

THE Freethinker

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To FIND the TRUE we must first let go the FALSE.
GERALD MASSEY.

Shakespeare and His Will.

THERE was a remarkable gathering at Stratford-on-Avon on April 23, which is Shakespeare's deathday and apparently his birthday. Ambassadors or other official representatives of fifty-two nations or overseas dominions unfurled their countries' banners in Bridge-street in honor of the mighty poet who was born in that little town some three hundred and fifty years ago. Every civilised part of the world, including China, Japan, and India, was represented. Even the republic of Hayti sent a spokesman in a handsome full-blooded negro, M. Guillaume, who delivered a delightful little speech in French, telling how Shakespeare was loved among the islanders of the southern seas. So wide has the empire of Shakespeare become already. And what will it be in another hundred years?

There are three great places of pilgrimage in the world. Christian pilgrims go to Jerusalem, Mohammedan pilgrims go to Mecca, and pilgrims from the whole world go to Stratford-on-Avon. Shakespeare's attraction is as wide as civilisation. He who is "not for an age but for all time" is also not for one country but for all Humanity.

No sinister or artificial interests are involved in the spread of Shakespeare's fame. No law protects it, no one is paid to promote it. It spreads as naturally, as steadily, and as irresistibly as the dawn grows into the day.

This phenomenon is disconcerting to the Churches. The glory of Shakespeare increases while the glory of Christ diminishes. What then is to be done? Time was when Shakespeare's very name was banned by the Churches as that of an actor in "the devil's house" as well as one who wrote plays to keep the theatre going. But that attitude is no longer possible. Shakespeare is too great now to be affronted in that way. The Churches are acting like a rusty old weathercock which resists the wind as long as possible and then lurches round to the opposite side of the compass. They denounce Shakespeare no longer; on the contrary, they claim him as their own; they argue that he is quite an excellent Christian.

This has been the keynote of the Shakespeare sermons preached for several years at Stratford Church in connection with the annual celebration. But a different note has been struck this year by the Head Master of Eton. Mr. Lyttleton has honestly confessed that Shakespeare was not a religious poet, and was not even interested in religion. Of course there is nothing new in this. The foremost critics are now pretty well agreed that Shakespeare was a Freethinker. The importance of Mr. Lyttleton's avowal is that it comes from a pulpit. And the importance of a certain well-written article backing him up is that it comes from the first newspaper in the world. The *Times* says that the irreligion of Shakespeare is displayed "in the choice of his character and the very structure of his plots."

During the Shakespeare celebration the usual correspondence has appeared in the newspapers, and

we note that Christians have appealed to the pious language of his will in proof of his orthodoxy. They only show that "a little learning is a dangerous thing."

The exordium of Shakespeare's will is as follows:—

"In the name of God, Amen. I, William Shakespeare, of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gent., in perfect health and memory, (God be praised!) do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following; that is to say:

"First, I commend my soul into the hands of God my creator, hoping, and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Savior, to be made partaker of life everlasting; and my body to the earth of which it is made."

How on earth can anyone with the merest modicum of literary taste mistake that bald, prosaic, perfunctory declaration as proceeding from the pen and brain of the author of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*? We may be sure that if Shakespeare designed to leave the world a confession of faith in his will it would have been a magnificent piece of writing, and more than a match for the finest passages in his plays. If Sterling's last private letter to Carlyle was "written in star-fire and immortal tears," what would Shakespeare's last deliberate message to mankind have been written in?

Shakespeare wrote no word of that will except his signature. It was prepared by his attorney, who provided the pious flourish at the start as he provided the legal jargon throughout.

Similar exordiums appear in other wills of that age. Sometimes the very same words are used. That they have no personal significance in Shakespeare's will is not a mere contention of our own but is shown by the following passages from four very different authorities:—

"Neither can any conclusion be safely drawn from what was then an ordinary and formal disposition of the soul and the body."—*Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, by J. O. Halliwell-Phillips, p. 241.

"The solemn words initiating Shakespeare's Will must not, indeed, be pressed, as they may, and probably do, represent mere formula."—*Studies in Shakespeare*, by John Churton Collins, p. 138.

"The religious exordium is in conventional phraseology, and gives no clue to Shakespeare's personal religious opinions."—*Life of William Shakespeare*, by Sidney Lee, p. 273.

"These opening lines of the will—where the testator expresses the hope that through the only merits of Jesus Christ, his Savior, he may be made partaker of life everlasting—are nothing but the standing phrase for the beginning of a Protestant will in those days, and do not, in the least degree, prove anything as regards the testator's religious sentiments."—*William Shakespeare*, by Karl Elze, p. 456.

Special light is thrown upon this matter by W. Carew Hazlitt in his book on *Shakespeare Himself and his Work*. We use the third edition published by Quaritch in 1908. Mr. Hazlitt refers to West's *Symbology* published in 1590, which contains several testamentary forms. A new and enlarged edition for lay folk appeared in 1605. Now one of the forms given in that book is almost word for word identical with the form in Shakespeare's will in 1616. Could anything be more decisive? Shakespeare's lawyer took the form from West's book, or West's book gave forms that were already in general use.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Life.—II.

(Continued from p. 275.)

It has been pointed out that inadequate knowledge, and probably less keen susceptibilities, must have operated in earlier times to keep the insane from multiplying. Doctors did not know enough to "cure" a lunatic—that is, to help him or her over the period when their insanity threatened the peace of society. Many were actually killed by brutal treatment. Or, if they were not killed, once they were confined, they were seldom sufficiently "cured" to be liberated. With ourselves, insane persons are treated, as they should be treated, with kindness. The study of insanity, our general knowledge of mental pathology, enables us to induce a return to sanity, with the result that of every hundred people confined as insane, over eighty are liberated as sane well within ten years—the great majority within three years. From one point of view this is a highly gratifying result. But there are other aspects of the matter. Consider, for instance, the following:—

In December last a case was brought before the London County Council of a female patient, sixty-seven years of age, who had been admitted to Colney Hatch Asylum *sixteen times*, and who had been eleven times in other asylums. She had borne thirteen children, five of whom were dead. It was also stated on the same occasion, by the Chairman of the Asylums Committee that twenty-nine per cent. of the patients discharged in 1910 had been re-admitted. That this case does not stand alone is shown by an instance quoted by Dr. Rentoul in his *Race Culture; or, Race Suicide*. This was a case in which a woman who, between her discharges and admissions to the County Asylum, had given birth to no less than nine children. The lady who had the courage to call attention to the significance of this, complains that she was denounced by her friends as cold and hard-hearted.

It does not require much reasoning to prove that there is here an ample reason for the increase of the number of insane persons. We are simply keeping alive, and helping the multiplication of, a type that was unconsciously weeded out. We have suspended the operation of a purifying force, without yet having had the courage or the wisdom to erect safeguards against the multiplication of the undesirable.

At present there is considerable talk in eugenic circles as to nations in the past having declined or died out because the lower classes multiplied at a greater rate than the better classes. There is really no evidence whatever that any nation has ever died out from this cause, and there is no real evidence that anything like this is taking place at present. Superior and inferior, lower and higher, I need hardly say, have much different values in biology to what they have in social life, and all the facts cited only go to show that lower social life, and the lower social classes have a larger birth-rate than those more fortunately situated. They also have, it may be pointed out, a larger death-rate. But, putting this on one side, there is really no evidence worth considering that the births in the East End of London are less biologically desirable than those in the West End. There is a greater infant mortality in the East End, and there is a greater percentage of diseases among children, which is hastily assumed to mean this. But these are results that may be due to nurture, not nature. The occupations of the mothers, the feeding and attention given to young children, appear to have much to do with the different mortality and sickness rates in the East and in the West. In other words, the problem is more of an economic than of a biologic character.

And it is easy to exaggerate the importance of numbers. For the political destiny of France, for instance, it may be important that its birth rate shall be equal to that of Germany—that is, assuming equality in other directions. But from the biologic point of view it is of small importance whether France or Germany, or any other nation, has a large

birth rate or not. What is important is that the births shall be those of a desirable type of human being, otherwise the very rate of increase only tends to add to the gravity of the problem. As Ruskin said:—

"The question of numbers is wholly immaterial compared with that of character; or rather its own materialness depends on the prior determination of character. Make your nation consist of knaves, and as Emerson said long ago, it is but the case of any other vermin—the more, the worse. Or to put the matter in narrower limits, it is a matter of no final concern to any parent whether he shall have two children or four; but matter of quite final concern whether those he has shall, or shall not, deserve to be hanged."

It is the quality of a nation's population, not its quantity, that is of ultimate importance. To merely excite a competition of reproduction between different classes, while maintaining those conditions that breed the lower, is the most insane of all policies.

The same lack of a scientific survey of the facts is responsible for the aimless talk about the decadence of some races and the youthfulness of others. As a figment of speech such expressions may pass; as expressions of fact they are grossly misleading. At one time we read of the decadent Latin races, at another it is the Turks that are biologically old and decrepit. Then it is the Japanese, or the Chinese, who are pronounced worn out by philosophers who prefer to generalise in accordance with their own prepossessions rather than from a study of the facts. Now, there are simply no facts available to support any theory of inherent racial decadence. A small race like the Tasmanians or the Australian Bushmen may die out, but this is because they are killed by the introduction of disease or by having modes of life forced upon them to which they lack the power of adaptation. They die poisoned, not from racial inability to continue their stock. Europeans would die out under parallel conditions. The superiority of the European to many natives lies in the fact that he is resistant to diseases that kill them, and is not seriously affected by drugs and stimulants that spell death to them. It is not racial decadence that is responsible for our infant mortality, but the poisoning of babies before birth and their lack of attention afterwards. What Weismann said of the germ cell is true of a race. Both may be immortal, but both may be killed. And whether a race flourishes or decays is ultimately a question of its social life and institutions.

I have been a long while coming to the question of the part played by religion on this subject, but I think the time has not been wasted. It is impossible to rightly understand the part played by religion unless one has some conception of the nature of the forces at work, above all, to clear away from one's mind the number of pseudo-scientific notions that cluster round the subject. And the question in itself is of quite sufficient importance to justify this somewhat lengthy introduction.

Mr. and Mrs. Whetham devote a special chapter to the "Biological Influence of Religion" in their new work *Heredity and Society*. They complain that adequate attention has not yet been given to the effect of religious teaching on race development, and remark:—

"No chapter in the history of the religious experience of mankind, when that book comes to be written, will be of greater importance than that which deals with their biological significance, and endeavors to assess the true relative value of the religious systems that have held sway in the imagination of the human race."

This is true enough, but one may add that before that book can have any scientific value, it will have to be written in a more serene atmosphere than obtains in this country. The social power of religion, the humiliating tendency of prominent writers either to be silent, or to speak under the obvious bias of a desire to say only good of religion, the vicious habit of defining religion without regard to its historic meaning, are elements that prevent the general public getting a balanced judgment on the subject. And it appears to me that Mr. and Mrs.

Whetham are fairly subject to censure in these terms. They decline to form any estimate concerning the influence of Christianity, while saying nearly all that can be said in its favor. And their general treatment of religion ignores the operation of social forces under the guise of religion, which is the most important point for consideration.

Briefly, the authors' plea for the good influence of religion is twofold. The first is, that conduct, of the kind necessary to promote social welfare, needs a supernatural sanction, and this is supplied by religion; the second, that religions have by "intuitive scientific insight" been led to emphasise those duties essential to the creation and well-being of the family, and ultimately for the preservation of the race. We are told that—

"In all stages of social evolution the interests of the individual tend to clash with those of the species. For the race it is necessary that selection should be rigorous and effective. Many must be called into life that few may be chosen as the parents of the next generation. For the individual, a stringent natural selection may mean disappointment, privation, or death. Hence comes the need of a supernatural sanction for unselfish conduct of no immediate advantage to the individual. No merely rational system of ethics has yet been found sufficient to influence the mass of mankind; it is doubtful whether such a system ever will be sufficient even when all men realise the social importance of conditions which bear hardly on themselves. It needs the tremendous force of supernatural sanction, it needs the sharp antithesis between fleeting temporal advantage and eternal spiritual gain, to bring the individual to acquiesce in conditions which his reason tells him are opposed to his interests on this earth."

This is a presentation of a much used defence of religion, and when stated with a certain assurance, is calculated to impose on the unwary reader. Yet from beginning to end it is full of fallacies and false assumptions. To begin with, there is a false conception of the form of natural selection as it operates within societies. The expressions that it is necessary for natural selection to be vigorous, and that the interests of the individual clash with those of the species, together with the general run of the argument, implies that the selection thought of as necessary is one that operates on the individual and with reference to individual fitness. But in human society this is never the case. Communal life, in any form, argues communal fitness on the parts of the units. And it may happen that the individual who is altogether desirable from the breeder's point of view may, from lack of certain mental and moral qualities, be quite undesirable from the point of view of the community. And I think Mr. and Mrs. Whetham would be the first to recognise that the healthy human animal with anti-communal instincts would stand less chance of marriage and of perpetuating his kind than would the weaker individual whose nature was better attuned to the communal life. Natural selection is thus, in society, not rigorous and effective in the authors' sense of the expression. It is lax, and the conditions of social health demand that it shall be so. Or, to put the matter more correctly, it is a social fitness that, on the whole, determines survival; and social fitness is not determined by the mere biological excellence of the individual. There is, of course, a point below which individual health and strength cannot sink, but to regard this as the sole means by which the interests of the species are served, is to lose sight of what is the essential aspect of social evolution.

(To be continued.) C. COHEN.

Morbid Views of Death.

THE New Theologians, if we take them at their own valuation, are the only sane people in the world. They always speak in the name of common sense and sanity. The Old Theologians, on the one hand, and the Secularists, on the other, are alike the victims of "the most irrational madness ever exuded

out of Bedlam at full moon," the theology of the former and the philosophy of the latter being but vain delusions which the New Theology "shivers like pale iridescent bubbles." There is an apt illustration of this superior air in an article, entitled "The Christian Conquest of Death," that appeared in the *Inquirer* for April 6. The *Inquirer* is described as "a Journal of Liberal Religion, Literature, and Social Progress"; and the author of that article is the Rev. J. M. Lloyd Thomas, a well-known New Theologian. Mr. Thomas opens his interesting but unconvincing paper by contrasting Paganism and Christianity in their respective attitudes to death. While deprecating "the kind of Christian apology which blackens Paganism in order to brighten by contrast the splendor of our Faith," and while admitting that "the studies of Professor Dill in Roman society of the Empire have revealed the rare nobility and the singular charm and graciousness of a great deal of the life of that passing and perishing world," and that "many of the ancients looked bravely on the face of death," he is yet unable to perceive that the contrast he himself endeavors to establish between Paganism and Christianity is fundamentally unjust. For example, nothing is more incontestable than that the Greeks, before the great deterioration set in, were distinguished for their love and enjoyment of life; and it is a certainty that no people can truly love and enjoy life who are in bondage to the fear of death. The Greeks of the fifth century B.C. displayed in their daily life a marvellous serenity of mind. No one who knows his *Æschylus* can ignore what Professor Gilbert Murray calls "the tone of solemn exaltation that pervades most" of his work; and though the national decline had advanced considerably by the time of Euripides, yet several of the plays of that great Agnostic show the same serene and sane outlook upon life. Furthermore, Mr. Thomas seems to forget that the Greeks of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. cherished bright hopes of bliss beyond death, and had very little fear of future misery. As Miss Harrison says in her *Religion of Ancient Greece* (p. 64): "For the Greeks the darkness and dread of the Unseen was lighted, purified, quieted by two lamps—Reason and Beauty."

Mr. Thomas is incapable of doing justice to people who do not share his faith. He claims that for all who have no clear vista of a genuine Beyond the present life is bound to be an intolerable burden. If every joy ends in the tomb, he argues, joy is not worth having; it is wiser to be miserable than happy if death ends all. Consequently, one is not surprised at the absurd assertion that "the Empire was not merely ripe for Christianity, it was rotten." It is true that the Empire was declining when Christianity came to power, but it is also true that it continued to decline under Christian rule until it actually fell. But listen to Mr. Thomas:—

"Into this world our Faith came with a spring-tide of abundant life and immortality. It looked cheerfully beyond death and contemplated it with a certain strange joyousness and exultant serenity.....It lifted a heavy stone from the entombed heart of Humanity and gave to emotion a new freedom and scope which swept beyond the grey ramparts of the natural world. It abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light."

The reverend gentleman is entirely mistaken on three important points. In the first place, the statement that the Pagan world was devoid of the hope of immortality is wholly false. The masses nearly always confidently entertained it; at any rate they believed in it, whether they hoped for or dreaded it. Lucretius, himself an unbeliever, informs us that the fear of future torments darkened and distracted man's total being. It was "the dread of something after death," not the fear that death ended all, that prevented many people from entering into the joy of the present life. Under the first Emperor a great religious revival took place and belief became almost universal. During the first Christian century we do not meet any prominent unbeliever in Immortality. In the second place, it is not true that Pagan unbelievers in a future life held gloomy and

pessimistic views on this earthly life. Pliny the Younger spoke with utter scorn of "the vanity or madness which dreams of a phantom life beyond the tomb"; but so far from fearing death was he that he called it "the last kindly boon of Nature," of the great charm of which such vanity or madness robbed its victims. Epictetus did not believe in immortality; and yet he spoke in glowing terms of the joy that accompanies a virtuous life. Comparing life to a voyage, he said:—

"What can I do? Choose the captain, the sailors, the day, the time. Then a storm comes on. What more care then have I, who have done my part? The business is now another's—the captain's. But the ship is sinking. What, then, have I to do? I only do what I can; I drown without fear, not screaming, nor accusing God, but with the knowledge that what has been produced must also perish, for I am not eternal, but a man, a part of the whole as an hour is part of the day. I must be present like the hour and pass like the hour" (*Discourses*, 1, 5).

Marcus Aurelius was also sceptical on the subject. Speaking of life as being brief and ephemeral, he proceeded:—

"Be content; thou hast made thy voyage; thou hast come to shore; quit the ship; if indeed to another life there is no lack of gods even there, but if to a state of unconsciousness, thou wilt cease to be held in bondage by pleasure and pains" (*De Senectute* ii. 3).

The truth is that in Pagan philosophy death was either the entrance into a brighter and happier life, or the end of all, but in neither view was it terrible to the good. In the third place, Mr. Thomas is quite wrong in thinking that the advent of Christianity brightened the life of the Roman world. The reverend gentleman *knows* that it did nothing of the kind. It closed the Pagan schools throughout the Empire, and under Theodosius the Great forcibly suppressed all the Pagan cults, burning temples and libraries without compunction, and putting multitudes to death to the glory of God. Then Christianity itself split up into innumerable little factions and sects which disputed and wrangled and fought like so many hostile troops of wild beasts, with the result that the social and moral evils so vigorously denounced by the Pagan philosophers were allowed to grow worse and worse until about the middle of the eleventh century. Does Mr. Thomas deny this, while every accredited historian reluctantly admits it? Then, of what earthly use was the Christian doctrine of immortality? The hope of heaven did absolutely no good to the social and moral life of the people, while the fear of hell was diligently exploited by the orthodox Church as furnishing at once the motive and the justification of the infliction of inconceivable pain and torture upon all heretics and unbelievers.

According to Mr. Thomas, Christianity, as soon as it was established in the Roman world, "abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light"; and we ask, on the assumption that it did that, of what service was such a miracle to the world? and history answers, None whatever. "It did that once," the preacher continues; "does it do it now?" What we maintain is that neither the hope of heaven nor the fear of hell has made the slightest contribution to the social and moral betterment of the world. Reforms were few and far between in the ages of faith. When the Church dominated every department of life "progress halted on palsied feet," nay, for five or six consecutive centuries the world sank deeper and deeper into degradation, a fact frankly admitted by a Catholic historian like Baronius. Whatever the hope of immortality may do for believers individually, whatever consolations it may bring them amid the sufferings and sorrows of life, the fact remains and stares us in the face that it endows them with no superior gifts or efficiency as members of society. Some there are who go the length of assuring us that believers are of less social value than unbelievers.

It is an eminently Christian action to charge unbelievers with insanity; but no one ever makes the slightest attempt to prove the charge. Mr. Thomas plays the superior person throughout the

article under discussion, and treats all who differ from him with supreme contempt. Scepticism as to immortality he describes as "a brutal anticlimax to the spirit and vision of Faith," "a hideous nullity," "the anæmic agnosticism of the age." Let us look, for a moment, at his own solution of the problem of immortality. He says:—

"Actually and usually it is solved by a *reductio ad absurdum*, by the unreasonableness of believing in the extinction of man's personal consciousness. The question is closed by a sheer daring affirmation of faith. It is finally settled by the refusal of the mind to accept an unproved and unprovable view which would bring permanent contradiction and irresolvable discord into our emotional and rational life."

We take the liberty of characterising that extract as the most fallacious and silly piece of reasoning we have ever come across. In point of fact, reasoning it is not, but the purest theological dogmatism. The merest logical tyro knows that personal consciousness had a beginning. There was a time when every individual on earth to-day did not exist; why is it unreasonable to believe that a time is coming when all persons alive now shall be no more? We do not even dream of proving that death ends all for individuals, the only thing we insist upon being the production of some proof that it does not; and this Mr. Thomas does not even attempt to adduce. We challenge the reverend gentleman to point to a single scrap of evidence that death is not the end, just as birth is the beginning, of individual existence.

Until that evidence is forthcoming we hold that the Christian view of death is morbid, and that the Atheistic view alone is natural and wholesome. Human life is a little span between birth and death, both of which are natural events, the latter quite as natural as the former.

J. T. LLOYD.

Modern Materialism.—VIII.

(Continued from p. 277.)

"Matter and law have devoured spirit and spontaneity. And as surely as every future grows out of past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter and law until it is co-extensive with knowledge, with feeling, and with action. The consciousness of this great truth weighs like a nightmare, I believe, upon many of the best minds of these days. They watch what they conceive to be the progress of Materialism, in such fear and powerless anger as a savage feels, when, during an eclipse, the great shadow creeps over the face of the sun. The advancing tide of matter threatens to drown their souls; the tightening grasp of law impedes their freedom; they are alarmed lest man's moral nature be debased by the increase of his wisdom.—PROFESSOR T. H. HUXLEY, *Lay Sermons*, 1874, p. 142.

"In Scotland the piece of ground which is left wild for him (the Brownie) to live in is called 'the good man's croft.' Now there are people who indulge a hope that the ploughshare of Science will leave a sort of good man's croft around the field of reasoned truth; and they promise that in that case a good deal of our civilising work shall be done for us in the dark, by means we know nothing of. I do not share this hope; and I feel very sure that it will not be realised: I think that we should do our work with our own hands in a healthy straightforward way. It is idle to set bounds to the purifying and organising work of Science. Without mercy and without resentment she ploughs up weed and briar; from her footsteps behind her grow up corn and healing flowers; and no corner is far enough to escape her furrow. Provided only that we take as our motto and our rule of action, 'Man speed the plough.'—PROFESSOR W. K. CLIFFORD, "Body and Mind," *Fortnightly Review*, December, 1874.

"To refuse to take the trouble to think out whether your religion is a supernatural religion or not, is either cowardice or else the most ignoble kind of indolence.—JOHN MORLEY, *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1874.

PROFESSOR CLIFFORD, in his article on "Body and Mind" in the *Fortnightly Review*, December, 1874, burst the crust of compromise and definitely declared for Atheism. Dealing with the spiritualistic hypothesis of the existence of mind without brain, and of the possibility of an organisation like the brain being able to exist without being perceptible by the methods of physical science, he says, "Certainly not"; the physical world "is composed of ether and atoms, and there is no room in it for

ghosts." And as to the other question, whether we can regard the universe as a vast brain, and the reality which underlies it is a conscious mind? he agrees with Du Bois Reymond in dismissing such an hypothesis. On the other hand, "if some vast brain existed far away in space, being invisible because not self-luminous, then, according to the laws of matter at present known to us, it could affect the solar system only by its weight." And he further declares that "we seem entitled to conclude that during such time as we can have evidence of, no intelligence or volition has been concerned in events happening within the Solar system, except that of animals living on the planets." Clifford declined to take refuge in the Agnostic camp, and refused to regard the problem as an insoluble mystery. He observes, these questions are only just beginning to receive the right sort of attention, and it seems to him "that we may expect in time to have negative evidence on this point of the same kind and cogency as that which forbids us to assume the existence between the Earth and Venus of a planet as large as either of them." To those who say that such views would "make the world a blank," he replies:—

"We have no right to call the world a blank while it is full of men and women, even though our one friend may be lost to us.....Moreover, healthy emotions are felt about facts and not about phantoms; and the question is not 'What conclusion will be most pleasing or elevating to my feelings?' but 'What is the truth?'"

And—

"As for the assertion that these conclusions destroy the motive for good conduct, it seems to me that it is not only utterly untrue, but, because of its great influence upon human action, one of the most dangerous doctrines that can be set forth."

These are difficult and complex problems. "But," he remarks:—

"It is not necessary to answer these questions in order to tell an honest man from a rogue. The distinction of right and wrong grows up in the broad light of day wherever men live together; and the only right motive to right action is to be found in the social instincts which have been bred into mankind by hundreds of generations of social life. In the target of every true Englishman's allegiance the bull's-eye belongs to his countrymen, who are visible and palpable, and who stand around him; not to any far-off shadowy centre beyond the hills, *ultra montes*, either at Rome or in heaven. Duty to one's countrymen and fellow-citizens, which is the social instinct guided by reason, is, in all healthy communities, the one thing sacred and supreme."*

No wonder that John Morley, in his book *On Compromise*, written about this time, could say:—

"Those who dwell in the tower of ancient faiths look about them in constant apprehension, misgiving, and wonder, with the hurried, uneasy mien of people living amid earthquakes. The air seems to their alarms to be full of missiles, and all is doubt, hesitation, and shivering expectancy."

Morley speaks of the attention which Professor Clifford's articles attracted, "and I fear that I may add, gave for a season so much offence." He says that Clifford died when he was only four-and-thirty:—

"Yet, in this brief space, he had not merely won a reputation as a mathematician of the first order, but had made a real mark on his time, both by the substance of his speculations in science, religion, and ethics, and by the curious audacity with which he proclaimed, at the pitch of his voice on the housetops, religious opinions that had hitherto been kept among the family secrets of the *domus Socratica*."†

Yes, Clifford proclaimed aloud that Atheism, which was the family secret, not of the ignorant and vicious, let it be noted, but of the *domus Socratica*—the house of the wise. He had faith in man and sympathy with the masses; he was not afraid of them, and thought they had as much right to know the truth as the well-to-do philosophers who trembled for the consequences if the truth became known; who thought that society could only be

maintained by keeping the people the bond-slaves of superstition. Clifford declared that it—

"was not English to tell a lie, or to suggest a lie by your silence or your actions, because you are afraid that he is not prepared for the truth, because you don't quite know what he will do when he knows it, because, perhaps after all, this lie is a better thing for him than the truth would be, this same man being all the time an honest fellow-citizen whom you have every reason to trust."

He observes:—

"Crooked ways are none the less crooked because they are meant to deceive great masses of people instead of individuals. If a thing is true, let us all believe it, rich and poor, men, women, and children. Truth is a thing to be shouted from the housetops, not to be whispered over rose-water after dinner when the ladies are gone away."*

At this time, John Morley was editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, George Henry Lewes, its first editor, retiring from that position in 1867. Both Lewes and Morley were unbelievers, but Lewes was extremely afraid of offending public opinion, and allowed no attacks upon religion. John Morley continued the policy, "occasionally," says Mr. Benn, allowing "a volcanic jet to come through the mask of snow";‡ but by the year 1874 there is no doubt that Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, and Morley had come to an agreement to put the battle in array against the forces of superstition, Morley placing the *Fortnightly Review* at their service for that purpose, and he himself taking part in the operations.

It was in this year, 1874, that the anonymous work, *Supernatural Religion*, was published—now known to be the work of Mr. Walter Cassels. "Neither then nor at any other time has English Rationalism been represented by another such huge ironclad as this," says Mr. Benn;‡ but as it does not deal with Materialism—except in so far as his arguments against miracles come handy to the Materialist—we shall not examine it in detail. Suffice it to say that the first part of the work is devoted to proving that the miracles recorded in the Gospels—which Christians advance in proof of the divine mission of Jesus—are incredible in themselves, and there is no historical proof that they ever happened. In the second part, the author examines every scrap of evidence bearing upon the subject, and claims to prove that the four Gospels, as we know them, were not in existence before the middle of the second century, that is, more than one hundred years after the death of Jesus! The book created a tremendous sensation, six editions of this ponderous and expensive work being printed in five years.

John Morley devoted an article to the work in the *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1874, in which he speaks of it as "by far the most decisive, trenchant, and far-reaching of the direct contributions to theological controversy that have been made in this generation," and makes "of this work a new starting-point in the terrible debate which is to distract the world for so long a time to come." Morley concludes with admiring "the patience and fairness with which the author has followed the arguments of the modern professional apologists, and the apologists are not in all cases persons with whom patience is an easy virtue." The book has done its work, the question has now shifted from a discussion as to the historical value of the Gospels, the battle now rages round the question whether such a person as Jesus Christ ever actually existed.

The year 1874 opened a new era of Freethought in England. Never had the fundamentals of religion been so openly and violently attacked in such force and by such distinguished assailants. Moncreu Conway, writing about this time, observed:—

"The *Origin of Species* had been published only a few years, but already the demands of orthodoxy on faith were lowered. Insistence on detailed dogmas was

* W. K. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, 1886, pp. 270-2.
† John Morley, *Studies in Literature*, 1891, pp. 326-7.

* *Lectures and Essays*, p. 337.

† Benn, *History of Rationalism*, vol. ii., p. 355.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 365.

relegated to the conventicle; the educated forces of both church and chapel, Unitarian or Trinitarian, were concentrated on the task of defending their common foundation—belief in the divine existence and government. When John Morley was spelling God with a small 'g,' a hallelujah could be raised for Herbert Spencer's spelling unknowable with a big 'U.'*

Yes, and when Morley took to spelling God with a small "g," one of the weekly reviews—was it the *Saturday Review* or the *Spectator*?—took to spelling Morley with a small "M." John Morley no longer writes God with a small "g"; he died to Free-thought, but rose again, and ascended into the British heaven, the House of Lords, where he now sits in glory with the holy Bishops. "No volcanic jets come through the crust of snow" now, and the religious press glories in the fact that Lord Morley bows the knee in family worship at the houses where he happens to be visiting. Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and Clifford received no titles or honors. But they cared for none of these gewgaws; like Burns, they looked with contempt on—

"His riband, star, and a' that;
The man of independent mind
He looks and laughs at a' that."

We wonder whether "Lord Morley" ever has "heart talks" with the Bishop of London (Dr. Ingram), and, if so, whether, like Charles Lamb upon a similar occasion, he ever experiences a desire "to feel his bumps."

How are the mighty fallen! We cannot but experience a shadow of pity for our once terrible old foe, the Church, when we see it brought to this pass—that it has to make do with such a shallow mind for such a position.

We do not envy Lord Morley his honors or his company. He did good work in his day; his works on the French Encyclopædists are valuable, and his monograph on Voltaire is very fine. He has earned our thanks; peace be with him.

The *Fortnightly Review* is now an extinct volcano. It has become—along with the *Nineteenth Century*—respectable; its only function is that of an opiate to the sleepless. Over the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*—which once rang with the dialectic of Huxley—a deathly torpor now reigns; it is approaching the last stages of senile decay.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

IF YOU HAVE DONE YOUR BEST.

If you have done your level best
You need not fear to look behind;
At night, in peace, you'll sink to rest,
Untroubled then will be your mind.
It will not matter then to you
Whether you've lost your fight or won,
If, looking back, you do not view
A lot of things you might have done.

If you have done your level best,
Your yesterdays will all be sweet,
Your thoughts will never be distressed,
You will not whimper at defeat.
There is no shame in failure when
You've nobly fought and nobly tried;
Your yesterdays are splendid then;
You need not view them leaden-eyed.

If you can look back when you've trod
And see no reason for regret,
Then forward you may bravely plod;
Your past is not a present debt.
You need not fear your yesterdays
Nor any future time of test;
The world must speak of you with praise
If you have done your level best.

—*Detroit Free Press.*

When the year was reckoned by thirteen moons of twenty-eight days each, thirteen was then the lucky number (a charm of primroses or a setting of eggs was thirteen), but when this was changed for the twelve months of solar time, then the number thirteen became unlucky or accursed.—*Gerald Massey.*

* Moncure D. Conway, *Autobiography*, vol. ii., pp. 45-46.

Nearer My God To Thee.

(NEW VERSION.)

NEARER my God to Thee,
Worse luck for me,
Much, *much* against my will,
I'm nearing Thee;
Earthbound I'd rather be,
Than close, my God, to Thee,
Too close to Thee!

With all my waking thoughts,
Schemes I contrive,
To postpone heaven's joy,
And keep alive!
Still, every day brings me
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!

When dangers hedge me round,
All closely packed;
When no loophole is found
For escape—in fact
'Tis when I'm "up a tree"
I feel myself to be
Nearer to Thee!

As Thou art *everywhere*,
O'er land and sea,
What difference distance makes,
That puzzles me!
Still, all my song shall be
That I am nearer Thee,
Nearer to Thee!

Someday, on Bleriot wing,
Skies I may cleave,
And too successfully
My end achieve;
By tumbling out I'd be
Soonest, my God, with Thee,
Nearest to Thee!

C. D.

N. S. S. Social Evening.

LONDON "saints" and their friends spent an enjoyable evening at Anderton's Hotel on April 30, when the last social evening of the season took place.

An inspiring program of dance-music was splendidly rendered by Mr. Robert Wood and a friend. Some humorous vocal selections were given by Mr. Wimhurst, while Mr. Younger and Miss Young contributed songs of a more serious character.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, on being pressed to make a speech, declared that a speech was unsuitable for the occasion, but consented to give a reading from *Hamlet*, choosing the fine soliloquy beginning "Oh! what a rogue and peasant slave am I," which was listened to with rapt attention.

Mr. Quinton discharged the duties of M. C. most tactfully and efficiently. The "merry meeting" broke up at eleven o'clock, hopes being expressed on all sides for a renewal of the pleasant gatherings in the early autumn.

E. M. VANCE.

A CHILD'S PRAYER.

Going to bed, a child, as it prayed, asked its mother if God was listening. "Yes," said the mother; "now sleep. He is certainly listening."

"But suppose he becomes ill, and sometimes will die, what will happen then?"

The mother smiled, and said: "God will never die. Now be a good child, and go to sleep."

"Yes, ma; but why don't he sometimes die?"

"Because he cannot. We want him; we cannot do without him. That is why he don't die. He loves us so."

The child was silent for a few moments, and then said:

"Ma, if we want someone, then he will not die, will he?"

"No dear, no," replied the mother, "he will not. But, dear, now do go to sleep, do."

"Ma, but do tell me, suppose we afterwards do not want him, will he die?"

The mother did not reply.

"Ma, do please tell me, will he then die?"

"Yes, dear, then he will die."

The child kept silent for a few moments, and then said:

"Dear ma, so God will die if we will not want him?"

"Yes, dear, God will then die."

The child then embraced its mother, and, with a smile on its face, said:

"Dear ma, dear God, I always want you."

The real God then kissed her angel.—*Translated from "Germana Esparantist."*

Acid Drops.

Lord Charles Beresford is a seaman—and when you have said that about most seamen you have reached the end of the chapter. But if a seaman is not likely to be a statesman he is likely to be amusing. Lord Beresford's speech against the Home Rule Bill kept the House of Commons in roars of laughter. It seems to have been delivered in his best quarter-deck manner. One of his stories was really good. It was that of an interrupter at one of his meetings when he was contesting the County of Waterford. The man was invited on the platform, told he was "no man," and asked for an explanation. He replied: "The last time a member of your family stood for this county I was up to my knees in blood and whisky for a month. And this time I haven't seen a drop of either."

On the religious problem in Ireland there was sure to be some sport when Lord Charles Beresford hitched up his trousers and started talking. We cut the following from the *Daily Post* report:—

"Were the Nationalist members quite sure that the Roman Catholic clergy were in favor of Home Rule, especially after having been told by Mr. Redmond that the Irish Parliament would have complete control of education? He did not want to touch the religious question except very delicately, because he had always held that religion was an accident of birth. (Laughter.) If his mother and father had been Roman Catholics, he would have been a Roman Catholic; if his father and mother had been Jews he would have been a Jew. (Laughter.) Why could they not leave out the question of religion altogether, respecting those who loyally believed what they had been taught? He remembered saying in the year 1875 that religion was an accident of birth, and he got about 400 letters of the most abusive character he had ever received in his life, principally from clergymen of his own persuasion. (Laughter.)"

There's many a true word spoken in jest. Underneath the comicality and the laughter there is an important truth. The religion of the bulk of mankind is the result of the geographical accident of their birth. We have said so a thousand times—and we are delighted to see it introduced in parliament.

"That Shakespeare was religious is certain," says *Rupert Hyde* in *T. P.'s Weekly*. Certain! Who on earth is Rupert Hyde to give this guarantee? Many of his betters have said the opposite. *Certain*, forsooth! Rupert Hyde, whoever he is, should cultivate a little more modesty.

The British and Foreign Bible Society held its annual meeting at Queen's Hall. This is a Society on which Church and Nonconformity can unite—and about the only one. It does not surprise one to hear, therefore, that several Free Churchmen have been added to the list of vice-presidents,—including Sir W. R. Nicoll, Dr. Charles Brown, Dr. Henry Haigh, Sir Alfred Dale, and Mr. J. Lewis Paton. Nor is it surprising to hear that the year's expenditure was £19,632 in excess of income. Most Christian societies are in that condition nowadays. The expenditure amounted to £275,141. This is a vast sum of money, and in view of it there is nothing supernatural in the Bible being circulated in many languages all over the world. Look at the translations and the circulation of Shakespeare. Not a penny is spent in promoting his circulation. There is nothing artificial about it. It is entirely natural. Yet a quarter of a million a year has to be spent to keep up the circulation of the Christian Scriptures. And behind the money there is the help of Omnipotence. Isn't it a rich joke?

One speaker at the Bible Society's meeting alluded to "France's policy of eradicating every vestige of Biblical ideas from education" and said "it was too early to say what the result of this policy would be, but he believed where the Bible was suppressed, *le bête humaine* would be let loose." Surely the human beast is let loose in the Bible. What is there in the whole world to equal the bloody and brutal records of the Old Testament? And this is not a prophecy, but a fact.

There was a special meeting for ladies in connection with this Bible Society gathering, and it was quite appropriate that the meeting should be addressed by Mrs. Barclay, wife of a clergyman, and authoress of *The Rosary*, and other pious, sentimental novels. Perhaps a few of the ladies knew enough to smile at Mrs. Barclay's assurance that no criticism could affect the Bible. The rest of her audience probably accepted her guarantee as that of a great authority.

The Church Army's expenditure for the past year was £252,257. All that money was spent by one of the many

similar religious bodies in England in trying to remedy a few of the very worst features of Christian civilisation. We say *trying* to remedy, because the attempt can never succeed. Social effects are produced by social causes, and dealing with the effects, instead of the causes, cannot bring about any radical change.

Dr. Clifford was one of the principal speakers at the recent annual meeting of the Liberation Society. Naturally he was delighted at the Welsh Disestablishment Bill. He hailed the forthcoming separation of Church and State in the Principality. By the separation of Church and State he means, of course, separation between Religion and the State. This same Dr. Clifford, however, is quite in favor of State Religion in the public elementary schools. State Religion for adults is abominable, but State Religion for children is absolutely "O. K." Such is Dr. Clifford's consistency! It is also that of the bulk of the Nonconformist party. And what is the explanation? Simply this. Church and State means an advantage to the Church of England; while Religion and the State means that privilege is shared by the Churches all round.

Disestablishment, according to Dr. Clifford, is going to lead to Christian unity. Nonsense! Christian unity never did exist and never will exist. We mean, of course, that it never existed voluntarily. There was a kind of unity under the Catholic Church in the Dark and Middle Ages, but it was a unity gained by repressing doubt and destroying heresy. Dr. Clifford pictures himself, as it were, lying down with the Bishop of London; but who else thinks that these two servants of Christ will ever repose in the same bed?

What we said about the English Positivists in our last week's article on "Frederic Harrison on Atheism" is curiously corroborated by an item in the May number of the *Positivist Review*. There is an extraordinary insularity amongst the Positivists. They seem, in their publications and formal proceedings at any rate, to be almost oblivious to the outer world. They move in a world of their own, and they appear to expect that all the rest of the world will come over to them in due time, by the ordinary course of nature. When the fine meeting took place in St. James's Hall in commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the death of Thomas Paine, it was mentioned in the *Positivist Review* (by Mr. Thomas, we think), but no mention was made of the fact that the meeting was organised by the National Secular Society, whose speakers were courteously held back in order that speakers representing other Societies might have the "fat" places in the evening's oratory. We had to call Mr. Swinny's attention to the omission and it was remedied in the next issue of his magazine. Mr. Swinny himself is a charming and modest gentleman; we find no fault with him personally; but see what has happened (perhaps in his absence) in the new number of the *Positivist* organ which he edits. We find the following paragraph in the notes after the articles:—

"The annual meeting of the 'Rationalist Peace Society' will be held in the Smaller Queen's Hall, Langham-place, W., on Sunday evening, May 19, at 7.30 p.m. The chair will be taken by Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., and Mr. Swinny will speak at the meeting. Admission free."

Now it is not "the annual meeting" of the Rationalist Peace Society which is to take place on May 19 at Queen's Hall. That "annual meeting" was held some time ago in quite another part of London. The meeting at Queen's Hall is a special one. The International Peace Congress will have been sitting all the previous week at Westminster, and the Christian churches will echo, on what is called "Peace Sunday," to more or less eloquent vaunts of the debt which the world's peace owes to Christianity. On that same day the Rationalist Peace Society will hold its meeting, for a different public, and a very different purpose. We are glad to know that Mr. Swinny, whom we are always glad to meet, is to speak at this meeting; and we are sure the audience will be much pleased to hear him. But would it not have been better in every way to give the names of the other speakers likewise? That is our own policy in the *Freethinker*.

The Baptist Union's membership does not increase with the growth of population. Curiously enough there has been some increase in England, Scotland, and Ireland, but this has been balanced by "a still further decline of membership in Wales." This is an important fact. It seems to us, at least, that the Welsh Revival, which was to do so much for Christianity, had the very opposite effect. The stimulus was followed by a great reaction, and many Christian people were disgusted at the hysterics of the movement, so strikingly embodied in Evan Roberts, who, we understand, has been "under care" ever since.

"Atheism will stalk rampant through the land." According to the Rev. R. E. Roberts, of St. Mark's, Peterborough, this is what is going to happen after Disestablishment in Wales. If the reverend gentleman is a true prophet Wales is to be congratulated.

The *Daily News* (May 4) complained of modern English cartoonists as having the "vices" of "politeness and courtesy." They don't go in enough for cynicism and hard-hitting. But when Freethinkers happen to think that truth (as Renan said) is higher than politeness, and that hard-hitting is as good in religious controversy as in any other, the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience is quite ready to see them sent to prison for "blasphemy." It is only Freethinkers who are punishable for hurting their opponents' feelings.

We see by the *North Wilts Herald* that Mr. J. R. Holmes, of East Hanney, Wantage, well known as a supplier of Malthusian literature, etc., has been indicted at the Wantage Petty Sessions for "unlawfully sending a postal packet, which enclosed a certain obscene book, contrary to the Statute." We thought the time was past for calling Malthusian publications "obscene." Colonels and Commanders, however, are not ideal figures on the bench during the trial of such a case. And when we see that the witness who was brought all the way from Ireland to supply evidence against Mr. Holmes was fifty years of age the whole affair becomes a farce. Mr. Holmes was ordered to pay £20 as fines, and £11 as costs, and £10 for the Irishman's holiday—£41 in all. The severity of this sentence was probably a good deal owing to the representative of the Public Prosecutor stating that the latter "regarded the case as a very serious one indeed, especially in these days when so much was being said about the decrease in population." From which it appears that Mr. Holmes's real offence is differing from the Public Prosecutor on the population question. We understand that this official is a Roman Catholic; a fact, if it be a fact, which explains why Mr. Holmes is interfered with at last after twenty years' unmolsted sale of Malthusian literature.

The London City Mission ought to perform wonders, for it spends a lot of money. According to the *Times* report of its annual meeting the Rev. T. S. Hutchinson—the secretary, we suppose—treated his hearers to a number of tid-bits. One of them was decidedly palatable. "It was reported last year," he said, "that two of the leading atheistic orators on Tower Hill had been won to Christ. The committee were happy to report that two more had come over to the Lord's side and were now seeking to build up the faith they formerly tried to overthrow." We don't recollect hearing of any atheistic orators on Tower Hill, but one lives and learns. At the same time, one would like to know the names of those four atheistic orators converted by the London City Mission. They appear to be bagged at the rate of two a year. Yet, strange to say, no news of the loss of these "leading" atheistic orators has reached our ears except through this rather cryptic announcement. Once more, then, we beg the London City Mission to make a clean breast of it.

The Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association has had a rather cheerless annual meeting. The secretary's report bewailed the fact that the Association's income had fallen seriously. In 1892 it was £1,264; last year it was £480. And the annual turnover of the National Sunday League was £100,000. Very sad, of course; but what can't be cured must be endured.

What a braying ass the Bishop of London is becoming. He says he is not ashamed of the Christian religion,—for preaching which he is paid £10,000 a year! And the reason he is not ashamed of it is that "it enabled those people to play the man when face to face with death" at the *Titanic* disaster. Does he really believe this? Or is he only talking "rot" for a living? Mohammedans beat Christians any day in facing death. As a matter of fact the fear of death is very little known outside Christendom.

The belief in witchcraft still obtains in parts of Switzerland. Cattle fell ill lately in the village of Noirmont, and the peasants accused an old woman of bewitching them. Although she denied the charge, they appointed a delegate to cast the devil out of her. This he proceeded to do with a stick. What happened to the devil we don't know. But we do know that the exorcist was tried and sentenced to two months' imprisonment, besides paying the costs (£1 4s.) and an indemnity (£14) to the poor old lady. He is very unlikely to try casting out the devil again.

Complaints were made at the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's recent annual meeting of "much more opposition than formerly" in India, and it was alleged that there could be "little doubt that the baneful influence of Mrs. Besant had strengthened this opposition." We should hardly have thought it from Mrs. Besant's late lectures in London. She is preaching something very much like the second coming of Christ.

Mr. Arthur Henderson, one of the Labor M.P.'s, is getting too godly for this world. He has just been denouncing "Sabbath desecration," and associating it with "gambling, drink, and impurity." Sabbath desecration, of course, simply means not spending Sunday according to the plan of the Old Testament and Mr. Arthur Henderson. Thinking people know that the Old Testament is played out. Mr. Henderson's condition may be open to debate.

Mrs. Elizabeth Rebecca Johnson, of the Hotel Metropole, Bournemouth, left £275,738 net. Many charities benefited under her will, and £5,000 was bequeathed to the Church Army, with smaller legacies to other Church institutions. The pious lady wished to be buried in her husband's tomb at Bournemouth. "I wish my funeral," she added, "to be conducted liberally and regardless of expense." Which reminds one of "the vanity of human wishes"—even amongst the "meek and lowly."

"Providence" seems to be always fairly active in America—or rather the U. S. A. part of it. The latest achievement of that personage is a tornado that swept through the State of Oklahoma, carrying death and destruction along a track more than a mile wide. One town, Lugert, was swept out of existence, and several others suffered considerably. Not far from Blair a train on the Orient line was blown into a ditch, eight of the passengers being killed and thirty injured. "He doeth all things well." Sometimes *too* well.

The new President of the Baptist Union, the Rev. J. W. Ewing, had to lament that "by a singular and sad irony the two great Protestant Powers of Europe, claiming to lead the van of Christian civilisation, stood, hand on sword-hilt, in a posture of mutual suspicion and fear." And this is nearly two thousand years after Christ. What a lovely confession! What a tribute to the moral power of Christianity!

The Lower House of Convocation was asked by the Arch-deacon of Ely to accept the following resolution:—

"That this House regrets the proposals to open Divinity Degrees at Oxford and Cambridge to laymen irrespective of their belief or disbelief in Christianity, and would prefer that the Universities should alter the conditions of conferring these Degrees, so that recognised ministers of any professedly Christian denomination may be eligible for them as well as Clerks in Holy Orders."

This was seconded by Canon Aitken, and supported by Dean Inge, of St. Paul's, who indulged in an allusive slap at the Bishop of London as "more distinguished for zeal and piety than erudition." Dean Inge, however, was concerned at the thought that "unbelievers" might get amongst the Doctors of Divinity. He suggested, therefore, that the regulations might be so drawn as to exclude them. The Dean of Westminster moved an amendment that the Divinity Degrees at Oxford and Cambridge should be open to "all competent students." But both the resolution and the amendment were defeated by a motion for "the previous question." So all things remain for the best in the best of all possible worlds. But who would have thought that there would be a rush of "unbelievers" to become Doctors of Divinity?

A most extraordinary case is that of Pastor Liebo, the Catholic Army chaplain, whose death has occurred at Berlin, through atropine poisoning. His sole income was thought to be his pension of £115 yearly and about £40 interest on a small legacy. Yet he had accumulated a large collection of jewels, porcelain, and other objects of art worth some £125,000. It appears that he was at one time engaged in mission work in Africa and Asia, and especially in India. Does this explain his resources?

"Lord Salisbury did not share Dr. Johnson's profound reverence for the hierarchy. The Conservative leader, when at the Foreign Office, generally used to lunch either at the Athenæum or the Junior Carlton. One day, as he was leaving the office at lunch-time, his private secretary noticed that it was raining, and offered his chief an umbrella. 'No, thank you,' remarked Lord Salisbury, 'I'm going to the Athenæum to-day, and I've lost too many umbrellas there. You can't trust those bishops.'"—*Daily Chronicle* (May 3).

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, May 12, South Place Chapel, Finsbury, E.C. : at 7, "Israel Zangwill's 'The Next Religion.'"

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—May 12, m., Finsbury Park, a., Parliament Hill.
- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £135 4s. 8d. Received since:—A. C. B., 5s.; John Wrofter (S. Africa), £2.
- PETER MORRISON.—Glad to hear our mention of your case has brought you still further help. It was very good of Mr. Jessop to send you a remittance, and also to send you a medical specialist all the way from Yorkshire entirely at his own expense. We suppose this is another instance of the "hardness" of Atheists.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- JOHN WROFTER (S. Africa), contributing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "I wish I could afford to send more. You will permit me to wish that you may long be spared to carry on the noble work you are engaged in. All friends of Freethought are under a great obligation to yourself and the splendid lot of men who assist to carry on the *Freethinker*."
- C. HENRY.—We agree with you essentially, but the time is not ripe for such an agitation yet, and when it is the matter should be taken up by some medical authority.
- G. DASH (India).—Glad you find this journal "so interesting and instructive." We note your congratulation on the other matter.
- E. B.—Thanks for cuttings.
- A. KIRKWOOD.—Glad to have your very interesting and encouraging letter.
- MISS VANCE acknowledges:—*Benevolent Fund*—Islington Branch 5s., Wood Green 5s., Manchester 14s., Huddersfield 10s.; *General Fund*—Islington Branch 5s., Wood Green 2s. 6d., Manchester £1 2s. 6d.
- T. A. JACKSON.—We are obliged to you for your long letter re your prosecution and imprisonment, but as it arrives on Tuesday morning you will understand that we can do nothing with it till next week.
- W. WARNER.—Tuesday morning is too late for such things—and we keep saying so. We are glad that Mr. Bates has had a successful week's meetings at Leicester.
- T. C.—Thanks for cuttings.
- H. DAWSON.—Your letter is welcome, but it arrives on Tuesday, and we can say nothing as to the first half. With regard to your question,—we cannot say that no Atheist ever committed a murder in this country, where Christians are so exasperating. One instance occurred while we were in prison in 1883. The man's name was Powell. He struck his employer under great provocation, and it was rather manslaughter than murder, but he was hung.
- J. C. GOODFELLOW.—Thanks for your efforts to make the *Freethinker* better known. We shall be glad to hear the result of your latest endeavor. Your enclosed list shall have attention. Thanks again.
- L. J. BURROWS.—Next week. Too late for this.
- H. JOHNSTON.—You forget that our remark was in reply to the reverend gentleman's. His parents were not in our mind or meaning. We are sorry the joke missed fire.
- 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.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Special.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

The National Secular Society has, after all, succeeded in effecting an entrance into Leeds. Through the agency of Mr. John Grange, one of its vice-presidents, it has secured the Assembly Hall, Briggate, for Whit-Sunday. This is a fine handsome hall in the very centre of the town and well-known to everybody. There is no need to dilate on the reasons for going to Leeds this year. They are only too obvious. But one reason may be specially mentioned. The

Conference will be a challenge to Mr. Reginald McKenna, the Home Secretary, who has been singing the praise of the Blasphemy Laws in the House of Commons. Let this challenge be as bold and strong as we can make it. We appeal to the Branches, members, and even friends of the National Secular Society, to assemble at Leeds in as large number as possible on Whit-Sunday.

G. W. FOOTE (*President N. S. S.*).

Sugar Plums.

South-place Chapel does not, after all, seem such a good pitch for Sunday evening Freethought lectures, although it is a very good pitch for weeknight meetings; or else the change from Queen's Hall for a couple of evenings had not been sufficiently advertised,—and how to advertise such meetings is one of the really difficult problems in London. Anyhow, there was only a middling audience on Sunday evening; a middling audience, that is, for Mr. Foote. But the appreciation and applause with which the lecture on "The Shakespeare Festival and its Lessons" was followed were sufficiently marked. Mr. W. Heaford, who presided, evidently voiced the feeling of those in front of him when he said he hoped the time would come when less nonsense would be published in Monday morning's newspapers and more reports of such lectures as the one they had listened to. There was no discussion and only one question.

Mr. Foote's subject at South-place Chapel this evening (May 12) will be "Israel Zangwill's *The Next Religion*"—the play which the Censor has banned for its "offensive" attacks on Christianity—as Mr. Baughan puts it in the *Daily News*. Mr. C. Cohen takes the chair on this occasion.

Mr. Cohen's visit to Belfast was successful. The hall was well filled each evening, and the *Northern Whig*, *Belfast News Letter*, and *Evening Telegraph* gave good reports of the lectures. Mr. Cohen's conclusion is that there is a distinctly Freethought element in Belfast worth cultivating.

A first instalment of Mr. Heaford's article on the Mediaevalism of Modern Spain, which was published in the *Freethinker* of April 14, is translated into Portuguese in the columns of our Lisbon contemporary, *O Livro Pensamento*. The talented editor, Senhor Augusto Jose Vieira, was one of the prime movers in the great Freethought advance made in Portugal. *O Livro Pensamento* began its career last February. We wish it and its work every success.

We may be allowed, perhaps, to advise our readers who happen to be able to afford a shilling as well as sixpence, that the cloth-bound edition of Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's *Penalties Upon Opinion* is the one for their money. Both for looks and permanency the extra sixpence for the better edition is a good investment. And while we are writing on the subject we may repeat our recommendation of Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's book as one that all serious Freethinkers should possess—if only to lend to Christian friends as a careful statement of the history of the Blasphemy Laws and of the disabilities under which Freethought still suffers.

The Rationalist Peace Society, of which Mr. J. M. Robertson is President and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner "chairman" of committee, is organising a public meeting at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening, May 19. We hope we need not appeal to Freethinkers to make that meeting a great success. The hall should be crowded. It will be Peace Sunday, and the religious bodies will be boasting of how the peace of the world is all owing to Christianity. Secularists have the opportunity of making a much-needed counter demonstration. The list of speakers includes Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Miss K. B. Kough, Mr. Herbert Burrows, Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. G. Greenwood, M.P., and Mr. S. H. Swinny, M.A.

"A. M." in the *Ardrossan Herald* of April 26 contributes a long descriptive article on "A First Impression of London." He called at 2 Newcastle-street, "but it was 9 p.m. and the premises were closed." Referring to this journal "A. M." writes: "The *Freethinker* is edited by the president in person, Mr. G. W. Foote. The famous editors of Fleet-street and Holborn pretend to be oblivious of this great man's existence. The slight, perhaps, is the surest index of fame. Foote has carved, and is still making, deep impressions on the scroll of Time; these may be read and

regarded when the scratchings of his brother scribes are blotted out and forgotten."

Mademoiselle Marthe Alexander (12 Rue Bodenbroeck, Brussels), daughter of the manager of our Belgian Free-thought contemporary, *La Pensée*, would like to find amongst English Freethinkers a few correspondents for her fellow pupils of the Ecole Normale Laïque d'Institutrices at Brussels. Intending correspondents should write to Mlle. Alexander as above.

It is rather curious that the late Mr. W. T. Stead mentioned the *Freethinker* again in the last number he edited of his *Review of Reviews*. Speaking of Mr. Israel Zangwill's censored play, *The Next Religion*, Mr. Stead said: "What Mr. Zangwill actually means to teach by it is, I confess, hardly clear to me. At the beginning it seems as if the play was intended to delight the heart of the Editor of the *Freethinker*." Mr. Stead was above the paltry common conspiracy of silence against the *Freethinker* in the ordinary press. When the Separation Law was first being put into operation in France—with some unfairness, as we argued, to the Catholic Church—Mr. Stead remarked how curious it was that the only English journalist who had lifted a pen in behalf of justice even to the Catholic Church was the editor of the *Freethinker*. It was good of Mr. Stead to say so,—and the worst of it was, in one way, that it was true.

We have received the first number of the *Rationalist Peace Quarterly*, the organ of the Rationalist Peace Society. It is a modest little publication at present, but we trust it is destined to develop in size in the no distant future. The price is one penny. Copies are obtainable at the Society's office, 38 Cursitor-street, E.C. Some of our readers will probably like to see this pioneer publication.

The *Secular Education Chronicle*, issued by the Secular Education League, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, London, W.C., is another paper to which we may call attention. The May number contains several interesting items. A penny stamp will secure a copy post-paid from the League's secretary, Mr. Harry Snell.

The Edmonton Branch asks us to announce that Mr. J. Hecht is conducting a party of members and friends through the British Museum on May 25. London "saints" wishing to join the party should meet outside the Museum at 2.45 p.m.

Mr. Thomas Hardy contributes a General Preface to the first volume of the new Wessex Edition of his works. Our readers will be interested in the following passage:—

"Positive views on the Whence and the Wherefore of things have never been advanced by this pen as a consistent philosophy. Nor is it likely, indeed, that imaginative writings extending over more than 40 years would exhibit a coherent scientific theory of the universe even if it had been attempted—of that universe concerning which Spencer owns to the 'paralysing thought' that possibly there exists no comprehension of it anywhere. But such objectless consistency never has been attempted, and the sentiments in the following pages have been stated truly to be mere impressions of the moment and not convictions or arguments.

"That these impressions have been condemned as 'pessimistic'—as if that were a very wicked adjective—shows a curious muddle-mindedness. It must be obvious that there is a higher characteristic of philosophy than pessimism, or than meliorism, or even than the optimism of these critics—which is truth. Existence is either ordered in a certain way, or it is not so ordered, and conjectures which harmonise best with experience are removed above all comparison with other conjectures which do not so harmonise. So that to say one view is worse than other views, without proving it erroneous, implies the possibility of a false view being better or more expedient than a true view; and no pragmatic proppings can make that idolum specus stand on its feet, for it postulates a prescience denied to humanity."

Truth, of course, is the highest and all-important characteristic of any doctrine. George Eliot said that she had only one objection to Christianity—it wasn't true.

We omitted to mention that the late M. Henri Brisson, President of the French Chamber of Deputies, who was accorded a State funeral, expressed in his will a desire to be buried beside his wife in Montmartre Cemetery. The funeral was conducted without religious rites. M. Brisson was an old Freethinker, and many Christians who listen to idle tales of the "loose lives of unbelievers" will be surprised to hear that he and his wife were so devotedly attached to each other that they were deeply affected when he lost his seat in Paris and had to stand for a seat in the South of France. It was their first separation for forty years. Her death left him a broken man.

Old Testament History.—IX.

(Continued from p. 284.)

THE last of the kings of Israel in the last table was Ahab (873—851 B.C.). This king, according to the Bible account, was at war with Benhadad king of Syria during all but the last three years of his reign. We find, however, from the Assyrian inscriptions that after his reconciliation with Benhadad he joined that king and eleven other princes in fighting against Shalmaneser II., king of Assyria, who had invaded Syria and captured several cities. A great battle was fought near Karkar (853 B.C.) in which the thirteen Confederates were defeated. The united forces of the latter, it is stated, numbered 5,840 chariots and carriages, 61,900 footmen, and 1,000 camels, besides men from "the country of Ammon" not numbered. Of these forces Ahab had contributed 2,000 chariots and 10,000 men. In the Assyrian record of the battle Shalmaneser says: "From the city of Karkar to the city of Kirzan I utterly defeated them; 14,000 of their fighting-men I slew with weapons." Respecting this historical event the book of Kings is silent, though it finds space in Ahab's reign for three chapters of fiction concerning the legendary doings of "Elijah the Tishbite."

Continuing the table of succession of the kings of Judah and Israel—which from the reign of Ahab to the captivity of Judah has to be reduced by 46 years—we get the following approximate dates:—

B. C.	JUDAH.	Years.	B. C.	ISRAEL.	Years.
			851 ..	Ahaziah ..	1
			850 ..	Jehoram ..	8
846 ..	Jehoram ..	3			
843 ..	Ahaziah ..	1			
842 ..	Athaliah ..	6	843 ..	Jehu ..	28
836 ..	Jehoash ..	40			
			814 ..	Jehohaz ..	17
			798 ..	Jehoash ..	16
797 ..	Amaziah ..	29			
			783 ..	Jeroboam II..	36

Coming now to the book of 2 Kings, the first event of history that meets us is the statement in the first verse—"And Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab." All the rest of the first chapter (from verse 3) has to do with the legendary "history" of Elijah, as has also the whole of the second chapter. In verse 11 of the latter chapter we read:—

"As they still went on, and talked, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

The foregoing mythical event appears to have reference, not to a man or prophet, but, as the name denotes, to "the god Yahu." The name "Elijah" signifies "the god Yahu" or "god is Yahu," and plainly suggests his mythical origin—that deity apparently being conceived as going about masquerading as a prophet. Among the antiquities in the British Museum is preserved an ancient Phœnician coin of the fourth century B.C.—that is to say, before the books of Kings were compiled—upon one side of which is inscribed, in the old Hebrew characters, the figure of a god in a chariot of flame, and over the head of the deity is the word YHU. This, if I am not very much mistaken, plainly indicates the origin of the so-called "translation" of Elijah. The coin also shows that the god Yahu or Yahu-ah was worshiped by other inhabitants of Canaan besides the people of Judah.

In chapter iii. we have an account of the expedition of three confederate kings—Jehoram of Israel, Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the king of Edom—against Mesha, the king of Moab, who had thrown off the Israelitish yoke. According to this account, the three allied kings defeated the Moabites with great slaughter, and followed them into the land of Moab, slaying as they went. Then we find the following statement:—

"And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him.....he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a

burnt offering upon the wall. And there came great wrath upon Israel; and they departed from him, and returned to their own land" (2 Kings iii. 26, 27).

The words italicised are in the marginal reading; those in the text have no meaning. The Israelites did not raise the siege in disgust at such an inhuman proceeding, and then return peaceably to their own land, as is implied. They suffered a crushing defeat. The sacrifice of the king of Moab's son had the effect of inspiring the superstitious Moabites with fresh courage, and the equally superstitious Israelites with terror. The latter fled panic-stricken, pursued by the victorious Moabites. Then, as stated in the foregoing passage, "there came great wrath upon Israel"; in other words, there was a great slaughter of the men of the retreating forces. On the "Moabite Stone," set up by Mesha, the king of Moab, to commemorate his emancipation from the yoke of Israel, we find the following statements:—

"I am Mesha, the son of Khemosh-melech, the Dibonite. My father was king of Moab 30 years, and I became king after my father. And I have erected this pillar to Khemosh in Korkha: a pillar of deliverance, for he delivered me from all the kings, and let me see my desire upon all my enemies.....Omri had taken the land of Medeba.....but Khemosh restored it in my days.....and the king of Israel built Ataroth; and I fought against the city and took it. And I slew all the men of the city for the well-pleasing of Khemosh and Moab.....And Khemosh spake unto me, saying, 'Go, take Nebo from Israel.' And I went by night, and fought against it from the break of day until noon; and I took it, and slew them all—seven thousand men and boys and women and maidens—for I had devoted them to Ashtar-Khemosh [i.e., the consort of Khemosh]. And I took from it the altars of Yahveh, and dragged them before Khemosh," etc.

We see from this that Moab was as priest-ridden as Israel or Judah. Every victory was ascribed to the national god, and every defeat to the alleged fact that the king "did that which was evil" in the sight of Yahveh or Khemosh. That Mesha's monument was set up to commemorate victories, and not defeats, is a matter beyond question. The pillar being a record of victory and dedicated to Khemosh, was of course deemed sacred in Moab, and so escaped destruction, until in the course of time its existence was probably forgotten. A similar practice of setting up a pillar to commemorate a victory appears to have prevailed in Israel (see 1 Sam. vii. 12). In the latter case there was no inscription; the stone was simply called "Eben-ezer," namely "the stone of help." We see, also, from Mesha's inscription that the inhuman practice of slaughtering in cold blood all the inhabitants of a captured city was not confined to the Israelites, but was common in that age to all the nations in and around Canaan—though not, perhaps, of such a fiendish character as some of the actions perpetrated by the "man after God's own heart" (see 1 Sam. xxviii. 8—11; 2 Sam. viii. 2; xii. 9).

Returning to the Old Testament history proper, we find that in this period more space is given to the legendary fictions relating to the prophet Elisha than to the history of the Hebrew kings. This so-called "prophet" may, I think, be regarded as a historical figure. There were plenty of self-constituted prophets and seers in Israel and Judah from the earliest times; but we must draw the line at the alleged working of miracles and foreknowledge of future events. If these be eliminated, the little that remains of the life of Elisha may be set down as historical. According to the Bible "history," this great "prophet" did the following miraculous works: He smote the waters of Jordan with a mantle, and the waters divided to let him pass over; he "healed" the bitter waters by casting salt into them; he cursed some children who mocked him, and two she bears came out of a wood and "tare forty-two of them"; he miraculously increased a widow's oil, so that she was able to pay her debts; he promised a son to a woman of Shunem, and afterwards raised this son from the dead; he "healed" deadly pottage by casting meal into the pot containing it; he fed a

hundred men with twenty barley rolls, and had bread remaining; he cured Naaman the Syrian of leprosy, and transferred the leprosy to his servant; he caused an iron axe-head to swim by casting a stick into the water; he made known to the king of Israel the secret plans of the king of Syria; he opened the eyes of his new servant to see the Lord's "horses and chariots of fire" that were invisible; he smote a Syrian army with blindness, and afterwards restored their sight; he predicted great plenty on the morrow during a famine in Samaria—which came to pass; etc. The paragraphs and chapters which contain these childish stories are the following: 2 Kings ii. 14—end; iv. i—end; v. 1—end; vi. 1—end; vii. 1—end; viii. 1—15; xiii. 15—19, 21. In addition to these legendary narratives, we also find the following interpolations by the post-exilic editors: 2 Kings ix. 7—10, 34—37; x. 10, 30; xiv. 6.

One of the stories told of Elisha ends as follows:—

2 Kings vi. 23.—"So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel."

The next narrative related of that prophet commences:—

2 Kings vi. 24.—"And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria."

The date of the accession of Jehoram king of Israel is stated to be "in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah" (2 Kings i. 17)—"in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah" (2 Kings iii. 1). According to the first statement Jehoram of Israel commenced to reign in 844 B.C.; according to the second, he commenced in 853 B.C. Neither of these is correct. Ahab was king in 853 B.C., as proved by the battle of Karkar, and his son Ahaziah was king in 851 B.C.; whence we get Jehoram 850 B.C.

We find from the inscriptions of Shalmaneser II. that that king invaded Syria in the years 853, 848, 845, 841, and 838 B.C. In the first three of these campaigns "Hadad-eder of Damascus"—the Bible "Benhadad"—is named as his strongest opponent; but in the last two, this honor is given to "Hazael of Damascus." In his fourth campaign (841 B.C.), after defeating Hazael and twelve allied kings, Shalmaneser says:—

"At that time I received the tribute of the Tyrians, the Sidonians, and of Jehu the son of Omri."

The appellation "Jehu the son of Omri" simply shows that Omri had made a great name for himself; so much so, indeed, that the kingdom of Israel, and its capital city Samaria—the latter built by Omri (1 Kings xvi. 24)—were associated with his name for several generations after his death.

Furthermore, we find from the Assyrian inscriptions that a later monarch—Rimmon-nirari III.—spent four years in Syria and Palestine reducing the kings of those districts to subjection. His inscription, written 806 B.C., reads:—

"I subdued the land of the Hittites and the land of the Amorites to their fullest extent: Tyre, Sidon, Beth-Omri, Edom, and Philistia, to the Sea of the Setting Sun, laid tribute and gifts at my feet," etc.

The land of "Beth-Omri," that is, of "the house of Omri," was the land of Samaria or kingdom of Israel. The name of its king is not mentioned. It would seem, also, that neither Shalmaneser nor Rimmon-nirari came so far south as Judah; for no king of that kingdom is named by either. ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

UNANSWERABLE.

Elsie had been naughty, and her thoughtless mother had told her she must go to her room and ask God's pardon. Elsie went, but came back very quickly. Her mother said:

"Have you asked God to forgive you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Well, you say that God knows everything that we are going to do. Then he knew I was going to be naughty, and why should I ask him to forgive me when he let me do it?"

The Ferrer Case.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On March 16 of this year I wrote a letter to *Justice* pointing out that a statement which had been industriously spread throughout Europe by the powerful secret society of which Ferrer became a member after his sudden accession to fortune, was a falsehood. This statement was that the Supreme Court of Spain had declared Ferrer innocent. I pointed out at the time that the falsehood, like most Masonic falsehoods, consisted in suggestion; that no Court had declared Ferrer innocent, and that what had happened was the relief of his estate from costs in a particular matter. But I took care to state that my denial was made "upon information," that is, I was writing without the documents before me and only upon the evidence of others. In your issue of the following week, March 24, you wrote, in ignorance of what I have myself written upon the matter, that my notions of evidence were elementary. As I had found it impossible in the past to get the truth about Ferrer published in the general press of this country, I sent you a letter which you were good enough to publish in the following week, begging you to give me half a column of your space with which to contrast with this "fantastic story" (as I rightly called it) the actual record of the Court.

You were good enough to accede to that request. The full record of the decision is now in my hands. It refers to a number of points of subsidiary importance and is 2,000 words in length, but if you care for it as a whole I shall be only too happy to put it at your disposal. Meanwhile, I will make no more call upon your space than to quote the essential passage.

Ferrer was condemned as the general inspirer and author of the riots. The State claimed no damages against him, but an embargo was laid upon his property in case private damages could be claimed, and certain individual interests that had suffered during the riots claimed damages against the estate. The technical legality of their claim was tested before the Military Court of Appeal, which gave its judgment upon December 29 last. This Court of Appeal pointed out that the technical right to such a claim, though dependent upon several clauses in the Military and Civil Code, were all ultimately referable to a particular clause of the Military Code, to wit, Clause 242; and it gave judgment that this Clause No. 242 did not apply under the circumstances, and that, therefore, the embargo must be raised. The determining words of the judgment lie in two passages which are as follows:—

The first recalls the particular provisions of that clause, which are to the effect that general action gives no claim to damages and that such are only obtainable for specific acts which can be proved due to the direct personal orders of the person claimed against. The significant words of this passage (the best translation I can make) are as follows:—

"Article 242 expressly and concretely directs that misdemeanors at common law, committed during the rebellion and motivated by it, must be punished separately from the rebellion; and when the actual authors cannot be discovered, there shall be punished the principal heads of the rebellion at whose immediate orders the rebels who committed (*such deeds*), words which categorically determine that an action lies against the principal chiefs of the rebellion as authors of said misdemeanors at common law, only when two circumstances concur. First, that the immediate perpetrators of these misdemeanors cannot be discovered. Secondly, that whoever they were, they were not under general orders, but under immediate orders; that is to say, under the direct and immediate command of the aforesaid (heads of the rebellion)."

The second and determining passage (of which this is the translation) which applies the above to this particular case is as follows:—

"Seeing that Ferrer was not condemned on any of the verdicts independent of that upon which he was executed, and was, therefore, not declared criminally and civilly responsible for the misdemeanors to which Article 242 of the Military Code refers" (*that is, for the specific acts against which particular individuals claimed*) "the embargo placed upon his property cannot be sustained as a legal consequence of his misdemeanors of military rebellion."

Upon this reasoning the Court releases the estate from the embargo provisionally placed upon it, pending its decision.

If this evidence is not drastic enough for those who propagated the falsehood, I cannot hope to convince them or their dupes; no can anybody else. There is a type of loose thinker who will always believe what he wants to believe in the face of any evidence, but it is waste of time to argue with fanatics of the sort.

H. BELLOC.

REPLY TO MR. BELLOC.

Mr. Belloc's allegations about the "falsehood" spread through Europe by his famous *bête noire*, the Grand Orient, are fantastic imaginings. I do not know anybody who has ventured to say that the Decree declared Ferrer innocent. Inferentially, and in essence, the declaration is there; and Ferrer's friends and Ferrer's foes are both right, from their respective points of view, in interpreting the Decree—praising or deploring it—as a virtual, if not as a legal, annulment of the sentence of death.

The statement originally "spread through Europe," not by the Freemasons but by a non-Freemason, M. Georges Lorand, was that the Decree—by its admission that "it does not appear from any of the aforesaid numerous trials [arising out of the insurrection] that Ferrer had been concerned therein, nor consequently declared responsible"—amounted logically, if not legally, to the rehabilitation of Ferrer.

Now, how does Mr. Belloc interpret the unexpected restitution of Ferrer's goods? Either inspired by Mr. Wyndham Bewes (*vide Daily News* of February 23) or making himself the fogleman of a theory invented by a "powerful secret society" not remotely connected with the "Society of Jesus," he at first stated his view that "what had happened was the relief of his (Ferrer's) estate from costs in a particular matter." If Mr. Belloc had honored me by reading my *Freethinker* article of March 10 he would have seen that his fantastic theory of "costs" is matched by another Catholic figment, bred in Spain, that the goods were restored because they were "illegally confiscated." I presume from his letter that he has now dropped the doctrine of "costs."

I cannot pretend to harmonise the language of the Decree with the terms and findings of the original sentence of death and confiscation. That sentence, after adjudging Ferrer guilty as "author and chief of the rebellion," condemned him to death and (the Spanish text is now before me) "condemning him moreover to pay indemnity for all the damages and losses caused by the burnings, sackings, and deteriorations of the roadways, railways, and telegraphic ways which happened during the rebellion, all the property of Ferrer Guardia to be applied towards the extinction of that civil responsibility until the amount thereof shall be declared." I admit, too, that the language of the Decree (see my article of February 25, citing Clause 6, and, generally, as to the import and true interpretation of the Decree) bears out Mr. Belloc's statement that "the State claimed no damages against him," but to my mind it is clear that the disculpatory findings of the Decree and the consequent restitution of Ferrer's property ordered and made effectual thereunder, logically tear the original sentence to tatters and pave the way to revision. An "author and chief" of a devastating rebellion to whom, or to whose orders or subordinates, after more than two years judicial inquiry, no act of destruction is traceable, and whose civil and criminal responsibility thereunder is declared *nil*, becomes a rebel chief *pour rire*.

A controversialist so well documented as Mr. Belloc is will no doubt have read Dr. Sinarro's great book, *El Proceso Ferrer, etc.* On page 522 he will find the long indictment by the Fiscal claiming that the civil responsibility of Ferrer arising out of Clause 242 should be met and made effective out of the whole of his property. He will also find (page 336, note 2) that the goods of no man amongst the many prosecuted on account of the rebellion, other than Ferrer and his goods, were condemned or placed under embargo for the discharge of the relative civil responsibility for these losses. The fact is the bigots in Spain wanted Ferrer's property as well as his life—and unhappily the forfeiture of his life by the hurried processes of the mock trial was more easily made irreparable than the forfeiture of the property.

If Mr. Belloc will read the death sentence he will see that the forfeiture of the property was a condemnation "to indemnify all the damages and losses" (see above), and—this is the essential point—the embargo on Ferrer's goods was to remain until the amount (*cuantía*) of Ferrer's civil responsibility shall be determined. In other words, the property was seized until the clerical and other claimants against it could make good their demands for indemnity, Ferrer's full responsibility, however, being declared *in limine*. That being so, I am content to rely upon Mr. Belloc's final quotation from the Decree in order to show that the "crimes committed in the rebellion" so far, at least, as they affected damage to property, were admittedly not committed under "the immediate orders" or "by the direct command" of Ferrer. Of course, in the circumstances the estate had to be relieved of embargo. The second member of the original sentence is gone, and the death sentence now becomes ripe for revision. Mr. Belloc's friends in Spain already perceive this. Hence their tears in the Senate and the press, for the day of redress for all the churches and convents burned is gone.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

THE ASSEMBLY HALL, BRIGGATE,
Leeds.

WHIT-SUNDAY, MAY 26, 1912.

Agenda.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report. By PRESIDENT.
3. Reception of Report.
4. Financial Report.
5. Election of President.
Motion by North London and Kingsland Branches:—
"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."
6. Election of Vice-Presidents.
The following are nominated by the Executive for re-election: J. Barry, W. H. Baker, J. G. Bartram, E. Bowman, R. Chapman, Victor Charbonnel, E. A. Chariton, C. Cohen, W. W. Collions, H. Cowell, W. Davey, F. A. Davies, J. G. Dobson, R. G. Fathers, Léon Furnémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, J. Hammond, W. Heaford, S. L. Hurd, R. Johnson, Miss Kathleen B. Kough, W. Leat, J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, James McGlashen, G. B. H. McCluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, W. T. Pitt, C. G. Quinton, J. T. Ross, Miss Mary Ross, G. Roleffs, Mrs. Roleffs, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, S. Samuels, T. Shore, H. Silverstein, W. H. Spivey, Miss Alma Stanley, Charles Steptoe, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, Miss E. M. Vance, F. E. Willis, C. J. Whitwell, Frederick Wood, G. White.
7. Election of Auditors.
8. Motion by Kingsland Branch:—
"That the rule with regard to members whose subscriptions are in arrear be altered as follows: That members whose subscriptions are twelve months in arrear be notified to that effect, and be struck off the roll if the arrear of subscription is not paid within six weeks."
9. Motion by Birmingham Branch:—
"That the names and addresses of all Branch secretaries be published regularly in the *Freethinker*."
10. Motion by Wood Green Branch:—
"That it is desirable that a half-yearly meeting of N. S. S. members resident within the London district be organised for the purpose of discussing policy, propaganda, etc.; such meeting to be held in March and October."
11. Motion by North London Branch:—
"That this Conference, feeling that the increased circulation of the *Freethinker* is of the highest importance to Freethought propaganda, and realising the difficulties experienced in obtaining it locally in consequence of the general boycott by the newsagents, hereby instructs the Executive to make it an absolute condition in future that every Branch of the N. S. S. shall appoint at least one member to undertake a weekly sale, such member's name and address to be published in the *Freethinker*, and terms to be arranged by the Executive."
12. Motion by Camberwell Branch:—
"That it be an instruction to the Executive to advertise the *Freethinker* as widely as possible in any locality where any Freethinker is being prosecuted, either for "blasphemy" or on any other charge that may be the result of Freethought advocacy."
13. Motion by Executive:—
"That this Conference hails with much satisfaction the formation of the Rationalist Peace Society, whose object is to disassociate the labor of non-Christians for peace from the intrusive piety of Christian workers in the same cause, and to promote the peace of the world on secular lines; and that this Conference promises the Rationalist Peace Society full support and wishes it all success."
14. Motion by Mr. Cohen:—
"That this Conference is greatly pleased at the failure of the Single-School Areas Education Bill and trusts that the same fate will overtake the promised Education Bill of the Government if framed on similar lines of Nonconformist advantage."

15. Motion by Mr. J. T. Lloyd:—

"That this Conference expresses its indignation at the latest revival of the Blasphemy Laws, which takes place only under Liberal Administrations, and severely condemns the ill-informed and insolent attitude of the Home Secretary in relation to the prosecutions and imprisonments at Leeds; and that this Conference welcomes the effort now being made in London to form a National Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws."

16. Motion by Mr. W. Heaford:—

"That this Conference considers it advisable, and even necessary, that the N. S. S. should be amply represented at the approaching International Freethought Congress."

By order of the Executive,

G. W. FOOTE, *President*.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

The Bishop.

The estate of Dr. Wordsworth (late Bishop of Salisbury) was valued at £33,455; Bishop Gott (Truro) died worth £82,611; Bishop Walsham Howe, £72,240; Bishop Tufnell, £65,805; Archbishop Thomson (York), £54,556; Archbishop Benson, £35,000.

When Bishop after Bishop dies,
And leaves a record showing
With shekels by the thousand he
Was really overflowing,
It makes the casual human think,
While yawning out the sermon,
How good it is to spread your fleece
Beneath the dews of Hermon.

A calf of gold in days of old
Was lifted up by Aaron,
And lusty Levites found it fair
As roses out of Sharon;
And so to-day a calf of gold
Before the people poses,
As set on high by priestly hands
Without the fear of Moses.

The stout Apostle trudged of old,
Of wealth a dour despiser;
But modern bishops seem to ape
In truth the very miser;
With bags of gold securely placed,
His Grace will preach submission,
And deem his twenty thousand pile
A Beatific Vision.

For ev'ry text that that curses wealth
He hath a gloss artistic,
And ev'ry text that damns the rich—
Its meaning is but mystic;
And when his little day is done,
He hopes at last to wheedle
That heavenly guide that leads him to
The eye within the needle.

One thing is surely out of date,
Our priestly lords agree on—
The Gospel stern that once was preached
By Him—the Galilean;
With one brief simple epitaph
His Grace departs contented:
"His Noble Self died full of Pol,
And deeply was lamented!"

—*Sydney Bulletin*.

FURNESS BORN.

AN INDIAN ANECDOTE.

One evening a man with a fine voice sang a long, rollicking aria rather like a buffo song from an Italian opera. It was much applauded, and I asked the native gentleman attending me if it was a comic song. "Yes," he said, "that is it—a comic song." So I asked him what it was about. "Oh," he replied in the airy way they all have, "some little praise of God and all that."—*Rev. E. Weedon, "A Year with the Gaskwar of Baroda."*

Obituary.

ON May 3 Mr. Henry Gage, a prominent member of the Camberwell Branch of the N. S. S. died at his residence at Loughborough Junction. He was seventy years of age, and had been in failing health for some years. He had been a regular reader of the *Freethinker* since its foundation, and he took an active part in the lectures at the New Church-road Hall, and, indeed, in all matters relating to the Branch.—C. E. S.

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.

SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL (Finsbury, E.C.): 7, G. W. Foote, "Israel Zangwill's 'The Next Religion.'"

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15 and 6.15, A. B. Moss, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, James Rowney, "Let Us Pray."

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, W. J. Ramsey, "The Silliness of Christianity."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, E. Burke, "The Bankruptcy of Jesus Christ."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, E. C. Saphin, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Davidson, "If Jesus Worked at the Bench."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

GRIMSBY (Freeman-street Market): Joseph A. E. Bates—Monday, May 13, at 8, "The Birth and Death of Gods"; Tuesday, 14, at 8, "The Enigma of Life and Death"; Wednesday, 15, at 8, "Tragedy of the Cross"; Thursday, 16, at 8, "Philosophic Necessity of Materialism"; Friday, 17, at 8, "The Uselessness of Monarchy."

LAINDON, ESSEX (opposite Luff's Hairdressing Saloon): Saturday, May 11, at 7, R. H. Rosetti, "God, Laidon, and Freethought."

LINCOLN (opposite Corn Exchange): 7.15, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Philosophic Necessity of Materialism."

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Hunting Skunks*, G. W. Foote; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll. 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 6d. per hundred, post free 7d. Special rates for larger quantities. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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