

# THE Freethinker

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*Over the desert of death the sphinx gazes for ever, but does not speak.*—INGERSOLL.

## The "Titanic" and Mr. W. T. Stead.

THERE was a stroke of unconscious humor on the contents-sheet of a London evening paper on Saturday, April 20—nearly a week after the loss of the great White Star liner with the overwhelming majority of her passengers and crew. A bold headline ran across the bill—"More Titanic Stories." We smiled when we saw it and thought "how appropriate!" Some very titanic stories had been in circulation during the week, especially on the first two or three days. The number of "heroes" on board the ill-fated ship was wonderful. Every man received that high designation who did not throw a woman out of a boat and take her place himself. The newspapers praised "British" heroism so grandly that Britishers' bosoms swelled with pride and their eyes overflowed with the pathos of self-worship. The clergy soon took their share of the sentimentalising. "Men," they said, "who had apparently forgotten their Creator, remembered him on that sinking ship." They prayed on the deck—and got drowned. They prayed in the boats—and got saved. Nay, those who prayed on the boats, and attributed their safety to divine aid, did so while the awful shrieks of the doomed ones rang in their ears as the *Titanic* sank into the ocean depths. God was evidently letting those unfortunates drown, but he was bent on saving them, so that was all right, and it proved the efficacy of prayer. Such is the logic of that ancient form of selfishness called religion. And the same spirit prevailed at the memorial service in St. Paul's Cathedral. There was an orgy of morbid emotion, under cover of which the clergy insinuated their fatuous old justification of the ways of God to men. It is an ancient game of theirs—"heads we win and tails you lose." Whatever happens they salve the reputation of their Deity by giving him credit for everything pleasant and beneficial, and leaving all the rest to be fathered upon the Devil, or man himself, or the wrong-grained nature of things. Yet it is obvious enough that if God directly saved some he indirectly drowned the others, and is responsible in both cases.

Perhaps the newspapers and the clergy were never sloppier than in their references to the tune the ship's band played while the *Titanic* was sinking. All sorts of tunes had been played earlier in the evening, although it was Sunday; dance tunes, rag-time tunes, everything of a profane character; but when danger arose the musicians turned religious and played "Nearer my God to Thee." Religious ideas occur to men's minds when they are frightened, and religious phrases rise to their lips. Nobody would say "My God, how I'm enjoying myself!" It is natural to cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" So the ship's band played the venerable hymn, which caught on with the passengers, who found it soothing and consoling. Not that they really rejoiced at being near to God. Almost to the last man and woman they were quite

ready to keep as far from God as possible. They would have been thousands of miles from him with the greatest cheerfulness rather than meet him in the vicinity of that fatal iceberg. Those who could get away from God did so; the others had to make the best of the situation—and placate the Deity by pretending they liked it.

No doubt some very worthy people went down with the *Titanic*. We wish to speak of one of them in particular. He was something more than a mere worthy person. He was perhaps the chief of English journalists. He had fought many hard battles for his convictions. He was known over the whole civilised world. He was erratic and even fantastic in some things; he illustrated Dr. Johnson's dictum that two contradictions cannot both be true but may both inhere in the same individual; he was even a victim to what many regard as a childish superstition; yet his enemies could not deny that his impulses were always sound, that his heart was generous, that he followed principle as he understood it, and that he was not to be tempted by anything from what he deemed the path of truth and justice.

In spite of Mr. W. T. Stead's little weaknesses about "Julia" and spirit writing, and the rest of that absurd hobby of his, there will always be a soft place for him in the hearts of Free-thinkers. He stood up like a man and helped us mightily when we were trying to bring Evangelist Torrey to book for his disgusting libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. He brought the case before a public we could not reach. He hunted Torrey down by means of a drastic correspondence, in which he consulted us at every step. Finally he exhibited the wretched figure of the convicted and half-confessed libeller in the *Review of Reviews*. Mr. Stead displayed conspicuous courage on that occasion. We saw many letters from leading Christians addressed to him, and begging him not to injure the Church of Christ by exposing one of his servants to public scorn for the sake of an "Infidel." It was a melancholy spectacle, and Mr. Stead felt all the force of its humiliation. But he was not to be deterred. He went on with the task that seemed laid upon him. And he never repented his action. In a letter I had from him only a few days before he started on his last voyage (dated April 8) he wrote:—

"May I say that I am much touched by your expression of gratitude to me for what I did about Torrey. It seemed to me the most obvious thing in the world to do, and certainly not a thing which called for any gratitude on your part. It was the merest act of justice due to the memory of a much maligned man, and I felt so thoroughly ashamed at Torrey's conduct that perhaps there was some selfishness on my part in trying to dis- sever myself as far as possible from so ungenerous and untruthful a controversialist."

Another thing is to be remembered. Mr. Stead attended the South Place Chapel meeting, organised by the National Secular Society, to protest against the Leeds prosecutions and to demand the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. He spoke in the name of Christ, and Freethinkers predominated in the audience; but a man who speaks for freedom, and justice, and honor, shall speak in what name he pleases. His sincerity is the one thing to the point. Mr. Stead was sincere; he was a man; and with that word we end this poor tribute to his memory.

G. W. FOOTE.



### Fear v. Fact.

FEAR as to what may happen should the world get rid of religion is expressed in many different forms. Sometimes it assumes a very crude and ignorant form, as when one of our pious Members of Parliament recently asked his audience to think of the number of social institutions that would now be lacking if Christianity had never existed—the poor man being, apparently, without any conception of the fact that Christianity itself is very largely a social product. At other times, the fear assumes a less palpable form and is expressed by those who have themselves little faith in religion. It seems to them that even though religious teaching be intellectually unjustifiable, still it is so closely associated with social life, it enters so largely into the popular consciousness of things, that any disturbance of the general structure might produce unforeseen evil consequences. They admit, for instance, that morality is fundamentally independent of religion, but few people realise it. And in shaking people's confidence in religion you may also destroy their respect for moral conventions. This fear was expressed by no less a person than Herbert Spencer, although the trend of the whole of his philosophy was to establish quite the opposite conclusion. In brief, we are warned to be careful lest in emptying the bath we pour out the baby with the water. Educate men by all means, they say, but be careful how you go about the work. Do it slowly.

Unfortunately, one cannot do it otherwise than slowly. No amount of propaganda will force on a society more than it is prepared to receive. No one can get into a man's mind more than it is capable of holding, any more than you can put a quart of water into a pint pot. The capacity of mental absorption is as much a determinate quantity as is the capacity of a sponge for absorbing water. We have to proceed slowly, whether we will or no; and there is really no need for advice against over stimulation. The trouble is, not that people get more truth than they are ready for, but that they get less truth than they are capable of receiving. It is the half truth, not the whole truth, that is dangerous. And when people are given a small dose of knowledge, with a warning that it is a very dangerous mixture, and that it may be well to mix it with a quantity of the old mixture of fallacy and folly, it is small wonder that they are left in a state of intellectual and moral confusion.

In any case the matter is not altogether under our control. We cannot stop people growing mentally, any more than we can stop them growing physically. Discoveries will be made in spite of all we can do to the contrary. The mere growth of the human family, with the consequences entailed by such growth, involves a questioning of accepted teachings. Life originates our questionings in a much truer and deeper sense than these determine the direction of life. Not even the Romish Church at its greatest could stop growth; it could only divert it for a time. And we do not by being timid of speech in matters of religion stop people discovering its falsity. We only succeed in inducing a general haziness as to the real nature of the social forces, and create a condition of indecision and confusion that is highly injurious to clear vision and effective action. It is really the safest policy for those to speak who see, and so enable those who merely feel to see likewise.

Let us assume as true, what is often pointed out, that hitherto moral theory and social theory have always been associated with religious belief, and associated in terms of cause and effect. The statement contains nothing of very profound significance, because, each in its degree, it is true of art, of science, of every branch of human life. The whole of life is at one time entangled with religious beliefs for the simple reason that religion represents man's early attempts to express the phenomena of the universe in rational terms. But the whole course of human

growth has been to place each department of life upon a foundation absolutely independent of religion. Even though it be argued that scientific teaching endorses religious theory, no one now claims that science cannot and does not exist apart from religion. And exactly the same development has taken place in the region of conduct. Ethical teaching, like every other teaching, commences in a cloud of supernaturalism. But every advance in civilisation and culture has meant the growth of a sense that however useful religion may be as an adjunct of morality, morality has an independent existence and value.

I have emphasised the fact that moral teaching commences in a cloud of supernaturalism. Even this is not strictly true—moral theory would be a more accurate phrase; but it will serve. For on that point hangs the kernel of the question. And this is to determine whether associated life springs from religion, or whether religion springs from associated life. All those who are competent to express an opinion will to-day agree with the latter position. Human association is the expression of an organic impulse, and in the long run all theory—religious, social, or moral—must yield to the demands of that organic necessity upon which social life is founded. And this implies that life fashions theory, not theory fashions life. A theory that fails to take account of life is doomed to disappear. It may be flawless in aspect, beautifully rounded and coherent as a whole; but if it fails to withstand the touchstone of facts it cannot persist. The notion that you can force upon society a theory for which it is unsuited is one of the wildest of delusions. The history of society offers countless instances of such failures, all of which rightly read carry lessons of hope and warning. They warn, because we are bidden to continually check theory by fact; and they bid us hope because they show the power of society to survive the wildest and most fantastic theory ever devised.

The simple truth is, then, that conduct is determined, not with reference to beliefs, but with reference to facts. (Of course, a belief is itself a fact, but to be persistently operative it must fall into line with other facts of a different order.) The steady operation of social selection will ultimately secure the conformity of conduct with those conditions upon which the welfare of society depends. And this will not only determine morality, but it will determine religion as well. Much is made of the fact that religions have always inculcated morality. This is true, but here religion has been subjected to the same forces that operate upon human nature as a whole. Fitness determines survival all round, and a religion to survive must become increasingly utilitarian in character. It must diminish the supernatural and increase the social aspects of its teachings. This is the real cause of the change that has come over Christianity of late years. It has not caused social growth, it is social growth that has forced a change of teaching, of doctrine, and interpretation. And this is as true of the past as of the present, and will be as true of the future as it is of our own time.

Assume, for example, that a religion of a grossly anti-social character were to arise. One of two things must result. Either it gains control, in which case the society disappears, and with it the religion; or, if the religion lives, it must greatly modify its teaching. But, in the latter case, the religion in its pure character has disappeared, and we have only a modified form of the original thing—that is, a religion partly socialised by the insistent pressure of social forces. Religion must, therefore, if it persists, become subject to the same laws of life to which other things are subject. It may have some influence upon the rate of development, but it cannot altogether frustrate it. The Roman Church could hold up celibacy as an ideal, but it was bound to make allowances for human instincts in other directions. Protestantism could lay stress on the atoning blood of Jesus, but it, too, had to give way before the force of social development. Ultimately,



life is life that determines the form of religion, not religion that determines the form of life.

The conclusion is, then, that, behind all our consciously elaborated theories of life and conduct lie the forces of life themselves. These compel systems of thought to fashion and refashion themselves, until they are in harmony with the conditions of social well-being. Morality is obviously no exception to this rule. It does not commence in a conscious discovery and application of moral rules; it exists in practice long before it is expressed in theory. Moral laws are no more the cause of morality than astronomical laws are the cause of an eclipse. In either case, we simply recognise the conditions of a given phenomenon. In the case of morality there is, however, the distinction that reflection shows us the reason and justification of certain lines of conduct, and so gives an added authority for their performance. Properly understood, morality is not the highly abstract thing some would make it; it is extremely concrete. The great feature of moral development is, as of human development in general, that at one stage the moral end is achieved unconsciously, and, at a later stage, consciously. But the fundamental laws of conduct remain unaltered, and we must ever return to it for a justification of its highest expression.

Apart, then, from the innate dread of change that some people have, there is no reason whatever for alarm as to what may happen with the disappearance of religious beliefs. If our intellectual life is pervaded with religious influences, it is also saturated with social influences which have always acted as a corrective to religious extravagances. And were religious beliefs really useful to human life, they simply could not disappear. The fact that they are in process of disappearance shows that they do not exercise any vital purpose in life. Such utility as is claimed for them is apparent, not real. They are disguised forms of social life. The claims made at present for Christianity as socially useful, the sentimental stress on the parental character of the relation of God to man, with the cant of brotherhood, proves this. These expressions are the religious veneer on the social fact; and we are not going to destroy the fact by stripping off the veneer. The material beneath remains what it was.

Naturally, Freethinkers view the decline of religion without apprehension of the consequences. And this, not because it is a decline of the force they are engaged in fighting, but because they believe they have a saner conception than have religionists of the forces that determine the growth and well-being of society. To them the really beneficent forces of life are, and always have been, independent of religion, although they have frequently—even usually—been in close association with it. Above all, they do not believe that the world can be injured by an overdose of truth. The world has never yet suffered from that complaint, but it has frequently felt the want of it. No man is made worse by speaking the whole truth or by facing the gravest facts. All that man does need is courage and understanding. To understand life is his first duty; while the exercise of courage in the application of knowledge forms the only effective condition of human betterment.

C. COHEN.

### Antichrists.

ANTICHRIST, as depicted in the New Testament, is a most detestable character. He is the quintessence of all wickedness. There is a striking portrait of him in 2 Thessalonians ii. 1-12, gazing on which one inevitably shudders. He is "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the lawless one," whose function is to oppose and supersede God, and whom the Lord Jesus, at his second coming, "shall slay with the breath of his mouth." According to 1 John ii. 18, there were many Antichrists in the world already,

and they were bold enough to deny both the Father and the Son. The author of 2 Thessalonians believed that the second coming was at hand, but not quite so near as he had predicted in the first epistle. As the result of reading 1 Thessalonians, some people had abandoned their daily avocations in the confident expectation that at any moment the Lord might appear. The writer perceived that he had made a mistake, to rectify which is the object of the second letter. You misunderstood me, he said; the Lord will doubtless come ere long; but "let no man beguile you in any wise, for it will not be except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." This is a passage the meaning of which it is impossible to decipher. Who or what Antichrist was is absolutely unknown. All that is clear is that this vague, mysterious character must be revealed and fulfil his mission prior to the advent of the Lord. What his mission was we cannot tell; but we may legitimately infer that he was "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition" simply because he had a different creed from the Christians and dared to defend it. That this view is probably correct is proved by the fact that Paul, the supposed author of Thessalonians, used even more extravagant language in denouncing Elymas, "a false prophet, a Jew," simply because he withstood him and Barnabas at Paphos. Indeed, there are theologians who maintain that Elymas was a follower of Jesus, though connected with a different sect from Paul's. Nothing was known against his character, no crime, no vice of any description was brought home to him; but merely because he had the temerity to disagree in opinion with the two apostles, and to try to convince the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, that his teaching, and not theirs, was true, Paul lost his temper and blackguarded him thus:—

"O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season" (Acts xiii. 9-11).

We are not concerned at present with the credibility of any New Testament records referred to, as it is quite immaterial whether they are true or false; but it is highly probable, taking the records as they stand, that the only fault to be found with the Antichrist was that he disbelieved and attacked the Christian Gospel, or, in St. John's words, "this is the Antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son." Well, the Christian attitude to unbelievers is still the same. As the apostolical Antichrist was "the man of sin," and "the son of perdition," "whose coming was according to Satan," so the twentieth century Antichrist is a wielder of all the powers of darkness. This is the Rev. Dr. Horton's polite description of the type in the *Lyndhurst Road News Sheet*:—

"My own personal ministry has been devoted solely to this one object—to set forth Jesus Christ as the one sure foundation, the essence of the Church, the secret of the Christian, the hope of the world. We have had hard times of late, as you know. All the embattled powers of darkness have conspired to shake our faith in our Lord. The Antichrists swarm; they start up on every side. Now they are outside the Church assailing it, now they are inside corrupting it."

Then he sneers at "a pseudo Congregational minister" who denies the historicity of the Gospel Jesus, at "an ignorant American woman" who evolves a new Christianity and writes a new Bible, and at "another erratic woman" who "proclaims the truth of Hinduism, and offers the Gospel of the second century Gnosticism in place of the Gospel of Christ"; but what pains him most is that these pseudo, ignorant, and erratic people are eagerly followed by great crowds, "even out of the Churches." "It is not too much to say," he concludes, "that anyone to-day will get a hearing who



will only quite frankly be Antichrist." All this is in Dr. Horton's ordinary style whenever he alludes to opponents. He pretends to be a hater of vituperation and intolerance; and yet he is invariably vituperative and intolerant in all his onslaughts upon Freethought. Freethinkers are spiritually blind, intellectually perverse, and morally degraded. However meek and mild he may seem to be in his normal condition, the moment he scents an Atheist, or even a very heterodox Christian minister, he flings his usual meekness and humility to the winds and becomes ferociously abusive and insulting. No terms are too violent, vile, or reckless to characterise those who so far forget themselves as to assail his creed. But, seriously, does it never occur to him that it is within the range of possibility, after all, that those who venture to differ from him may not be such utter fools as he imagines? He admits that the Christian Faith is being undermined, whether by Christian Science, Theosophy, or Secularism; but has it never dawned upon him that the undermining process is being conducted, not by "all the embattled powers of darkness," but by the rapidly evolving powers of light? It is a demonstrable fact that Atheists are most numerous, not among the illiterate and ignorant, but among the best educated and enlightened, or among those who have learned to think for themselves.

Dr. Horton says that he and his Church "stand calmly and firmly on Jesus Christ, the sure foundation"; but is he not aware that he is surrounded by thousands of people, quite as honest, upright, and conscientious as himself, who have long ago outgrown the entire Christian creed, and cast it off as superstitious rubbish? Instead of reviling them, without really knowing anything about them, ought he not, rather, to carefully study their standpoint and patiently listen to and duly weigh their arguments, before publicly charging them with ignorance and stupidity? Let him take a man like Professor Metchnikoff, an avowed Atheist, and examine his life-story of self-denying devotion to the philanthropic task of investigating and conquering disease, and then, let him assert, if he dare, that by means of this man "all the embattled powers of darkness have conspired to shake our faith in our Lord." As a matter of fact there are people whose faith in Christianity has been shaken right out of them as the result of direct contact with the works of this distinguished scientist. What we contend is that unbelief is the offspring, not of ignorance, but of knowledge. It is a well-known fact, tearfully deplored at religious gatherings, that the working classes are alienated from the Christian Church and seldom darken its doors; but it would be found, on inquiry, that the majority of such people are still passive believers in Christianity, though they have completely lost touch with Church and clergy. Comparatively only a few of the more intelligent amongst them are convinced Freethinkers, though the number of these is steadily increasing. In every country in Christendom it is among the unlettered and unlearned that the ministers of all denominations find their most faithful and docile clientele.

We note the fact that Dr. Horton's one object, throughout his long ministry at Hampstead, has been "to set forth Jesus Christ as the one sure foundation, the essence of the Church, the secret of the Christian, the hope of the world"; and he has succeeded in building up a large society of people to whom his presentation of Jesus Christ is acceptable. But is it not obvious that Christ's hold upon his followers is pitifully feeble when crowds of them run after any pseudo clergyman, ignorant or eccentric woman, or misguided Freethinker that happens to come along and stand up quite frankly as Antichrist? The Gospel Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." To-day, on Dr. Horton's own showing, it is Antichrist who is victorious. He snatches Christ's sheep out of his

hand, and out of his Father's hand, by the thousand. From the Wesleyan fold, during the last six years, he has managed to steal 15,575 precious sheep; and the Baptist fold has been considerably depleted of late. In spite of every conceivable precaution and watchfulness, the Christian folds are emptying in all parts of the Christian world, and bitter is the lamentation indulged in by all the under-shepherds. The only one who does not seem to deplore the depletion is the invisible Head Shepherd, who neither says nor does anything in the matter. This is Antichrist's day. Yes, at last, "the Antichrists swarm," as Dr. Horton says; and they do their work both inside and outside the Church. Wherein does their work consist? Simply in destroying, root and branch, every form of superstition, in clearing the land of every shred of supernatural belief and covering it with the light of scientific knowledge, and in rationalising morality. Wherever they are, outside or inside the Church, their one ambition is to set forth Reason as the supreme guide of human life. In relation to Christianity they are unbelievers; in relation to society, Secularists; in relation to science, loyal adherents; in relation to morality, progressive thinkers.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Modern Materialism.—VI.

(Continued from p. 252.)

"When a personal Deity has gradually dislimned, evaporated into formless mist, and finally melted away into impersonal absolute, naturally the difficulty for mankind will be how to love *It* which is no longer *Him*, and to pray to *It* as to *Him*.....is it a natural procedure, or an actually achievable feat, to fall down in adoring love and reverence of the absolute, and to invoke its support in suffering, its counsel in time of need? Is it any less futile than it would be to urge the body to feed itself on the name or the aroma of savory food?"—H. MAUDSLAY, M.D., *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, 1887, p. 145.

"A helper of men outside of humanity, the truth will not allow us to see. The dim and shadowy outlines of the super-human deity fade slowly away from before us; and as the mist of his presence floats aside, we perceive with greater and greater clearness the shape of a yet grander and nobler figure—of *Him* who made all Gods and shall unmake them. From the dim dawn of history, and from the inmost depth of every soul, the face of our father *Man* looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes; and says, 'Before Jehovah was, I am!'"—PROFESSOR W. K. CLIFFORD, *Lectures and Essays*, 1886, p. 386.

AGAIN and again, in the history of philosophy, we find philosophers coming face to face with these ultimate problems, only to turn aside, instead of carrying their philosophy to its logical conclusion in Atheism.

As Spencer somewhere remarks, men have tried all the wrong roads before they have found the right, and his own adoption of Agnosticism is an illustration in point.

Immanuel Kant, the Königsberg philosopher—the predecessor of Comte and Spencer, who are, in a philosophic sense, his lineal descendants—is another instance of this perversity. Like Comte, he had an exasperating style of writing, he wears by frequent repetition; some of his sentences are overloaded with such a multitude of qualifying and explanatory clauses that the reader is lost in a maze. Sometimes he himself loses sight of the subject with which he set out, and concludes by dealing with something else mentioned in the course of his argument. Kant himself declared that only one of his followers, Schulz, the court preacher, understood him; in this being a little more fortunate than Hegel, who, lying on his deathbed, lamented, "Only one man has understood me," shortly afterwards adding fretfully, "And even he did not understand me."† Heine, who studied under Hegel in Berlin University, declared that he did not wish to be understood.‡

\* Hagenbach, *German Rationalism*, 1865, p. 229.

† Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, 1891, p. 123.

‡ Sharp, *Life of Heine*, 1888, p. 51.



Kant lived eighty years in Königsberg, and is said only to have left the town once in his life. The Cathedral clock, says Heine, was not more methodical in its working than its famous philosopher. The townspeople knew it was exactly half-past three when Immanuel Kant stepped from his house to walk eight times up and down the little linden avenue, called after him to this day, the "Philosopher's Walk," and—if there were signs of rain—his servant, "Old Lampe, trudging anxiously behind him with a big umbrella under his arm, like an image of Providence."

In his earlier works, Kant writes with clearness, mingled with wit and humor; "Why then," asks Heine, "did he write the *Critique of Pure Reason* in such a colorless, dry, packing-paper style?" and answers that he wished to repel—

"all familiarity on the part of intellects of the lower orders. He wished haughtily to separate himself from the popular philosophers of his time, who aimed at the most citizen-like clearness, and so clothed his thoughts in a frigid, official dialect. Herein he shows himself a true philistine."\*

Judged by his *Critique of Pure Reason*,† published in 1781, Kant might be described as an Agnostic before Agnosticism. His defiance of the theologians, when he observes, "Without looking upon myself as a remarkably combative person, I shall not decline the challenge to detect the fallacy and destroy the pretensions of every attempt of speculative theology," might serve as a motto for a text-book of Agnosticism. In his four Antimonies (Antimony, a contradiction in thought or language), Kant develops the argument for and against the world having a beginning; whether every composite substance consists of simple parts; the doctrines of Freedom and Necessity; the existence of an absolutely necessary being. He develops a series of mutually destructive arguments upon these theses, and in the end leaves them in ruins, coming to the conclusion that Reason "finds herself hemmed in by a press of opposite and contradictory conclusions, from which neither her honor nor her safety will permit her to draw back."‡

According to Kant, "There are only three modes of proving the existence of a Deity on the grounds of speculative reason." They are the *physico-theological*, *cosmological*, and the *ontological* arguments. "More there are not, and more there cannot be," adds Kant emphatically. After devoting a section to the examination of each of these arguments, he comes to the conclusion that the *physico-theological* and *cosmological* arguments depend upon the *ontological* argument (p. 387). But he has already told us that—

"The celebrated ontological or Cartesian argument for the existence of a Supreme Being is, therefore, insufficient, and we may as well hope to increase our stock of knowledge by the aid of mere ideas, as the merchant to augment his wealth by the addition of noughts to his cash account" (p. 376).

Having thus destroyed all the arguments in proof of a God, Kant wrote another work on "Practical Reason," in which he again establishes his existence! "Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*," says Heine; "this is the sword that slew deism in Germany, although," he adds, "it may be several centuries before it gets universally known." He proceeds:—

"Up to this point Immanuel Kant has pursued the path of inexorable philosophy; he has stormed heaven and put the whole garrison to the sword; the ontological, cosmological, and physico-theological bodyguards lie there lifeless; Deity itself, deprived of demonstration, has succumbed; there is now no All-mercifulness,

no fatherly kindness, no other-world reward for renunciation in this world, the immortality of the soul lies in its last agony—you can hear its groans and death-rattle; and old Lampe is standing by with his umbrella under his arm, an afflicted spectator of the scene, tears and sweat-drops of terror dropping from his countenance. Then Immanuel Kant relents and shows that he is not merely a great philosopher, but also a good man; he reflects, and half good-naturedly, half ironically, he says: 'Old Lampe must have a God, otherwise the poor fellow can never be happy. Now, man ought to be happy in this world; practical wisdom says so;—well, I am quite willing that practical reason should also guarantee the existence of God.' As a result of this argument, Kant distinguishes between the *theoretical reason* and the *practical reason*, and by means of the latter, as with a magician's wand, he revivifies deism, which theoretical reason had killed."\*

"But," asks Heine, "is it not conceivable that Kant brought about this resurrection, not merely for the sake of Old Lampe, but through fear of the police?"

And what was Heine's own attitude to Atheism? That he had no religious belief himself is certain. Even on his deathbed he jested with the subject. To a friend, who, with the officious zeal of the pious, asked if the dying man had made his peace with God, Heine replied, "Do not trouble yourself, God will pardon me; it is his business."† These were his last words, and it is incredible that a real believer could jest about God with his last breath.

But Heine was no more anxious to declare himself an Atheist than any of the other philosophers of his time. But, unlike them, he is perfectly candid about the matter. In his *Confessions*, after saying that his revelations, in his book on Germany, excited the greatest surprise amongst French thinkers, who had "always believed German philosophy to be a peculiar mystic fog, behind which divinity lay hidden as in a cloud, and that German philosophers were ecstatic seers, filled with piety and the fear of God," whereas, in fact, "our latest philosophers have proclaimed absolute atheism to be the last word of German philosophy." He goes on to give his reasons for repudiating Atheism. He says:—

"So long as such doctrines remained the secret possession of an intellectual aristocracy, and were discussed in a select coterie-dialect which was incomprehensible to the lackeys in attendance, while we at our philosophical *petit-soupers* were blaspheming, so long did I continue to be one of the thoughtless free-thinkers."

But when he saw that the "rabble began to discuss the same themes," when cobblers and tailors presumed to deny the existence of God;—

"when atheism began to stink of cheese, brandy, and tobacco—then my eyes were suddenly opened, and that which I had not comprehended through reason, I now learned through my olfactory organs and through my loathing and disgust. Heaven be praised! my atheism was at an end."‡

Heine said that he would gladly sacrifice himself for the people, "but the poet's refined and sensitive nature revolts at every near personal contact with the people, and still more repugnant is the mere thought of its caresses, from which Heaven defend us!" And yet, he adds, "To be candid, it was, perhaps, not alone disgust that made the principles of the godless obnoxious to me, and induced me to abandon their ranks." It was—

"the secret dread of the artist and scholar, who sees our whole modern civilisation, the laboriously achieved product of so many centuries of effort, and the fruit of the noblest works of our ancestors, jeopardised by the triumph of communism."

So it was fear of the democracy that repelled Heine, and that fear is still operative. These class antagonisms are instilled into the minds of the young of the upper classes during their training at the public schools and colleges. They receive a bias against working men; they are taught to look

\* Sharp, *Life of Heine*, p. 110.

† Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1876 (Bohn's edition). This edition is a translation of the second edition, which Schopenhauer asserted to be less bold and vigorous than the first; Kant having omitted—"in the weakness of old age"—certain passages attacking the "sacred doctrines of the old dogmatic philosophy," the translator of Bohn's edition (see preface) does not agree with Schopenhauer; however, he might have given the omitted passages in an appendix, then the reader could judge for himself.

‡ *Critique of Pure Reason*, 291.

\* Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, p. 119.

† Sharp, *Life of Heine*, 1888, 197.

‡ *Prose Writings of Heinrich Heine*, pp. 300, 301.



down upon them as a different race, incapable of culture, sensibility, or the higher thought; they are the helots of our civilisation, to be held down with an iron hand.

Now, the working man is of the same flesh and blood as his upper-class brother; he has only lacked the opportunity to acquire the same culture—no, not culture, for many of the upper class are uncultured enough—the same polish and manners.

The well-to-do sees the miner coming black from the mine, and the fitter greasy from the factory; they see the masses in their leisure on a Bank Holiday, and they do not know which is the more repulsive. They only know two phases of their life, and that only imperfectly; for the well-paid mechanic has as great a disgust for the rowdy element on a Bank Holiday, and is, as often as not, as fashionably dressed as his scornful critic, who does not know the working man in the workshop and the home, of the mutual respect and helpfulness, the self-sacrifice and devotion, and, on the average, far higher purity of life than that prevailing among the so-called upper classes. Moreover, if these superfine critics were to hold an inquiry into the ideas governing the rowdy element in a Bank Holiday crowd, they would find, not Atheism, but a Jingo Imperialism, founded upon the belief that the British nation is specially favored by God Almighty, who will enable them, with the help of the *Daily Mail*, to smash any possible combination of Dreadnoughts that the alien riff-raff bring together; the same crowd who—when numerous enough—stone Freethought lecturers, and whose sensitive religious feelings have to be protected from outrage by sending the lecturer to prison.

(To be continued.)

W. MANN.

### The Blasphemy Laws.

UNDER the title of *Penalties Upon Opinion*, an excellent booklet of over a hundred pages has been written by Mrs. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner on the origin, character, and operation of the Blasphemy Laws in England. Of course a larger work, with fuller details, would be of still greater value; but it is difficult to see how the task could be better done within the limits to which Mrs. Bonner was practically restricted. This is not a mere compliment to a lady; we speak seriously, with something of the authority of an expert on this particular subject.

Mrs. Bonner points out that blasphemy was originally the denial of any doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church in this country. Subsequently, when Catholicism was thrown out of power, blasphemy became a denial of any doctrine of Protestantism. It was further amended in the reign of George III. so as to bring Unitarians within the lines of safety. Long before, the Statute of William III. had been drafted so as to exempt Jews from prosecution without specifically mentioning them; which is the reason, probably, that no "blasphemer" has ever been indicted under the Statute,—all prosecutions from first to last having been under the Common Law. But although the Statute has never once been applied, it has often been appealed to in order to illustrate and interpret the Common Law of Blasphemy. This, however, is not likely to occur again, after the famous judgment of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in 1883, which has recently been accepted as authoritative by Mr. Justice Phillimore, Mr. Justice Darling, and Mr. Justice Horridge.

Very valuable and interesting is Mrs. Bonner's historical sketch of the Blasphemy Laws, and the sufferers under them, up to the advent of popular Freethought following upon the publication of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Hume and Gibbon were quite as hopeless heretics as Paine, and probably more so, for it is doubtful whether either of them was so much as a Theist, while Paine believed both in God and a future life. But the great philosopher and the great

historian did not write for the multitude and the great agitator did. It was this, indeed, which made him so dangerous to the clergy and the classes, and caused them to hate him with such deep intensity.

Mrs. Bonner, in a long list of blasphemy prosecutions, mentions the case of James Naylor under the Commonwealth. She describes him as "a religious madman,"—and she is right; but in a more detailed treatment of the subject she would have to qualify the description. James Naylor was a remarkable man. He was a fanatic (a crank if you will) with a decided vein of genius in his composition. It is interesting too—if we may pause to say so—that James Naylor's case gravely occupied the mind of Cromwell. That great statesman saw that the House of Commons, in James Naylor's case, usurped the functions of the judiciary, and that if this were allowed no man's liberty or life was safe. He also hated persecution, being hundreds of years in advance of his age on that matter; and when he sent that House of Commons packing he stood as the representative of a higher civilisation than they did. That his hand was on his sword at the same time was a necessity of the situation.

When a second edition of Mrs. Bonner's booklet is called for, as we trust it will be, we hope she will give two additional touches of color to her narrative. It was the case of Daniel Isaac Eton which called forth young Shelley's powerful Letter to Lord Ellenborough. The case of Carlile also called forth young John Stuart Mill's fine article in the *Westminster Review*. We reprinted both those pieces in pamphlet form during our own prosecution in 1882-1883.

Mrs. Bonner celebrates with true eloquence the heroism of Richard Carlile, his wife, his sister, and some 150 other Freethinkers in all, who came up to London from all parts of England to continue the sale of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Carlile himself was an unsubduable hero; he had no feeling of fear,—it was not mixed up with his composition; he suffered nine years and seven months imprisonment altogether for the freedom of the press. One has to stand reverential and almost awestruck before such magnificent courage. Not even the names of many of the volunteers who followed him to prison have been preserved; they were indifferent even to "the last infirmity of noble minds"; to stand in the breach for their principles was to them less a duty than a delight. Most "honorable" and most "affecting," as Mrs. Bonner says, was the martyrdom of those "obscure men and women." And they won the battle. They wore out the malice of the persecutors. They defended the publication of Paine's *Age of Reason*, especially, until it was practically beyond the reach of further attack.

With regard to the case of George Jacob Holyoake, it is pointed out by Mrs. Bonner that the title of his book *The Last Trial for Atheism* is misleading. He was not indicted for Atheism, but for "blasphemy," and tried and sentenced under the Common Law, like every other "blasphemer" of that period; for Holyoake was really but one in a long list of persons prosecuted under the Blasphemy Laws, but as he lived on to the great age of eighty-seven he was known while the rest were forgotten.

An important part of Mrs. Bonner's task is showing how the judges before Lord Coleridge held that the mere denial of Christianity was blasphemy, whatever the language in which it was expressed. Lord Coleridge, however, after saying that times had changed, laid it down in our own case in 1883 that "if the decencies of controversy are observed, even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked without the writer being guilty of blasphemy." Not the matter but the manner of the attack constitutes the offence. This marks an epoch in the progress of toleration, but at the same time it exposes Freethinkers to a new, incalculable danger. Any words may be blasphemous if they displeas Christians. "Gentlemen of the jury, do you like this?"—for that is all that approval means—being answered in the negative is sufficient to send a Freethinker to prison.



Those whose religion is attacked are hardly the most impartial judges of the manner in which the attack is conducted. To place a Freethinker in the dock is almost certain to secure his conviction.

Nevertheless, we saw that Lord Coleridge's judgment had relieved us on the financial side. We devised and registered the Secular Society, Ltd., on that basis in 1898. It was said that we could not succeed in dodging the law. We replied that we were not trying to dodge the law; we were building within the law a Society that could receive bequests, hold money, and expend it for the promotion of Freethought. Lord Coleridge's judgment made that possible, and other Societies have since been established on the same basis, which is as secure as the Rock of Gibraltar.

We agree with Mrs. Bonner that the only satisfactory conclusion will be the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. Her argument is perfectly sound, and her final pages are powerful and convincing. Her booklet should have a wide circulation. Freethinkers at least should keep it constantly by them for ready reference, and do their utmost to get it into the hands of their more liberal-minded Christian friends and acquaintances. Mrs. Bonner's booklet is just what was wanted. It ought to be sold by the thousand.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Acid Drops.

Frederick Henry Seddon, the convicted murderer of Miss Eliza Barrow, was hanged at Pentonville Prison on Thursday morning, April 18. The usual morbid crowd gathered outside the gates, including women with babies in their arms. We suppose it afforded them some satisfaction to be near the spot where Seddon's neck was being broken by the hangman,—a process which occupied only thirty-five seconds from the condemned cell to the strangling pit. As to Seddon's guilt, it is idle to say, as he kept saying, that he had not a fair trial. Certainly the evidence was such that this man or that man might have hesitated to find a verdict of Guilty in face of the fact that capital punishment would follow it; but the fact remains that the men in the jury box, who saw as well as heard the witnesses, including Seddon himself, were unanimously against him, and nothing was gained, but rather the contrary, by his going before the Court of Appeal. Whether he was guilty of the murder or not, he was detestably callous and mean. His own counsel argued that as a point in his favor as to the capital charge. His moral outfit was of the poorest character. We are glad to note, therefore, that he was a truly religious man, as scoundrels usually are. We think it well to put on record in our columns the man's own confession of faith (of the crime he made *no* confession). In a last letter to his sister at Liverpool he wrote:—

"No mercy in human law has been extended to me. I am a victim of a gross miscarriage of justice. My execution will be a judicial murder, for I did not murder Miss Barrow. In the name of Christ, my Savior, I freely forgive all who have unjustly accused and condemned me, and also everyone who has done me any wrong. I shall soon know the great secret. My anguish is for those I leave behind with broken hearts to mourn my fate."

This rather suggests Seddon's guilt. It is quite the usual practice of pious murderers to forgive other people—instead of asking forgiveness.

Englishmen are being spoiled by their newspapers. The sentimental, hysterical stuff that the cheap press printed over the *Titanic* disaster was enough to make a cat sick. And the worst of all sinners in this respect were the minor poets. Raucous verse was published in celebration of the tremendous virtue of the men who went down with the shattered liner. They were described as dying heroically, just because they died decently. They were heroes merely because they didn't crowd into the boats and leave the women and children to go down with the ship! Heroes, that is to say, simply because they were not dastardly cowards. Why, if parents try to save the lives of their own children nowadays, say in a fire, a halfpenny paper that wants copy is ready to praise the act to the very skies. Englishmen used to take a certain level of energy and virtue for granted; if a man acted up to it he was a decent fellow, if he sank below it he was a cad or a scoundrel. But the newspapers have changed all that. Common honor is now

astonishing heroism. And it is just the same with regard to people's feelings under calamity. It was not formerly thought wonderful if wives and mothers, for instance, grieved at the loss of husbands and children. Readers were expected to realise such things. But now the reporter comes along and chronicles the sobs and tears, and the reader has to hear the one and almost drink the other.

Perhaps the most fatuous comment on the *Titanic* disaster was that of the *Methodist Times*. After remarking that people are chary nowadays of "associating the direct intervention of Providence with such vast and awe-inspiring disasters," it said: "We shall not go altogether astray if we gather from this terrible event a solemn warning against that human self-sufficiency and apotheosis of the engineer and his works which mark the Materialistic thought of the modern world." This, we presume, is what is called improving the occasion. If the world had been "spiritually" minded—in the Methodist sense—the disaster would never have happened, for Providence would think twice before drowning a boatload of Methodists. But what has the poor engineer done? His work was done well enough. And we would remind the *Methodist Times* that it is the two nations that are most ostentatious in their Christianity that sets the pace for the "hustle" of the modern world.

Week by week one reads of funds being raised and new buildings opened by the Wesleyan Methodists, with glowing reports of successful missions, and of the renaissance of evangelical Christianity. So far one would imagine everything was in a flourishing condition. But there is another side to the picture. For the sixth year in succession there is a reported decrease of members—on this occasion 2,646. There is a decline of membership in every department. Not only is there a decline in members; there is also a falling off in the number of candidates for the ministry. Last year the number of candidates passed for the ministry was 142; this year the number is 119. This, we believe, is not usual; but its unusual character makes the circumstance the more significant. Of course, the decrease mentioned is an absolute decrease. If the growth of population is taken into account the loss is much greater.

The £100,000 appealed for on behalf the new Young Men's Christian Association headquarters in London was not fully realised, but as some £75,000 was raised the success was sufficient to encourage similar efforts in other parts of the world. We see that the idea has even extended to Pretoria. £10,000 was asked for by a certain date for the Young Women's Christian Association, about £6,500 was collected, and then the fund stopped dead. Nevertheless, the £6,500, with as much more as can be picked up later on, will provide a fairly snug building for the young women thus unblushingly cadged for. A letter signed Margaret Bolla in the *Transvaal Chronicle* asks "what sort of Christianity it is which will spend £10,000 on a club for young women—many sufficiently well paid to look after themselves—whilst hundreds of despairing, hopeless wretches are forced to live on practically nothing." "Let building schemes slide," the lady says, "and combine and agitate for a living wage for our loss fortunate sisters."

Rev. A. T. S. James, the new President of the Congregational Union of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, called his presidential address "Plain Thoughts on our Present Position." In the course of it he said that change was everywhere to-day, and that "of course the Christian faith had come into court and was asked to make good its claims." The worst of it was that the democracy was "bent on taking the social riddle into its own hands." "The danger was," he added, "that democracy might embrace abstract philosophic ideas and speculations, and putting religion and faith completely aside might take up with the idea that society is easily capable of being morally regenerated by mere modification of legislative rules." Christianity isn't much of a success, as Mr. James half admits, but the proper remedy for the failure of Christ is *more* Christ. The reverend gentleman is confident of that. Of course. He would be. No one could expect him to cry stinking fish.

Dr. Len G. Broughton, the American preacher, who is taking charge of Christ Church, Westminster, gave his new congregation an outline of what he intends doing. Among other things he contemplates the establishment of a "distinctly Christian hospital and training school for Christian professional nurses." Now a distinctly Christian hospital would be a rare feature in this country, and we should be very interested in observing such an experiment if it were tried. For it would be an institution in which medicine and



surgery would be prohibited, and in which every parson would be a qualified practitioner. The prayer of faith would save the sick, and the cures would all go to the credit of the Gospel. But we gather this is not the kind of institution Dr. Broughton contemplates. He means by a Christian hospital one in which all the officials are Christians, and where the patients, in addition to medicine, are dosed with religion. Theology and medicine and nursing mixed up together, and theology is to take the credit for all the good that results. So far, we admit, it will be a Christian institution. That is, there will be a fair amount of pious humbug connected therewith.

Mr. E. A. Baughan, the dramatic critic of the *Daily News*, justifies the Censor's refusal to license Mr. Israel Zangwill's new play, *The Next Religion*. He declares that the play is "an attack on Christianity couched in terms of needless offensiveness." That it is an attack on Christianity is proved by this, that "Not a single Christian in the play but is either a fanatic or a fool." What of that, Mr. Baughan? And why was not the same objection applied, though in an opposite direction, to Mr. Wilson Barrett's *Sign of the Cross*? All the Christians in that play were the salt of the earth, all the Pagans were of the very worst character,—with one exception, but that one was destined to become a Christian. The Censorship is like the Blasphemy Laws—it only strikes at heterodoxy; at the same time it allows orthodoxy to be as silly and objectionable as it pleases.

That "model institution" the Post Office would be anything but "model" if people only published their complaints against it. We could fill the *Freethinker* with such complaints. Some of them are really funny. We received a letter a few months ago addressed to us at "2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C." The address was written quite plainly. Yet the envelope had a number of marks upon it, each showing a fruitless effort by the Post Office to deliver the letter elsewhere. Some official had at last written upon it "Try E.C." So they "tried" E.C.—the original address—and delivered the letter at its proper destination. But for that "Try E.C." it might have been on the road still. We fancy that "Try E.C." must be well to the front in the race for the biscuit.

Living nearly forty miles from London, we have to make a good deal of use both of the Post Office and the Railway. We often send up copy by train to our printing office; it takes longer for letters between Southend and London to go to and fro, and get delivered, than it does for letters to go to and fro, and get delivered, between Manchester and London,—although Southend now boasts of more than 60,000 inhabitants, and the train service is nearly all that could be wished. Well, on Thursday, April 4, we sent a packet up by train to Fenchurch-street Station, and we telegraphed to our shop manager to have the packet fetched away promptly. The railway did its part of the business all right. And now for the part played by the "model institution."

On Good Friday morning our son came down from London to spend the week-end at home. On the way he heard of our telegram. He had met a friend of his, who told him that his (the friend's) grandfather, living at 2 Newcastle-street, Aldgate, London, E., had had a telegram delivered there, sent by a person called Foote to a person called Sall, and that the address was plainly enough "E.C." on the telegram itself. The news thus accidentally and so curiously picked up by young Mr. Foote saved the situation for his father. It cost us several letters, owing to the possible upset of the Post Office at holiday time, but we managed to secure what we most wanted. The packet was fetched away from Fenchurch-street Station. It contained copy for the *Freethinker*, and it also contained the wages cheques for the shop and the composing room. They ought to have had their wages on the Thursday. And had it not been for the news of our telegram which reached us so miraculously, as the newspapers say, they would not have had their wages on Saturday. That would have filled us with regret and anger, and there would have been less jocularity in these paragraphs.

We wrote at once to the Postmaster-General in London stating what had occurred, and informing him that the telegram was still waiting, we believed, at 2 Newcastle-street, E. We remarked that the whole thing was childish. The telegraph messenger had not even taken the usual precaution of asking if it was "all right." That was on Good Friday. Not a word reached us from the Postmaster-General's office until the following Wednesday evening, when we received a printed form, scolding us for not having

applied to the Southend Post Office, as we ought to know was the proper method, so lucidly explained in the "Post Office Guide." Our letter was referred to as our "application,"—which was mere insolence. We made no application. We simply informed the Postmaster-General of facts which he ought to know connected with his department of the public service.

The Postmaster-General also stated that he had referred our letter to the Postmaster at Southend. Nearly a fortnight has elapsed and we have not yet heard from that gentleman. We don't want to hear from him. The childish blunder was not made at his end; it was made at the Postmaster-General's end. We do not even wish to hear from that gentleman again. He may have time to waste. We have not.

And now for the telegram. What became of it? It was put into our letter-box at 2 Newcastle-street, apparently very early on Tuesday morning. Not a word of apology for the delay, not even a word of explanation. The childish performance was crowned with an ill-conditioned end. That is the Post Office all over. You cannot imagine a private firm acting in such a fashion. It makes no difference to the Post Office whether it pleases its customers or not. They cannot help *being* its customers. If you don't like its method of business you can lump it. If that doesn't satisfy you, you can "go and be damned." It doesn't say so in words, but it uses "words to that effect," as the lawyers say. And that "go and be damned" attitude is common behind the counters of most of the Post Offices in England. Especially with the ladies—especially with the ladies. Bless them! But they *are* trying. Though you enjoy the joke if you happen to have a sense of humor.

Rev. A. J. Waldron's industrious fogleman (is it himself?) never misses an opportunity of sounding his praises. Two new Waldron anecdotes appeared in the *Modern Man* of April 13, and if these are what the modern man likes to read we decidedly prefer the old one. The first story relates how he gave an Atheist a punch in the eye in Hyde Park. We have heard these yarns of his pugilistic powers before, but he himself appears to be the only person who ever witnessed one of these performances. We believe the only instance of physical courage on Mr. Waldron's part was when he assaulted a weak aged man who was selling the *Freethinker* in the street. That is authentic. It was in the police news. The second anecdote is as follows:—

"On another occasion, Mr. Waldron was in the East End addressing a bitterly hostile meeting of unbelievers. One man in the front row, a singularly ugly Polish Jew, made himself particularly obnoxious by constant interruption. At last Mr. Waldron could stand it no longer, and pointing an accusing finger at the offender he exclaimed:—  
"You there, do you know what I'd do if I had a face like yours?" (Uproar.)  
"I'd (when there was a lull) have it photographed and sell the prints for rat poison."  
"Mr. Waldron got safely away, but it was by the back entrance."

It is difficult to imagine anything more disgustingly vulgar. Christianity must be played down to the very dregs when it rejoices in such stories and regards them as rounding to a Christian clergyman's honor. Mr. Waldron himself takes a pride in them; at any rate, he never contradicts them, and from all we know of him we should say that they are in harmony with his nature, though whether they are actually (as well as psychologically) true is another matter.

The Leeds police are on the pious warpath again. We heard on Saturday (April 20) that Mr. Jackson, a local lecturer and a friend of Mr. Gott's, had been summoned to appear at the Police Court on Monday. In the afternoon we received a telegram from Mr. John Grange informing us that Mr. Marshall, the assistant stipendiary magistrate, had sentenced Mr. Jackson to fourteen days' imprisonment for "profane language" under an Act of 1847. Mr. Jackson refused to be bound over. Mr. Grange says that he "made an able defence." We have not heard yet what the alleged "profane language" was, but we have a good idea of the object of the Leeds police.

Just as we are going to press we receive a report of this case extracted from Monday's *Yorkshire Evening News*. Mr. Jackson's language respecting religion was simply a match for the language of Christian Evidence lecturers respecting Secularism. He is prosecuted and imprisoned because he is a Freethinker. Any other explanation is sheer humbug. We shall return to the subject next week. Some aspects of the case are really curious.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, April 29, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.: at 7.30, "Thomas Hardy on God's Funeral."

May 5 & 12, South-place Institute.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—April 28, Wood Green; 30, and May 1, Belfast; 5, Victoria Park; 12, m., Finsbury Park, a., Parliament Hill.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £126 3s. 2d. Received since:—A Pretoria Freethinker, 5s.; M. J. Charter, 7s. 6d.

THE N. S. S. general secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, acknowledges: M. J. Charter (Benevolent Fund), 5s.; and a parcel of useful clothing from Mrs. Horace Parsons.

We repeat that the usual press rule as to anonymous letters is observed at our office. We cannot reply to them.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

E. G. HAIGH.—It will be useful.

B. E.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

JULIAN.—We have enough matter on the subject already. Thanks, all the same.

A. DAVIS (Perak).—Glad you find this journal "such an intellectual treat"—and thanks for good wishes. Our shop manager (Mr. H. Sall) is writing you on the other matter.

H. J. HYETT.—We are keeping back numbers of the *Freethinker* now and are willing to send parcels of copies stamped "Specimen" to any of the "saints" who can distribute them. Recipients to pay carriage.

H. WOOD.—Pleased to hear from one who has read the *Freethinker* ever since its first number and still enjoys it. Miss Vance, N. S. S. secretary, is sending you what you ask for.

M. J. CHARTER.—Benevolent Fund subscription passed over to Miss Vance. Shall be glad to see you at the N. S. S. Conference. We agree with you that N. S. S. members might well make the Conference the occasion of their annual holiday, and thus get to know each other personally.

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 lectures at Queen's Hall again this evening (April 28), his subject being "Thomas Hardy on God's Funeral." This is the last Queen's Hall lecture for the present season. Mr. Foote lectures on the first two Sundays in May at South-place Chapel. His subject on May 5 will be "Lessons of the Shakespeare Festival," and on May 12 "Israel Zangwill's 'New Religion.'"

Mr. Foote had a large and sympathetic audience at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening. His lecture on "Christianity and the Coal Strike" was shortened to allow of his dealing with the *Titanic* disaster, and paying a tribute to the memory of the late Mr. W. T. Stead. Mr. Victor Roger acted as chairman. There was one Christian opponent and several questioners.

Mr. Cohen lectures at the Ulster (Minor) Hall, Belfast, on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings next (April 30 and May 1). We hope the readers of the *Freethinker* in that district will do their best to give publicity to Mr. Cohen's visit and to secure him good audiences.

Mr. Foote will have something to say about the "G. B. S." matter so neatly raised by Mr. Cohen this week. Fortunately the file of the *Freethinker* exists—and is beyond appeal. Mr. Foote will also deal with Mr. Shaw's "sermon."

A delegate meeting was held at South Place Chapel on Tuesday evening, April 16, and steps were decided on for the formation of a National Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. The National Secular Society was represented by Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. J. T. Lloyd. We have not a list of all the other delegates. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner occupied the chair. We hope to be able to publish a gratifying report of the Committee's work before long.

Mr. F. A. Davies has secured a good post in the service of the Printers' Trade Union, of which he has long been an active member. We congratulate him on the appointment. We regret, of course, that it cancels his lecturing engagement with the Secular Society, Ltd., which was lately announced in our columns. That engagement was subject to the possibility of what has occurred.

Tuesday evening, April 30, is the date of the next "social" at Anderton's Hotel under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive. There is no charge for admission. Members of the N. S. S. are free to introduce a friend on the same terms. Non-members who are not able to get introduced in that way can apply for an admission card to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. The program will include either "a few words" or a reading from the President. This function begins at 7.45 instead of 8 as heretofore.

The last number of Mr. W. W. Collins's *Examiner* to hand from Christchurch, New Zealand, opens with an article of our own reproduced, with due acknowledgment, from the *Freethinker*. We are glad to note that the *Examiner* has "completed the fifth year of its existence" and that "with each number issued its circulation has steadily increased." The word "circulation," however, is always relative, and in the case of Freethought journals it never means anything very profitable. We are not surprised to hear that Mr. Collins is not yet free from all "financial anxiety." It is to be hoped he will be before very long. The burden of fighting is heavier when you have any doubt about your sword.

Efforts have been made during the past month to arrange for the National Secular Society's Conference to be held on Whit-Sunday at Leeds. There are many reasons for choosing that spot, some of which are sufficiently obvious. It has been, for one thing, the scene of a miserable revival of the Blasphemy Laws. But the obstacles in a town so much under police rule, backed by religious bigotry, are really formidable. It has been impossible up to the time of our going to press (Tuesday evening) to secure a hall in Leeds definitely. The N. S. S. may win yet. A more positive announcement will be made next week as to whether the Conference will be held at Leeds or elsewhere. Meanwhile the Branches and individual members are earnestly invited to get ready for the Conference wherever it has to be summoned. "The battle is not ended." There is plenty of fighting yet before us. Let us prepare ourselves for the fray.

The second (concluding) part of our article on "Frederic Harrison on Atheism" unavoidably stands over till next week.

### WHY ADA NEVER MARRIED.

Her mother's explanation: She's always hard to suit.

Her father's explanation: She could not find a man her intellectual equal.

Aunt Fanny's explanation: Young men are not what they were in my day.

Brother Jim's explanation: She was never much of a looker, anyhow.

Her best friend's explanation: She never was asked, that's the reason.

Ada's own explanation: I could not bring myself to give up my church and settlement work.

### FAITH STILL COOL.

A girl went to India, and at the first New Year away from home she wrote to her devout mother: "It is now very hot, and I perspire a great deal, but you will be pleased to hear I am still a member of the Church of England."



## Old Testament History.—VII.

(Continued from p. 246.)

THE most uncertain periods in the history of the Israelites are those relating to the judges and the first three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon—which periods, as already remarked, must be reduced by about one-half. In the book of Judges the number of years (and the events) pertaining to the mythical Barak, Gideon, and Samson (viz., 167 years) may be struck out, and several other periods—e.g., 80 years in Judg. iii. 30, etc.—can be curtailed. The duration of the government by Samuel and king Saul is not stated; but Josephus says that Samuel was judge for 12 years after the death of Eli, and 18 years during the reign of Saul—the latter having been king for 20 years. Christian writers give the last-named king a reign of 40 years on the authority of a statement in a fictitious speech in the Acts (xiii. 21). We may take the figures of Josephus as more likely to be correct.

Next, it is stated in the Hebrew books that David and Solomon each reigned 40 years, which periods may be reduced a decade. But, in the case of these three kings, a considerable element of doubt exists. With regard to the first, the people asked Samuel to give them a king, and when that prophet found they would take no denial, he granted their request, and anointed Saul. Now the name "Saul" signifies "the one asked for." It really looks as if one part of the story was concocted to fit the other.

With respect to the second king, Professor Sayce calls attention to the fact that the Moabite Stone shows that the Jewish god was worshiped under the name "Dodo" or "Dod," as well as that of Yahveh. The name "David" in unpointed Hebrew is "Dod," and Dod or Dodo was a god, the consort of the Phœnician goddess Dido. The appellation Dod (or David) means "the beloved one," and, as Professor Sayce says, "was a divine title applied to the youthful Sun-god, who was worshiped under the manifold names of Tammuz, Adonai, and the like." The Professor is of opinion that "the familiar title of the deity was given by his followers and people to the beloved founder of the Hebrew empire."

As regards the third king, "Solomon" is the Hebrew equivalent for "Sallim-manu," the Assyrian god of peace, and the name Solomon signifies "the peaceful one." The Rev. A. H. Sayce further suggests that the names of the last three kings of Edom (Gen. xxxvi. 37—39; 1 Chron. 1 48—50) were probably those of the first three kings of Israel. The passage reads:—

"And Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth by the River reigned in his stead. And Shaul died, and Baalhanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. And Baalhanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadad reigned in his stead."

The name "Saul" in Hebrew is "Shaul," as in the foregoing extract. According to this theory, David's real name was Baalhanan, and that of Solomon was Hadad. King Solomon certainly had another name; but this is said to be "Jedid-iah" (2 Sam. xii., 24, 25), that is to say, "Y'did-Yah"—"the beloved of Yahu." The Rev. Professor Sayce does not, however, work out his theory; so it remains a theory: but, setting aside the proper names of these three kings, it may, I think, be assumed that the majority of the events recorded in their reigns are in all probability historical. The narratives, in this period, which appear to be of a fictitious character are the following:—

1. The Song of thanksgiving put in the mouth of Hannah (1 Sam. ii. 1—10).

2. Predictions of calamities that were to come upon the house of Eli (1 Sam. ii. 27—36; iii. 4—18).

3. The story of the god Dagon being thrown down and broken before Yahveh's ark, and of the Philistines being smitten with a plague wherever that ark was taken (1 Sam. v.). The taking the ark to battle was in accordance with ancient custom. Thothmes III. captured one on the field of Megiddo.

That the Philistines should send it back was evidently due to a superstitious belief that to retain it might bring calamities upon them.

4. That 50,070 men of Beth-shemesh were slain for looking into the ark (1 Sam. vi. 19).

5. The story of Saul and the asses; of Samuel being forewarned of the coming of Saul, etc.; of Samuel anointing Saul king privately, and afterwards selecting him publicly by drawing lots among all the tribes and families of Israel (1 Sam. ix., x.). The way in which Saul became king is recorded in 1 Sam. xi. Returning home from the fields with his cattle, he heard what Nahash king of Ammon was about to do to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and, taking action like the earlier judges, he summoned the tribes to meet him to save the men of that city. After defeating the Ammonites he was made king by "all the people" (1 Sam. xi. 15). The Israelites had never asked Samuel to give them a king.

6. That king Saul was rejected by Yahveh for not slaying the king of the Amalekites and all the sheep and cattle (1 Sam. xv.). This account was probably taken from the "History of Samuel the seer." Samuel did not wish the Israelites to have a king, he himself being king in all but name. He disliked Saul, and has misrepresented that sovereign's actions all through his reign. That chapter xv. is unhistorical can also be seen from verse 48 of the preceding chapter, in which it is stated that Saul "smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them." What Samuel asked him to do had already been done.

7. That David played on a harp before Saul to drive away "the evil spirit from God" which troubled him (1 Sam. xvi.). The author of this story was probably Samuel, with whom David was a favorite.

8. The story of David's conflict with Goliath of Gath (1 Sam. xvii.). Here we must notice two accounts of David's introduction to king Saul, the first of which is the following:—

1 Sam. xvi. 19—22.—By the suggestion of his servants, "Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son.....And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armorbearer.....And when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

Turning to the next chapter we read:—

1 Sam. xvii. 55—58; xviii. 3.—"And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of his host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.....And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house."

Here we have two conflicting accounts of the introduction of David to king Saul, neither of which can be regarded as historical. Furthermore, the slayer of "Goliath of Gath" is named in the following passage:—

2 Sam. xxi. 19.—"And there was war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare, the Bethlehemite slew Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam."

Here it becomes obvious that David has been credited with a deed performed by one of his "mighty men." The mendacious Chronicler, in copying the foregoing passage, has made it read as follows:—

1 Chron. xx. 5.—"and Elhanan the son of Jair slew *Lahmi* the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam."

The words italicised were added in order to lend support to the long story of the combat in 1 Sam. xvii. Moreover the words "the brother of" are inserted in 2 Sam. xxi. 19 in the Authorised Version, those words being taken from the Chronicles; but they are



omitted in the Revised Version because not found in the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel.

9. The lamentation for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. i. 19—27). This is a purely literary composition, and was never uttered, as described, by the freebooter David.

10. Nathan's message from Yahveh to David, and David's address to Yahveh (2 Sam. vii.).

11. Nathan's parable of the Ewe lamb (2 Sam. xii. 1—12). This was probably taken from Nathan's "history"; but that prophet would not dare to narrate it to the king, as described.

12. A psalm of thanksgiving (2 Sam. xxii. 2—xxiii. 7). This is another literary composition which was never spoken by David.

13. The destruction of 70,000 men by "the angel of Yahveh" because David had numbered the tribes (2 Sam. xxiv. 10—25). This action of David is called a "sin," though its nature is not named in Christian commentaries. If we consult the latter we are told that the sin was pride, David desiring to know how many thousands he ruled over, etc. This is mere evasion; there was no sin in simply numbering the people, neither had pride anything to do with it. But, according to Bible "history," the "Lord God" had made a law enacting that whenever a census was taken in Israel, every man of "twenty years old and upward" was required to give an offering to Yahveh as "a ransom for his soul" in order "that there be no plague among them." The offering to Yahveh from each man was to be half a shekel, the money to be handed over to the priests (Exod. xxx. 11—16). David's sin was thus of a most heinous character. He had not exacted from each man that was numbered the Lord's half shekel: hence the plague or pestilence. By this omission David had defrauded the "Lord God" of 1,800,000 half shekels, which sum should have been devoted to "the service of the Tabernacle" described in Exodus. It is true, there was no such Tabernacle in existence in David's time; but that is a mere detail. It is true, also, that David did not know of any such command; for the latter is found only in the Priestly Code which was not concocted until after the return from the Exile in Babylon; but this circumstance also is a mere detail. The compilers of the books of Samuel and Kings assumed that the laws contained in the Pentateuch were known to David: hence the sin, and hence the pestilence. They even make David say: "I have sinned greatly in what I have done." The insertion of this fictitious event is a notable illustration of the way the more ancient narratives were edited by the post-exilic compilers. Could there be any doubt as to the character of the story, we have but to note that David "saw the angel that smote the people," to which the unscrupulous Chronicler adds that the angel was standing "between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem" (1 Chron. xxi. 16).

14. Solomon's prayer to Yahveh (1 Kings viii. 28—53).

15. Yahveh's covenant with Solomon (1 Kings ix. 1—9).

The lengthy literary compositions put into the mouths of Hannah, David, Solomon, and the god Yahveh need no comment. One other paragraph, which appears to be historical, needs to be noticed (i.e., 2 Sam. xxi. 1—14). The barbaric precautionary measure taken by kings of a new dynasty of putting to death all male survivors of the preceding sovereign, applies also to David. That king caused to be hanged the two surviving sons of Saul and five grandsons, under the pretence that a three years' famine, which then afflicted the land, had been sent as a punishment "for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." There was one other grandson of Saul alive; but he was a cripple, and not to be feared. After the murder of these seven men, we are told, "God was intreated for the land." There is no record of any such slaughter by Saul; that king has simply been malignd.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

## Religion and Superstition.

(Reprinted from the "Examiner," Christchurch, New Zealand.)

THE Rationalist, surveying the thought world by which he finds himself environed, is forced to note the prevalence of those modes of thought commonly termed "religious." The predominance of this "religious thought" has given rise to a very wide-spread impression that man is, by the essential nature of his development, a religious and worshipping creature, that religion therefore is natural to man, and that to attempt to destroy it is to fight against nature itself. It will require no very deep insight to perceive that the value of these impressions and contentions depends solely upon the meaning attached to the word "religion."

By those who claim to be its exponents and professors "religion" is usually defined as "a system of worship having divine authority." In this sense religion is assuredly neither universal nor natural, since no system is universal and the numerous systems extant—all claiming divine authority—effectively disprove that claim by their mutually contradictory characters.

Much more broadly "religion" has been defined as "Man's attitude towards the unseen, and whatever consequences that attitude may produce on his conduct in relation to his fellows." In this sense religion becomes much more general; here religion may be said to be natural, but it is just where we find religion to be natural that we also find it to be synonymous with that much less popular term "Superstition."

Religion, then, in its broadest sense, is neither more nor less than superstition, and we have forced upon us the unpalatable fact that man is a superstitious animal. Even here, however, there are grounds for hope. The very process by which superstition originated, suggests the means whereby it will ultimately be destroyed.

"What am I? Whence came I? Whither am I going? The world I live on: how came it?" Here are questions which, from the remotest ages, have agitated the mind of man. Can these questions—involving as they do the widest stretch of knowledge, and the profoundest capacity for generalisation—be answered? Early ideas are almost invariably erroneous, and man's earliest ideas concerning himself, the world, and the universe, were no exceptions to the general rule. Ignorant of the nature of his own intellect, possessed of the most fragmentary and superficial knowledge, man attempted to answer questions, the very import of which could scarcely be appreciated until ages of thought development had done their work. In his ignorance he degraded the universe to the level of a manufactured article, and himself into an artificer's product. Reasoning from his own uncorrected conceptions it was scarcely possible he could arrive at any other than equally incorrect conclusions. His undeveloped mind became filled with vague apprehensions; he was a prey continuously to the idle fears to which his own untutored imagination gave birth.

Slowly, so gradually as to demand vast ages of time, man emerged from conditions of ignorance and brutality into a state of intellectual humanity. The long, long ages of darkness had, however, done their work, the foundations for future forms of religious belief had been dug in the hard rocks of ignorance and credulity, and man himself had forged the chains which were for centuries to hold him bound to most servile superstitions and cruelly degrading despotisms.

Amongst the numerous forms of religious belief, the roots of which are to be found deep down in that superstition, is the *Christian religion*. In its dogmas, its doctrines, its ceremonials, and its ethics, this religion has originated nothing new; it has merely utilised elements existing ages previous to itself. Its pretentious claims are as unreal as its doctrines



of future rewards and punishments are immoral. Like every other form of superstition it thrives but ill among the better informed of these more intellectual days. The superstitions of the past are being dissipated by the sciences of the present. Just as the hardest rock must ultimately succumb to the constant wear and tear of water and atmosphere, so the very foundations of religious belief are worn away by the ever-increasing actions of investigation, experiment, and experience. As surely as night gives place to day, darkness to light, the cold of winter to the warmth of summer, so surely the mature intelligence of mankind must ultimately triumph over the mistakes of its untutored infancy. To-day we can say:—

"The charm dissolves apace;  
And as the morning steals upon the night,  
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses  
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle  
Their clearer reason."

W. W. COLLINS.

## The Law of Progress.—II.

*An Address by Dr. T. J. Bowles, delivered before the Secular Union, Chicago.*

(Concluded from p. 230.)

THESE same laws of transformation, evolution, and development, which constitute the law of progress, peopled all the great continents and all the isles of the sea with savage and speechless men, and in process of time transformed these savage people into barbarians; and these in turn, after the lapse of many ages, have been transformed in a few favored spots of earth into partially civilized men, and among these may be found a constantly increasing number of Rationalists.

This is the highest variety of the human species, and it is destined to replace all lower varieties of men, because the lower varieties are out of harmony with the light of science which now illuminates the world, and every living thing out of harmony with its environment must perish from the earth.

Every Rationalist, like a star in the darkness of the night, is a luminous centre, and from him in due time the whole human family will be flooded with the sublime knowledge that the universe embodies all causes and all effects, and that the supernatural does not and cannot exist.

From the beginningless past the law of progress can be traced in the inorganic world until organic nature was evolved, and then little by little over immense periods of time improved forms of vegetable and animal forms made their appearance upon the earth, and finally brutal and savage man came upon the scene, who was but a single remove above his animal ancestors, and in him reason had scarcely dawned.

Having no knowledge of natural law, all the phenomena of the world around and about them were believed to be due to invisible things like themselves, but far greater and more powerful. From this universal ignorance of natural law the brain of primitive man became the fertile soil in which innumerable gods and devils flourished in rank luxuriance, and from this dark and dismal period in the early morning of man's sad history was born all the gods and devils that have cursed the earth and blasted the hopes and happiness of the toiling millions.

This knowledge is now possessed by all enlightened men and women, and must at no distant day become universal in all civilized countries.

When this happy period arrives, as it certainly will under the cosmic law of progress, all supernatural religions will forever pass away and be remembered only as products of ignorance, fear, and fraud, and natural only to an age of savagery and barbarism; for every institution out of harmony with the environment must perish, and as man has now entered the period of enlightened reason we may confidently predict the early extinction of every god and every devil, and every so-called revealed religion, which all cultured men now know are the products of evolution and not of revelation.

Good men and good women have nothing to fear concerning the final triumph of reason over superstition, of Rationalism over holy books and divine revelations, of love and devotion to humanity over fear and worship of cruel gods and malicious devils; for inherent in the very nature of things—interwoven in the economy and in the constitution of nature—it is clearly apparent that the right must triumph over the wrong.

That love for the good, the beautiful, and the true must triumph over the silly devotion to a mythical God, a mythical Savior, and a mythical Holy Ghost.

These are not the prophecies of hope nor the fragrant fruits of a mental vision, but they are scientific deductions based upon the universal law of progress that has worked unceasingly through a beginningless past and will continue its ennobling work through all the ages of an endless future.

Rationalism, now rapidly spreading through all civilized countries, is destined during the twentieth century to rid the earth of the ravages and horrors of war and fill it with the joys and blessings of peace. The law of progress is eternal and universal, and long before now gods and devils, and the priests of superstition, would have disappeared from all civilized nations had it not been for the powerful forces of heredity, tradition, and vested interests; but the law of progress is stronger than all these, and we can all rejoice in the certain knowledge that it will extinguish all the phantoms of the skies and fill the hearts of all men with the sublime and rational love for man, woman, and child.

I rejoice to tell this learned assembly that supernaturalism is rapidly dying, and that we are now in the bright morning of the glorious era of Rationalism which is destined in the near future to bring joy and gladness to the toiling millions of the earth.

The glorious work which the Freethinkers of the world are now doing to hasten the oncoming of this happy day is infinitely grander than any victory that was ever won on the bloody fields of war.

The heroes who died at Marathon and Thermopylae, at Lexington and Concord, at Yorktown and Gettysburg, deserve to be commemorated in poetry, in history, and in song; but they cannot be compared with the heroes of Rationalism who, with no weapons but the bloodless battle-axe of reason, are now driving from our beautiful earth man's first and last and only enemies—the gods and devils, and the priests of superstition.

The law of progress has finally transformed the primitive savage man into the dignified and lofty stature of a great philosopher; it has changed cannibals and devil worshippers into disciples of peace and philanthropy; it has dethroned the heartless Jewish Jehovah, and completely extinguished the fires of his eternal hell; and it is now rapidly filling the mind of man with love and justice and mercy.

The universal cosmic law of progress unfolds all nature in its mighty arms, and forever bears all things onward and upward; and it will continue its ennobling work until the whole world blossoms as the rose, and it will in due time lift all races of man into a state of happiness so beautifully portrayed by all the great apostles of mental liberty who have lived and died for humanity.

The civilized world will soon bid farewell to all so-called revealed religions which have so long cursed the human race, and which had their origin in the dens and caves of savagery. This must be true because the law of progress is inherent in the cosmos, and is eternal and unbreakable.

This law laid down the stony foundation of the earth, and clothed it in due time with an infinite diversity of charming scenery—this law stocked the earth with an endless variety of trees and plants and flowers, and with myriads of animal forms—this law peopled the earth and all the isles of the sea with numerous races of wild, ferocious, and savage men, and is gradually transforming them into scientists and philosophers.

Had it not been for the natural law of progress, which ever bears all things onward and upward, the whole earth to-day would be enveloped in a mantle of darkness, and the whole human race would still be living in the dens and caves of savagery; the railroad, the steamship, the telegraph, the telephone, the phonograph, the sewing machine, the reaper and mower, the trolley car, the electric light, and all the multitudinous arts and industries that fill the world with comfort, joy, and happiness would still be locked up in the womb of the future.

The law of progress is the only friend that man has ever had during his long and toilsome pilgrimage upon the earth, and his only enemies have been the gods and their priests, who have ever sought, and are still seeking, to prevent the operation of this beneficent cosmic law. Even to-day, in the bright morning of the twentieth century, the priests of Jehovah, if they had the power, would hang every scientist and philosopher in the world, or torture them to death in the foul air of filthy dungeons.

The fires that reduced to ashes the bodies of Huss and Jerome, Wycliff and Savonarola, Bruno and Servetus, would be rekindled, and this magnificent assembly of grand men and noble women would soon be reduced to ashes by flame and faggot at the hands of the priests of superstition.

The sacred memory of Copernicus, Galileo, Hypatia and Spinoza, Voltaire and Paine, Jefferson, Franklin and Ingersoll, and all the real saviors of the human race, would be



obliterated from the human mind and cast into the vast sea of oblivion.

Had it not been for the cosmic law of progress that inheres in every atom of matter, the priest and the prophet, the soothsayer and the exorcist, the miracle-monger and the pulpiter would still usurp the dominion of the earth, and the whole human race would still be hopeless and helpless in the loathsome and slimy folds of the serpents of superstition.

To resist the cosmic law of progress and make slaves of the toiling millions has been, and still is, the supreme end and endeavor of the priests of Jehovah, and I shudder when I look back through the long vista of the dismal past and behold this beautiful earth converted into a swimming Golgotha of blood.

These priestly enemies of the law of progress invented the iron boots and the iron collar for the grand men and the noble women of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries; they crowded the dungeons of Europe for more than a thousand years with the good, the merciful, and the just; they invented an everlasting hell of endless torture for all honest men and women who worship at the altar of the good, the beautiful, and the true.

Every nation of the earth has been cursed by this frightful monster, and its whole history through all the countless centuries is filled with unspeakable sorrow and agony for the whole human race.

If the people now living had to endure the agonies and horrors inflicted upon our ancestors by the priests of Jehovah during the dark night of the starless past, and down to the beginning of the nineteenth century, it would be infinitely better for every man, woman, and child to commit suicide, and find peace with the eternal sleep of death.

But thanks to the beneficent cosmic law of progress, which ever bears all things onward and upward, these awful atrocities can never again occur on our beautiful earth; no peasant girl will ever again become the mother of an infinite and eternal God; bread will never again be changed into the flesh of a crucified Savior, nor wine into his sacrificial blood; the priests of Jehovah will never again have the power to tear out our tongues, nor to subject us to the tortures of the stake nor in the flames of faggots. The age of science has been ushered in by the eternal law of progress, and all the countries of the world will soon be bound together and a golden cestus of clasped hands will soon encircle our beautiful earth.

It is an infinite distance from the fiery mists that once filled universal space down to the lovely morning of the twentieth century, but the beneficent law of progress, tireless in its work, wrought our magnificent solar system out of chaos and freighted it with the forms of life. On the banks of the Ganges, the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Nile long ages ago thousands of monstrous gods and malicious devils lived in the savage brain of our hairy ancestors; but the law of progress has finally driven this menagerie of wild beasts out of the brain of man, and in their stead has enthroned the beautiful angel of Science and the lovely goddess of Reason.

It has taken hundreds of thousands of years to free the mind and to free the body of the suffering and sorrowing millions from the heartless tyranny of gods and priests—it is a long distance from John Calvin, the murderer, to Herbert Spencer; it is a long road from Jonathan Edwards, the assassin of happiness, to Robert G. Ingersoll, who flooded the world with light and love; but these long distances have been travelled by the beneficent aid of the law of progress, and we are now standing on Pisgah's heights, and, with enraptured vision, we behold the dying struggles of gods and devils and priests, and the dawn of that bright and glorious era when the beautiful angel of Science and the lovely goddess of Reason shall rule the world and fill the earth with shouts of joy and songs of gladness.

The conquest of the priesthood by human reason will soon be achieved—the dungeon, the rack, and the stake for philosophers and scientists are gone for ever; the shrieks of the victims of the Inquisition will never again be heard, and the rivers of the earth will never again run red with blood at the command of the priests of Jehovah.

Our work, however, is not yet complete—our efforts to rid our country of priestly tyranny must never cease until our schools, our colleges, and our universities are completely secularised and the inspired savagery of our holy books are for ever banished from the halls of learning.

It must never cease until we can elect presidents of the United States who will follow the example of the immortal Jefferson, who peremptorily refused to comply with the demands of the priesthood to issue annual thanksgiving proclamations to Jehovah, giving as his reason that it was no part of his duty under the Constitution as President of a purely secular Republic.

Our efforts must never cease until their temples and gorgeous cathedrals, now amounting to the enormous sum of

billions of dollars, are made to contribute their just share of taxation for the support of the Government.

It took millions of years to fit and prepare this earth for the home and habitation of man, and it has taken man thousands of years of struggle and effort, of tears and blood, to establish this Republic, the only spot on earth where life is worth the struggle for existence; and our efforts must never cease until the stars and stripes wave proudly in triumph over our Republic, happy and free, and completely emancipated from the galling yoke of priestly tyranny.

Our efforts must never cease until their vast army of political demagogues who betray their country for the support of priests are buried out of sight for ever, and driven from the halls of legislation.

Our efforts must never cease until the world is free; until ignorance is unknown; until superstition is a forgotten dream; until reason, clothed in the purple of authority shall become King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

—Beacon (Chicago).

### "G. B. S." and the N. S. S. Presidency.

MR. BERNARD SHAW has been lecturing on "Modern Religion," and a report of his lecture has received the honor of being issued as one of the sermon supplements of the *Christian Commonwealth*. Mr. Shaw has his own fantastic way of defining religion, coined, we fancy, so as to bring his own views under that respectable title. We are not now, however, concerned with that. Mr. Shaw says that under existing circumstances he finds it difficult to describe himself—religiously—with satisfaction. Twenty or thirty years ago, out of sympathy with Bradlaugh, he called himself publicly an Atheist. We fancy Mr. Shaw does himself an injustice here. We are rather inclined to believe that Mr. Shaw called himself an Atheist in the old days because he was an Atheist, and because he understood what Atheism was. But a great deal has happened since then, and if Mr. Shaw now declines to use that word as descriptive of his own position, no one can say him nay. But we must confess to a preference for the Bernard Shaw of days gone by. Atheism is a clear, honorable, and expressive term, and religion is neither of the three—except occasionally.

On one point Mr. Shaw is sadly astray, or else he was misinformed at the time. He says:—

"When Bradlaugh died, the National Secular Society, having some temporary disagreement with his successor, Mr. Foote, wanted another leader—a thorough-going Atheist—and accordingly invited various people to address them at the Hall of Science. Among others, they invited me—no doubt, because of my utterances during Bradlaugh's conflict with Parliament."

This is news, indeed—not that Mr. Shaw was invited to speak at the Hall of Science, but that the National Secular Society ever invited Mr. Shaw, or anybody else, to speak with a view to electing him as President. The Presidency of the N. S. S. is not something that is decided in the same manner as a new pastor is appointed to a tabernacle. We can assure Mr. Shaw that something more than a merely successful speaker is needed for that post. No such invitation has ever been issued by the N. S. S., and that Society has never been in doubt as to who should be its President since Mr. Foote was nominated for the Presidency by Bradlaugh himself. We really cannot imagine how Mr. Shaw could have got hold of such a story, or hearing it, how he could have persuaded himself of its truth.

C. COHEN.

### GONE BEFORE.

Apropos of Washington's birthday and the Revolution, Professor Reginald P. Craven said, in the course of a lecture in Duluth, "In one of George Washington's letters—the only humorous letter Washington ever wrote—he tells of a Revolutionary veteran with one leg.

"The veteran's granddaughter and another little girl were playing together when the old fellow clumped past.

"Your grandfather has only got one leg, hasn't he?" said the visiting little girl.

"Yes," said the other.

"Where is his other leg?" went on the visitor.

"S-sh,' was the reply, 'It is in heaven.'"

### SUPERNATURAL.

Stranger in Town: "So that is the haunted house. What gave it such significance?"

Resident: "Well, there's been something uncanny about it from the beginning. Even when it was built it didn't exceed the contractor's estimate.



**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, G. W. Foote, "Thomas Hardy on God's Funeral."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, E. C. Saphin, "The Duty of Destroying Christian Fundamentals."

**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, H. Dawson, "Christianity: Is it True? Are its Teachings Moral?"

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, Mr. Fry and Mr. Bradford, Debate, "Did Jesus Ever Live?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Cohen, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.****INDOOR.**

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Miss Dorothy Pethick, "The Militant Policy of the W.S.P.U."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, F. G. Jones, "When the World is Without God."

**OUTDOOR.**

LEICESTER (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Sunday, April 28, at 7.30, "God and the Titanic Disaster"; Monday, 29, at 8, "In the Valley of the Shadow"; Tuesday, 30, at 8, "The Uselessness of Monarchy." Humberstone Gate: Wednesday, May 1, at 8, "Origin and Nature of the Christ Myth"; Thursday, 2, at 8, "Philosophic Necessity of Materialism"; Friday, 3, at 8, "The Paradox of Christian Socialism."

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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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