are being raised against the robbery. Man wants to have his hours to himself; and what man wants he will have. An hour with God was an hour of melancholy misery, an hour full of incomprehensibility. And man has had enough pain and too little happiness. He wants more pleasure here and now. He needs it. And he has had enough, too, of mystery. He desires to understand. He wishes to see things as they are, and to grasp his relationship with them. He wants to get at the reasons behind his conditions so that he may be happier, here and now, by changing them to suit himself. The promise of a life of bliss hereafter has lost its fragrance, and no more appeals to him as something that puts perfume and color into a faded leaf of which he is told by someone else. He wishes to touch, to see, and to smell for himself. He is thinking. It is thought that makes a man, not stature, nor physical strength.

When the river tide goes out to meet the sea, the river bears on its breast many things that have fallen upon it, many things it has loosened from its banks. You watch them float past. One by one they come into view and then disappear from sight. The tide turns, and the waters come back; but the things you saw return no more. They have gone out to be tossed and beaten into sea-slime by the waves, and to sink, at last, to the bottom, to be one with the unrecognisable things that were and are not.

Christianity is floating on the broad river of time to the seas of silence, to be ground into indiscernible moist powder, and to fall to the unseen, unknown depths where it shall lie in a quietness as profound as that of the grave. Slowly it moves past us. Portions are washed off from the mass and float into little pools at the river's edge. Men still come to bathe in those pools, and to splash the water over them for a few hours. But the pools are drying up, and the hours are becoming less and less in number. Soon the floating mass will disappear, and the pools

be all dried up, and man will rise to claim the hours as his own, and not God's; for with the evaporation of the waters in the pools will go the reflection of man's idea of a god in them, and man will be free.

ROBERT MORELAND.

### Old Testament History.—III.

(Continued from p. 181.)

IN 1887 about 300 tablets bearing cuneiform inscriptions were discovered at Tell-el-Amarna in Egypt. These, when deciphered, proved to be letters and dispatches to the Egyptian kings Amenhotep III. and Amenhotep IV. (1414—1365 B.C.), the majority being from local kings or governors in Syria or Palestine. From these letters we learn that Babylonia was a powerful empire, that Assyria was an independent kingdom, that Mesopotamia was also an independent state, and that Syria and Canaan, though in a very unsettled condition, were still subject to Egypt. Without going into all this correspondence, I will briefly refer to a few facts bearing on Egypt and Palestine.

The king of Babylon informs the Egyptian king that his ambassadors had been robbed and murdered when passing through Canaan on their way to Egypt, and names the leaders of the band that had waylaid them. He also says that in his father's days the Canaanites had sent asking for the assistance of the Babylonians in their revolt against Egypt; but his father had refused. The king of Assyria tells the Egyptian king that when his father (the late king of Assyria) had sent an embassy to Egypt, he had received a present of twenty talents of gold. The writer then gives a broad hint that he would not object to a similar present himself. From the letters of the king of Mesopotamia we learn that for three generations the kings of Egypt had taken wives from the royal family reigning in that country—a fact which doubtless was well known, and which probably gave rise to the legend that Isaac and Jacob had also taken their wives from Mesopotamia.

Amongst the letters from Syria and Canaan are some from Abimelech, king of Tyre; from Aziru, Egyptian governor of the Amorites; from Rib-hadad, governor of northern Syria; from Zimrada, governor of Lachish; from the governor of Megiddo, the governor of Jerusalem, and a host of others.

Arad-khiba, the governor of Jerusalem, having heard that enemies had accused him of disloyalty to the king of Egypt, writes protesting his fidelity. Moreover, having been placed in his present position by the arm of the mighty king, why should he rebel against his lord the king? He is, he says, the faithful ally of the king, and has paid the king's tribute. He then tells the Egyptian king what is going on in a neighboring district. The *Khabiri*, he states, are disturbing the peace there; they have marshalled "the forces of the city of Gezer, the forces of the city of Gath, and the forces of the city of Keilah, and have occupied the country of the city of Rabbah," with the result that "the country of the king has gone over to the *Khabiri*." He also complains of the inaction of the Egyptian governor of Gaza in not putting down this lawlessness.

The meaning of the word "*Khabiri*" is somewhat uncertain, but it is generally rendered "Confederates." The name is said by some critics to refer to the Israelites under the appellation "the Hebrews." The Biblical term for a Hebrew is "(?)*abiri*," the sound of the first letter (*ayin*) being unknown. Hence, the band of freebooters called "the *Khabiri*" might have been a tribe that at some later date became allied to those known as "Israel." The name "Hebrews" signifies a people from "the other side" (probably of the Jordan or Dead Sea). These *Khabiri* had evidently left their own district, and had entered one in the south of Palestine proper, which many years later was occupied by the tribe of Judah. It is not at all likely that the original

Israelites were known in the earliest times by the second appellation—"the Hebrews."

Zimrida, governor of Lachish, writes informing the king of Egypt of a revolt in Philistia and also among the Amorites. Rib-hadad, the governor of Syria, writes to the Egyptian king, charging a neighboring governor with being in league with the Hittites, and with endeavoring to take from him the cities he holds for Egypt. He then asks that Egyptian troops should be sent to his assistance. Many other governors also make a request for the assistance of Egyptian troops, and several of them charge other governors with disloyalty to Egypt: the whole of Canaan, in fact, seems ripe for revolt.

The most important circumstance, however, in connection with the Tell-el-Amarna tablets is the fact that the Assyrian and Babylonian cuneiform system of writing was employed in Syria, Canaan, and Egypt for diplomatic correspondence between 1400 and 1360 B.C. Every king and governor in Canaan and Syria must therefore have kept a qualified Assyrian or Babylonian writer in his service. It follows, then, that the myths and cosmogony of Babylon must have been transmitted to Canaan with the language and script—a fact which accounts for the stories of the Creation, the Deluge, and the Tower of Babel in the book of Genesis, as well as the moral, civil, and ceremonial laws in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These laws and legends thus became known to the priests and scholars of Canaan, and after being handed down for several centuries had become so changed and distorted as to be almost unrecognisable when compared with the Babylonian originals. The spoken language of Palestine was the Phœnician or Hebrew; but the period when this dialect first became a written language is unknown: probably not until three or four centuries later. The traditional view that the Pentateuch was written in Hebrew by Moses about a century before the time of the Tell-el-Amarna tablets needs but to be stated to be rejected. The earliest known specimen of ancient Hebrew writing is the Moabite Stone (850 B.C.), and it was something near this time when the Elohist and Yahvistic narratives in Genesis were also written in the Hebrew tongue.

Coming now to the Egyptian nineteenth dynasty, we find that the whole of Palestine was overrun by Seti I. (about 1326—1300 B.C.), who reduced all the revolted cities and provinces to submission. Among his conquests were the towns of Tyre, Kadesh, Beth-anoth, and Kirjath-anab. As in previous revolts, the Canaanites had been assisted by the Hittites. Seti now concluded a treaty of peace with Mautnur, the Hittite king, who engaged on his part not to assist the peoples of Syria and Canaan in rebellion against Egypt—which treaty was kept during the remainder of Seti's reign.

The death of Seti I., and the accession of his son Rameses II. (about 1300—1234 B.C.), was the signal for another revolt of Canaan and Syria from the Egyptian rule. To put down this rebellion Rameses came with an immense army into Palestine, and for nearly seventeen years was engaged against Canaanites and Hittites. The most important engagement was the battle of Kadesh (1295 B.C.), which lasted two days. On the second day Rameses gained a great victory, the slaughter of the Hittites being immense, an enormous number of prisoners being also captured and carried away to Egypt. Many other battles were fought, including that of Tabor, of Merom, of Salem, and of Ashkelon; but in 1279 B.C. Rameses came to terms with the Hittites, and a treaty of peace was concluded, which was ratified by the marriage of Rameses with the daughter of "Khita-sir, the great king of the Hittites." After this, Rameses appears to have had no further trouble with the Canaanites during the remaining years of his long reign.

Upon the death of Rameses, and the accession of his son Menepthah or Meremphah (about 1234—1214 B.C.), Canaan and Syria once more revolted from the Egyptian yoke. To suppress these revolts Menepthah,

in the fifth year of his reign, marched through the disaffected districts, and succeeded by force of arms in again reducing them into submission; after which he returned to Egypt with about 9,000 prisoners. The result of this campaign is thus recorded:—

"Devastated is Libya; quieted is the Hittite-land; ravaged is Kanum with all violence; taken is Askalon; seized is Kazmel; Yanuh of the Syrians is made as though it had not existed; *the people of Israel is spoiled, it hath no seed*; Syria hath become as widows by the hand of Egypt: all lands together are in peace."

Here, at last, we find the Israelites named as inhabiting Canaan. There had been no exodus from Egypt under Moses, and no conquest of the country by Joshua. These Bible stories are thus seen to be boastful Hebrew fictions. As a matter of fact, no conquest, such as that described in the book of Joshua, could take place during the Egyptian domination of Palestine. Upon the first appearance of an invading army of Hebrew cut-throats, dispatches from the local kings and governors would be sent post-haste to the reigning Egyptian monarch. Sixteen days later a strong Egyptian force would be in Canaan ready to meet and inflict summary punishment on the invaders. According to the Bible chronology, Joshua and his followers entered Canaan 1451 B.C., and spent several years in fighting with, and exterminating, the inhabitants. Yet now, more than two centuries later, we find the Israelites fighting side by side with the other tribes of Canaan without any such conquest having been made.

We will now look at Menepthah's remarkable record—"The people of Israel is spoiled; it hath no seed." What are we to understand by the last four words? Do they mean that all the corn and crops of Israel had been carried away, and that that people would be likely to perish of hunger? If this were the case, the Israelites might live upon their sheep and cattle, or beg or borrow corn from their neighbors. This, it is evident, cannot be the meaning. When we turn to the Old Testament we find that the word "seed" refers in nearly every case to offspring or posterity. The "seed" of Abraham, for instance, was to be as numerous as the stars of heaven, etc. So in the case before us. Menepthah believed that the aged men of Israel, who were too old to fight in battle, would be left without offspring; since it had doubtless been reported to him that the younger men of that tribe who had entered the field against him had all been slain or made prisoners. He did not, however, know that "Israel" was merely the collective name of a number of tribes that had entered into a defensive league for mutual protection in times of war or great danger. Hence, the probability is that only one tribe had had the temerity to contend against the Egyptian power. Now, when we look through the earliest Hebrew traditions (*i.e.*, the book of Judges) we find amongst those records that one tribe of Israel was very nearly annihilated—the tribe of Benjamin—which tribe was the most rash and impetuous of them all. In the Song of Deborah (Judg. v. 14) Benjamin is named as one of the six tribes that fought against Thothmes III. Apparently, in Menepthah's time, this tribe entered the field alone. There are many circumstances in connection with the narrative in Judges (xx. and xxi.) which show that account, as it stands, to be unhistorical. Yet there can be little doubt that the narrative was derived from a distorted tradition of some actual occurrence in Canaan, the Hebrew tribes that fought against Benjamin being put in the place of the Egyptian army.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

#### MISSIONARIES.

Again, I have to put on record that I have absolutely no sympathy with missionaries. I cannot see the necessity for missions to the heathen; as yet, there should be no crumbs to fall from the children's table, while the children of Europe are in such a shameful state as many of them are, far worse than any heathen I have ever seen in Africa.—*Mary Gaunt, "Alone in West Africa," p. 280.*

## Correspondence.

## THE FERRER JUDGMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Since you doubt the value of the evidence upon which I contradicted the last fantastic story about Ferrer, will you give me no more than half a column of your space in which to print side by side that fantastic story (I mean the story that Ferrer was declared innocent on appeal) and the actual record of the Court?

I have usually found people of strong religious convictions, such as are expressed in your paper, to be sincere lovers of truth, and if you will allow this simple test the whole matter can be cleared up. If I prove wrong I shall be the first to acknowledge it.

I think I owe it to my reputation with your readers to point out that I never put forward Ferrer's strong religious convictions, which I believe agree with your own, as proof that he was capable of particularly evil deeds. On the contrary, I insisted upon his claim to be regarded as a sincere man. But I have continually protested against the falsehoods which his powerful secret society spread throughout Europe in order to create a legend, and against their policy of obscurantism, silence, and suppression. It would be well for the English press if there were more such protests, not only in connection with the quarrel between the Catholic Church and the Grand Orient (of which Society this exceedingly rich man was a member), but in connection with every other dispute.

H. BELLOC.

[We are quite ready to comply with Mr. Belloc's request.—EDITOR.]

## RE FIRMIN SAGRISTA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A press-cutting from your issue of the 17th reached me this morning, by which I see it is believed in England that Senor Canalejas has kept his promise and set Sagrista free. This is not the fact. Sagrista, and some thirty other political prisoners, remain always in the Carcel Celular of Barcelona, and the President of Council has merely added broken faith to his other crimes. It is now over three months since he declared Sagrista was to be released immediately, and the constantly recurring rumor of this release has had the effect of stopping further efforts on his behalf, which, perhaps, was the end desired?

Senor Canalejas is said to dread nothing so much as having public opinion in England against him, and he relies, with a confidence which is justified, on the silence of our capitalist press. But for this cold, inhuman silence, his conduct would be held up to the execration it merits, and these unhappy men would be restored to their homes, their work, and a living world.

I hear that Sagrista has fallen into a condition of complete discouragement. He is now finishing the third month of his second year of imprisonment, and his is one of those natures which cannot accustom itself to captivity. He is not merely an artist, but a man of great intelligence, of very advanced political, social, and religious ideas. He was a friend of Ferrer, and the drawings for which he was prosecuted are in memory of the Martyr of Montjuich. This, in the eyes of the Spanish Army and the Catholic Church, is his real crime.

The Court-Martial, pre-determined to condemn him, found out that the incriminated drawings were actually insulting to the Army—with the best will in the world it could not find them so—but that the evident intention behind the drawings was to insult. For this evident intention his soldier-judges gave him nine years' imprisonment.

But the idiocy of the verdict and the ferocity of the sentence, worthy of a Gilbertian farce, are surpassed, perhaps, by the findings of the same Court-Martial in the case of Antonio Herrero, fellow-prisoner with Sagrista in Barcelona. Herrero is a schoolmaster, and because he gave in dictation to his pupils a passage from one of Charles Malato's books, which book is permitted by the Spanish Government to be used as reader in the schools, he was awarded an imprisonment of twelve years, which he is now undergoing.

Laughable were it not so tragic. But when one thinks of the daily and hourly suffering of the men themselves, and of their families and friends, of the constant injury to our own sense of human dignity and love of justice, one feels that such an outcry should be raised as will bring these indignities to an end. Will you, Sir, give all the weight of your influence to make our protests heard?—Yours, etc.,

The English Hotel, Cuniez,  
A. M. France.

ELLA D'ARCY.

## CHRISTISM.

When we eliminate from the Gospel all that is utterly utopian and, humanly speaking, impracticable—all that is mere mysticism and quietism that would reduce us (if literally practised) to be hermits of the Thebaid or Simeon Stylites—and also eliminate everything miraculous, super-human, and scientifically incredible—then the residuum is some very beautiful and touching lessons as to humility, charity, magnanimity, peaceableness, and the beauty of forgiveness and loving kindness; but it is not solid enough and workable enough to make a religion. All that is best and strongest in Christianity is historically a much later and plainly human construction, quite independent of the essence of the original Gospel, and often irreconcilable with the Sermon on the Mount. The entire scheme of Christian religion—the imitation of Christ, being perfect as God is perfect, the union of the Human and the Divine, the sacrifice for sin, the washing away of our sins by Christ's mediation, the sacramental infusion of Christ's spirit in us, our being reconciled to God by Christ, our good actions being inspired by Christ, our seeing our Redeemer in Heaven hereafter—every part of what is called Christianity—implies and absolutely rests on the Divinity of Jesus, and his miraculous Incarnation and Ascension. Paul said truly, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Christianity as a religion rests on the divinity of Christ. If there be no miracle there can be no divinity. If Jesus were not God, he is a rather feeble type to imitate, and an utterly vain reed to lean upon. If he be risen from the cross, it is a miracle. If he be not risen, he is not God; and if he be not God, "then is your faith vain." If Christ be a man like Socrates, put Socrates for Christ. Talk of the Imitation of Socrates; Socrates' sacrifice for our sins, our good actions being inspired by Socrates; Socrates being our Mediator, and receiving us into Heaven. What nonsense would be this Religion of Socrates! So Christianity without the supernatural is nonsense also.

Now in saying all this I am merely pointing out what inevitable logic requires—what rigid consistency of mind involves—and it is only addressed to those who deliberately think they can construct a systematic and permanent scheme of religion on the basis of the spiritual essence of Christianity denuded of all miraculous and supernatural element in doctrine and all revelation by any sort of Paraclete in the Scriptures. To those who dream of such a type of religion in the future I say it is pure waste of effort floundering in a sea of confusion and prevarication. The essence of the primitive Gospel as delivered by Jesus to the Jews is a perfectly hazy, thin, and hysterical affair when rigidly examined by modern philosophy and research. All that is great and permanent in Christianity has been built up by ordinary men without inspiration and without divine mission, ages after the death of Jesus on the Cross, and largely upon ideas and hopes which never entered his mind at all.—*Frederic Harrison, "Positivist Review."*

## THE RIVAL.

He is handsome, he is witty, he is wise;  
He is kindly, he is noble, he is brave;  
He is eloquent and tender; tells no lies;  
To duty he's a most devoted slave.  
And she loves him with a holy, lasting passion;  
(But I know that he's a counterfeit and sham),  
Yet I view him with a certain grim compassion;  
He's the fellow that my wife believes I am!

## A REMARKABLE ANIMAL.

"An old lady was going over the Zoo, and after some time she went up to a keeper and tapped him on the shoulder with her umbrella.

"Well, mum?" said the keeper.

"I want to ask you," explained the old lady, "which of the animals in the Zoo you consider the most remarkable?"

"The keeper scratched his head for a while. Then —

"Well, mum," he replied, "after careful consideration, as you might say, I've come to the conclusion as the biscuit goes to the laughing hyena."

"Indeed!" said the old lady in surprise; "and why do you consider the laughing hyena so remarkable?"

"Well, mum," answered the zoological expert, "he only has a sleep once a week. He only has a meal once a month. And he only has a drink once a year. So what he's got to laugh about is a bloomin' mystery to me!" — *George Robey, "Jokes, Jibes, and Jingles."*

## 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, J. T. Lloyd, "Secularism as a Philosophy of Life."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, R. H. Rosetti, "Christianity's Harmony with Science.—II. Astronomy."

#### OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, Mr. Harrison, "Christian Evidence and the Scientists."

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, Lantern Lecture, "Evolution—Astronomy."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dudley Wright, "The Impossibility of Harmony between Religion and Science."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Bert Killip, "A Substitute for Christianity."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): J. A. E. Bates, 3, "The Folly of Sabbatarianism"; 6.30, "The Myth of Creation" (with diagram illustrations). Tea at 5.

#### OUTDOOR.

HANLEY (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Friday, March 29, at 8, "God is Dead"; Monday, April 1, at 8, "Death, Man's Soul, and the Great Beyond"; Tuesday, 2, at 8, "Christ: Man, Messiah, or Myth?"; Thursday, 4, at 8, "Kingcraft"; Friday, 5, at 8, "Materialism in the Nineteenth Century."

STOKE-ON-TRENT (Monument, London-road): Joseph A. E. Bates—Wednesday, April 3, "The Christian Valhalla."

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Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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