

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

There is neither virtue, utility, nor courage, in attacking prostrate opinions.....It is living, thriving, mischievous error, which calls for refutation; it is corrupt, profitable, and intriguing misrepresentation, which should be fearlessly attacked.

—SIR T. C. MORGAN, M.D.

Our "Boycott."

WE were struck by the following paragraph in the "Books and Booksellers" column of the *Daily News* on Wednesday, May 22:—

"I learn from the *Bodelian* that Mr. James Bryce's novel, the *Story of a Ploughboy*, has been treated in rather an amusing fashion by the committee of the Carnegie Library at Stirling. It has been banned from the general section, but has been placed among the dictionaries and solid works of the Reference Department."

The "I" of that paragraph had evidently never seen a record of such treatment of books or other publications before. He would have been perfectly familiar with it, however, if he had deigned to look at a journal which is better worth his attention than most of those he reads now for choice or as a matter of duty. We refer to the *Freethinker*. This journal has been treated in that "amusing fashion" (though it may easily be something worse than amusing) any number of times and in all parts of the country. Many of our readers will probably remember the battle royal which raged over the *Freethinker* at West Ham. It was turned out of the Free Library reading rooms, and the action roused so much resentment that it nearly resulted in a poll of the ratepayers over the fate of this "wicked periodical." After many years of struggle there was a final victory for toleration and fair play. But during the interval a compromise was effected, the *Freethinker* being kept, not on the library table with other papers, but hidden behind a screen and handed out when asked for—with strict injunctions that the poison was not to be left about to the danger of the general public.

It is conceivable, of course, that the writer of the *Daily News* paragraph is in blissful ignorance not only of the *Freethinker* and all connected with it, but of the whole fight for freedom that goes on outside the limits of the "respectable" press; that is to say, the press which is only a commercial enterprise, and takes this or that direction simply because some direction is inevitable. Everyone who knows anything at all about it is perfectly aware that the "glorious free press" is the greatest fraud of the age. It exists to pervert and corrupt the public mind, as far as possible, in favor of certain interests which are never openly stated. The only really free press in England consists of a few journals founded and maintained for the promotion and defence of principles. They have relatively small circulations, they derive no revenue worth speaking of from advertisements, and that they continue to live year after year is a tribute to the animating power of convictions. Journals of this kind have all the natural and all the artificial difficulties of publication. They are starved by the neglect of advertisers,

and they are also surrounded by a boycott which prevents them finding their way to more than a fraction of their potential customers. They are perpetually between the Devil and the deep sea. Their existence is one of the miracles of propaganda.

Amongst the real free press of England we serenely include the *Freethinker*—and it has been boycotted worse than any other paper we know of. There is a common conspiracy of silence about it. Even when reporting a police-court case a few years ago, in which a Church parson was charged with assaulting an elderly and feeble news vendor who had the audacity to offer this journal for sale in a non-apologetic manner, even the dear *Daily News* could not mention its name, but alluded to it as "a journal devoted to Freethinkers." Our pious contemporary affects not to know of our existence. Yet, as a matter of fact, we are perfectly well-known; and we venture to say that very few journalists were astonished when George Meredith, only a little while before his death, sent us a cheque (with his name for public announcement) in support of the *Freethinker*, having appreciated and praised our work for more than thirty years.

The conspiracy of silence against the *Freethinker* is wonderful. Its name is like that of the old God of the Jews, which was never to be spoken. The first syllable is enough. When "Free" sounds in Christian ears they know what is coming, for there is only one "Free" paper in England—as far as religion is concerned. That "Free" paper is naturally the *Freethinker*—since the only people who are free are those who think.

When the conspiracy of silence against the *Freethinker* is accidentally broken, and its name cannot be absolutely ignored, the Christians (real or pretended) display another aspect of their attitude towards "infidelity"—a poisonous word which epitomises the whole detestable spirit of what, with such grim humor, is called "Christian charity." This journal is then reviled and slandered. It is described as "wicked," "indecent," "obscene," and "filthy." These various flowers of description are intended to serve but one purpose. Those who employ them know that they are barefaced liars, but the lie is for the glory of God, its practical object being to keep this journal from finding readers. Let there be no mistake on this point. The orthodox policy towards this journal is not entirely due to fanaticism. It is largely a matter of business, especially amongst the professional representatives of Christ. The public friends of that personage, in the press and in the pulpit, pretend to believe that the *Freethinker* is weak, foolish, ignorant, and ill-conditioned; that it would never influence a sensible and decent person,—or, if it did, that it would only confirm him in his Christianity and sicken him with the very name of Freethought. This is what they pretend to believe. But what they really believe is the reverse of all this, and the proof of it lies in their actions. If they really believed that this journal promoted Christianity and injured Freethought they would advise people to read it; but as they advise them not to read it, they obviously believe that it promotes Freethought and injures Christianity. It is calculated to cause a slump in the orthodox soul-saving business. For this reason, more than for any other, the professional soul-saver dreads the advent of this

journal amongst his congregation. He feels unsafe while he knows there is a single copy of it in the neighborhood. And when he cannot ignore its existence, he warns everybody against it without mentioning it, by means of the most fantastic circumlocutions.

We are not surprised to see the same cowardly but truly Christian policy pursued in America. In a recent number of our gallant contemporary, the *Truthseeker*, of New York, we note that Mr. Mangasarian, the Freethought lecturer at Studebaker Theatre, Chicago, took for his subject on the Sunday morning following the loss of the *Titanic* "Ships That Sink in the Night." The place was crowded, and the lecturer's discourse created a profound impression. One of his points, dealing with the question of responsibility, must have gone right home. Captain Smith stood upon the bridge of the *Titanic* until she went down. Yes, and what about another captain? "Does not God also stand upon the bridge of the universe?" That question raises more difficulties than all the theologians in the world can settle. Mr. Mangasarian is to be congratulated on the swift directness of his logic. No wonder he addresses more people on Sunday morning than any Christian minister in Chicago. Yet the *Truthseeker* reporter states that "the daily press does not devote a line to his work."

We will pursue this subject next week, dealing with the consequences of this boycott, and making a detailed appeal to our readers to help us in resisting and counteracting it.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Life.—V.

(Continued from p. 323.)

WHAT has been said concerning certain presumed racial characteristics of Jews will apply to others that might be taken, such as immunity against certain diseases, and various mental characteristics. None of these are fixed in the sense that other "races" do not acquire them, or that Jews cannot lose them. Yet it would be quite fallacious to conclude that in nearly every country in the world the Jews as a body cannot be discriminated from the rest of the population, and, in some cases, easily so. But a careful analysis proves this distinctiveness to be of a psychical character, due to the operation of identical social causes—themselves ultimately of a psychic nature. The essential fact in the situation is, not an inborn racial trait expressing itself amid diverse conditions, but substantially identical conditions inducing the manifestation of similar characteristics.

First of all, there is the historic fact of the forcible exclusion of Jews from agricultural pursuits. Declared aliens in every country during the Middle Ages, and legally prevented from owning land, the Jew was driven into mercantile pursuits; although, under the Moors in Spain, they formed the principal portion of the agricultural population. Condemned to a city life and sedentary occupations, and lacking the modifying power of intermarriage with an agricultural class, the Jews have naturally developed a city type more completely than have non-Jews. Where approximately similar conditions have operated with other people we get approximately similar results. The development of the money power in America, and the absence of legal restrictions against Jews, shows the Gentile well able to hold his own in this direction. And Greeks and Armenians under Turkish government seem to have gone through the same phase of development. The reputation of both for sharp business transactions is actually greater than that of the Jew. There is, indeed, a maxim, "One Greek is as bad as two Jews, one Armenian is as bad as two Greeks, and two Armenians are as bad as the Devil."

Against the very recent admission of the Jews to political equality—1791 in France, 1845-58 in Eng-

land, 1795-6 in Holland, 1867 in Austria, 1859 in Italy (with the exception of Rome), 1874 in Switzerland, and so forth—we have to place centuries of political, legal, and social disqualification. In Russia, with its five and a half million Jews, they are shut up within a few cities not greatly different from the mediæval ghetto. And it must be borne in mind that as emigration is greatest from those countries where the conditions affecting the Jews are the most intolerable, it is these Jews, bearing upon them the stamp of the ghetto, that are seized upon by careless observers as presenting proofs of a distinct Jewish type. If a hundred Jewish emigrants from Russia or Poland were placed in the midst of a thousand native-born American or English Jews, the advocates of a distinctive Jewish type would not fail to pick out the hundred as fulfilling their requirements. But what these people bring is a social, not a racial type. As one writer properly says, the Jewish "type" is not anthropological, but psychic. Centuries of suffering and persecution, centuries of confinement in ghettos, centuries of social insecurity and legal helotage, have left their impress on the mind and character of the Jews, as it has left them on the mind and characters of all people to the extent to which they have passed through the same experiences.

The proof of this is that with a generation or two living under different conditions, these so-called Jewish characteristics disappear. Left alone, the Jew would soon be lost amidst the people around him. This is what actually does take place in those countries where the Jew possesses security of tenure and legal liberty. The frequency with which one finds people of Jewish descent described as not looking like a Jew is evidence at once of the truth of what has been said, and of the superficial character of most of the studies on the question.

Finally, this psychic quality is not peculiar to the Jew. Everywhere identical conditions tend to induce the same result. When Dissenters were more separate from other bodies of Christians they, too, presented a distinct type. Even to-day we find people described as looking like the Dissenting "type." Lawyers, doctors, actors, various trades, all induce their special "type" of face and character. Except, then, so far as social and other conditions affect biological development, the persistence of the Jew is not at all a question of biology. He persists, not in virtue of the hygienic or eugenic principles inculcated by his religion—since these are partly mythical and partly accidental. The same policy of mutual exclusion would have had the same effect on any other class of people with any other religion. Mr. and Mrs. Whetham's selection of the Jew as proof of the eugenic value of religion is no more than a warning to students to beware of religion in any form when considering a purely scientific problem.

Turning to Christianity, Mr. and Mrs. Whetham remark that "we cannot yet make any just estimate of the influence of Christianity from the biological point of view." If this were true it would in itself be good grounds for setting Christianity on one side as a, biologically, negligible factor; and with it would go the authors' thesis on the favorable influence of religion on life. For if it is in the nature of religion to exert a biological influence on the race, then a religion that has endured, officially for some seventeen centuries, and during a large portion of that period has enjoyed a power such as few religions have enjoyed, must have exerted a very great influence on race development. The authors' reason for their conclusion is that "it is scarcely possible to separate the essential features of the religion from the excrescences with which the various nations and sects have associated it, in deference to their own needs and in conformity with their previous traditions."

This is the language of a theologian, not of a scientist. The question of what is "essential" or "true" or "primitive" Christianity may concern theologians; a scientific observer should only be concerned with the Christianity that has lived, and

which the world has known as such. A genuine inquiry as to the influence of Christianity must concern itself with the Christianity that has been and that is. What it ought to be, or what it might be, has nothing to do with the case. And when we are further told that, "owing to the spread of Christianity through neighboring and antagonistic nations, it has been difficult for it to become associated with any strong racial instinct," there seems a complete surrender of the thesis with which the authors set out. For it is the racial instinct that is made the all-important fact. Moreover, these other nations, however antagonistic to Christianity, each had its religion, and as it was claimed that religion generally has aided race preservation, on this point at least there should have been unanimity and effectiveness.

One really feels that visions are about on being informed that it was Christianity's aspiration after universality which "prevented the formulation of a code dealing with the minutæ of custom and morality." It is precisely in its endeavors to do this that Christianity has been most troublesome to the world's wellbeing. In the confessional of the Roman Catholic Church, Christianity produced a machinery that not only aimed at regulating the actions of men but also their thoughts. And although the Protestant Churches had not the confessional, its inquisitorial aims were as great as circumstances permitted. The Christian Church did not regulate what kind of food one should eat, but it had something to say on nearly everything else. Above all, it took the family under its direct control, and with disastrous results. To be told, then, that Christianity did not formulate a code dealing with the minutæ of custom and morality is to be told that which is not correct. It is true that the teachings of the Christian Churches on this head have not been uniform; but the lack of uniformity resulted from the divisions among Christians, not to the absence of endeavors to regulate life in all its aspects.

Mr. and Mrs. Whetham think that "the Christian religion in some of its manifestations has a definite survival value" because of the "maintenance of the birth-rate among the devout Roman Catholic peasantry of Brittany, and the industrial Irish Catholic populations of our large towns." But one would have expected a professed champion of eugenics to realise that it is not a large birth-rate, but an effective birth-rate, that is desirable. Not number, but quality, is the desirable thing. This is seen and stated clearly enough by Mr. and Mrs. Whetham when they are solely concerned with a study of the facts, and not playing the part of religious apologists. But unless we adopt the foolish teaching that a country should act as a spawning ground in order to people other lands with its surplus population—which means in practice the creation of evil social conditions that will force emigration—there is no intrinsic good in a mere increase of population. It may be a good or it may be an evil; but all that is needed for race preservation is an equilibrium between the birth-rate and death-rate. And Mr. and Mrs. Whetham must be quite aware of the fact that the larger birth-rate of the lower industrial classes—whether Irish or English—does not make for the growth of a population that offers many attractions to the scientific eugenist.

Not that religion has anything to do with the higher birth-rate, except so far as it keeps attention from the essential nature of the problem. The birth-rate varies with the social and intellectual status of people, and Catholics exhibit these fluctuations to much the same extent as non-Catholics. I have not been able to get any exact or reliable figures on this point, but such indications as I have bear this out. Besides, there is something obviously fallacious in crediting religion with the power of determining the birth-rate in the face of the general decline of the birth-rate all over the civilised world. This can only mean, at best, that religion has no influence on the birth-rate, either for increase or decrease, and that so soon as other forces begin to

operate it is powerless to prevent their operation. The real influence of religion on life is in a different direction altogether. It does not affect the number to be born, but it does affect the development and quality that make up the social whole.

(To be concluded.) C. COHEN.

Heretics and Blasphemers.

THEOLOGY injures everything it touches. It has darkened and degraded human life beyond the power of words to describe. Its effect upon language has been equally pernicious. Take the word "heresy," which is the English equivalent of the Greek term *airesis*, as an example. In the Greek classics *airesis* primarily signifies, as Hobbes says, "nothing more than a private opinion, without reference to truth or falsehood." It also frequently means a school of philosophy, or a school of jurists. It bears this harmless meaning in one or two places even in the New Testament. Christianity itself was at first called a "heresy"—"the heresy of the Nazarenes" (Acts xxiv. 5), "the Way which they call a heresy" (Acts xxiv. 14), "as concerning this heresy, it is known to us that it is spoken against" (Acts xviii. 22). But in the Epistles the word is already used in a sinister sense. The Corinthians were blamed because there were "heresies" among them (1 Cor. xi. 19), while in Gal. v. 20 "heresies" are classed along with grave moral offences. In Titus iii. 10, "a man that is heretical, after a first and second admonition," is to be avoided as a dangerous person, that is, put under the ban of excommunication. In 2 Peter ii. 1 the word has sunk into the lowest depth of degradation. The writer refers to heresies which he qualifies as "destructive," "damnable," or as "heresies of perdition." Alford notes that the term is employed here "in the sense in which we now understand it, new and self-chosen doctrines, alien from the truth." In the estimation of the Apostles, all who held different opinions from those preached by them were enemies of God and man, and ought not to be tolerated. Paul literally cursed and swore at those who dared to oppose the particular Gospel which he preached. He was beside himself with indignation at the mere thought that the earth contained such abandoned blackguards. "Whoever he be that opposeth me," he said, "even though he be an angel from heaven, let him be anathema." The Apostles were infallible men entrusted by God with an infallible Gospel. To differ from them was, therefore, a heinous sin which must be either repented of and renounced, or punished with the utmost severity.

Once we are in possession of the New Testament viewpoint the history of the Christian Church ceases to perplex us, because we perceive that it has been a perfectly natural working out of Apostolic ideas. We learn that Christianity and persecution are in the nature of things inseparable. A religion based upon an alleged revelation from heaven to elect persons is bound to be intolerant. Inasmuch as it alone makes known the only possible way of salvation for a lost and ruined world, it naturally follows that those who believe that they have been specially chosen or "called" to be its ministers cannot tolerate self-chosen and self-called busybodies who wilfully pervert or contradict its truths. Toleration from such a quarter would be a contradiction in terms. And there is another fully as vital a consideration. It is generally conceded that the followers of the Buddha outnumber those of every other religious teacher in the world; and yet Buddhism has never been guilty of persecution. So far was the Buddha from anathematising those who were not of his way of thinking and who might speak in dispraise of him and his doctrine, that he earnestly exhorted his disciples never in any way to retaliate upon them, or even to entertain the least anger or ill-feeling towards them. Buddhism has been supreme in several countries for very long periods; but it is not on record that it has

ever availed itself of its supremacy to persecute either heretics or unbelievers, or any other religion. What explains this enormous difference between the two religions? There are several explanations at hand. Buddhism does not claim to embody a Divine revelation, nor does it preach the doctrine of salvation by faith. Buddhism is a natural philosophy of life, its central truth being that salvation is by intellectual and moral self-culture and love, "without any of the rites, any of the ceremonies, any of the charms, any of the priestly powers, any of the gods, in which men love to trust."

"To cease from all wrong-doing,
To get virtue,
To cleanse one's own heart,—
This is the religion of the Buddhas."

A religion with such tenets has no need to persecute. The Buddha's message is not "Accept salvation from the hand of God by faith," but "Work out your own salvation with confident courage; be ye lamps unto yourselves; cling for refuge to the truth." But the truest explanation of the complete absence of persecution from Buddhism is to be found in its high and noble doctrine of love. The Buddha did not say to his followers, "Love one another," "Love the brotherhood," but "Cultivate love without measure towards all beings. Cultivate towards the whole world—above, below, around—a heart of love unstinted, unmixed with the sense of differing or opposing interests." He called upon everyone to "suffuse the whole world with thought of love, far-reaching, grown great, beyond measure, void of anger or ill-will." There is no such teaching in the New Testament, or in any of the Confessions of the Church. The nearest approach to it is in Matt. v. 43-48, and in two or three passages in the Pauline Epistles; but nowhere is the emphasis laid on the duty of cherishing universal love. Again and again do we meet with such exhortations as these, "Love the Brotherhood," "Let love of the brethren continue," "In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another," "Concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another," "Unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently," "Above all things, be fervent in your love among yourselves." It is true that Christianity is often eulogised as the religion of love, and it is customary to praise Jesus as the only revealer of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Historically, however, Christianity has shown itself to be the religion of hatred and cruelty much more than of love and kindness; and it is undeniable that the Gospel Jesus never even remotely hinted at the universal Fatherhood of God, or the Brotherhood of all Mankind. Jesus claimed God as in a special sense his Father, and he instructed his disciples to address him by the same name; but of God's relation to the unregenerate world outside he never uttered a word. The Church has always taught that men become the children of God only when they are born again. Unbelievers are beyond the range of God's love, for of every one of them it is said that "the wrath of God abideth on him." We earnestly contend that the Church's uniform treatment of heretics and blasphemers has been a tacit denial of both the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

The Church's claim to infallibility is a rope of sand. It is the most laughably absurd contention that ever issued from the brain of man. The utter hollowness of it is seen the moment we begin to think about it. For a few years the Athanasians were the stronger party, and without mercy they persecuted the Arians. Then the tables were turned, and the Arians found their happiness in tormenting and slaying the Athanasians. Under Edward VI. John Rogers pleaded for the burning of John Bocher because he denied the Incarnation. Five years later, under Bloody Mary, John Rogers himself was burnt because he was a Protestant. Henry VIII. and Edward VI. glorified God by torturing and killing Catholics, and Mary did the

same by burning Protestants. What sane person can believe in a God who not only allows himself to be glorified in such conflicting ways, but also allows such cruel murderers to imagine that he is exceedingly well pleased with them in consequence of their dark crimes? To believe in the existence of a God of justice and love, while face-to-face with ecclesiastical history, is to offer an unpardonable affront to human intelligence.

Technically, heretics are no longer prosecuted. The Free Church Council may exclude Unitarians from its membership, and the Congregational Union may frown upon the New Theologians; but such heretics can now be sent neither to the stake nor to prison, much to the chagrin of some very pious people. It is only unbelievers, who are conscientiously driven to oppose the Christian superstition, that have to suffer persecution to-day. Yes, aggressive Atheism is still a punishable offence against the State. Before a Liverpool audience only the other day, Dr. Horton classed it along with "every form of evil." With recent prosecutions, convictions, and imprisonments in mind, who has the temerity to affirm that the Churches really believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man? At any rate, if they do hold such a belief, their conduct belies it at every turn. If it were true, as it has often been asserted by judges, that "the law of England is the law of God," God would be revealed as a heartless tyrant, rather than as the loving Heavenly Father. In the circumstances, the only possible alternatives are, no God at all, or a wicked one.

Our only comfort lies in the fact that, in spite of persecution, unbelievers are multiplying. Dr. Horton said, in the speech already alluded to, that "he lived in a part of London which was fettered with the Materialism and idolatry of the day. At his door Atheism and every form of evil were rampant." Such testimony from such a man furnishes a conclusive proof that our cause is in the ascendant. Indeed, Dr. Horton went so far as to declare that "the whole current of things" was against the Churches, which is perfectly true; but he made the usual mistake of associating Atheism with "every form of evil." The truth is that there is less evil in London to-day, when "the whole current of things" is admittedly against the Churches, than there was three hundred and fifty-seven years ago, when everybody was religious. The reverend gentleman knows this quite well; and yet simply because all is not well with the Hampstead Churches, he concludes that every form of evil is rampant there. If that statement were true, it would only show what a colossal failure Jesus Christ has been in Hampstead. On the whole, evil is steadily on the wane, while the tide of unbelief is steadily rising. Many of the evils in Christendom are the fruit of Christianity, one of the chief of which is the spirit of persecution. This evil is bred in the Christian bone; and it cannot be got rid of as long as there is any Christianity left. We shall not enjoy free speech and a free press until we shall have cleansed the world of supernaturalism. In order to be free, we must all be rational. With this end in view, let Freethinkers do their utmost to multiply and fill the earth.

J. T. LLOYD.

Personally, I claim the right of free deliverance, free speech, free thought, and what I claim for myself I claim for every human being. I claim the right to attack and to defend. I claim the right to justify the Devil, if I want to. I can be suppressed by wiser argument, by deeper insight, by greater knowledge, but not by the magistrate, civil or literary. I would stand even by Judas Iscariot in the dock, if his Judge denied him a free hearing, a fair trial. The Truth, if she is as great as we assume her to be, must prevail.—Robert Buchanan.

Modern Materialism.—XI.

(Continued from p. 326.)

"In infinity looms a world of shadow called the unknown, the unread, or the unlearned, an *incognita* daily vanishing as its wrung-out secrets are added to our stores of knowledge. In this unknown, as Pasteur and the orthodox confidently assert, dwells a First Cause; but it is there, like a hidden feticch, only to the ignorant and the credulous. All the wonders, productions, forces, and so-called inexplicable phenomena in nature attributed to supernatural causes are, as overwhelming evidence demonstrates, merely the ever-cycling effects of eternal natural laws, working through ceaseless motions inherent in the very constitution of existence itself—*indestructible matter-in-motion*."—REDCOTE DEWAR, *From Matter to Man*, 1898, p. 23.

"Not, then, to the Cæsars and Alexanders; not to the bandits and plunderers who have reddened history; neither to the dreaming messiahs whose hallucinations have filled men's minds with empty fancies—not to these should rise our pantheons; but rather to those who, in the pursuit of science and of truth, have added to the intellectual wealth of mankind. For they are the true gods, the real gods."—CARL SNYDER, *New Conceptions in Science*, 1904, p. 35.

"Science will always remain the gratification of the noblest craving of our nature, curiosity; it will always supply man with the sole means of improving his lot."—KENAN, *L'Avenir de la Science*.

In Professor Huxley's teachings regarding consciousness, we meet with still more astonishing contradictions. In his reply to Mr. Lilly—a Roman Catholic apologist—he observes:—

"I understand the main tenet of Materialism to be that there is nothing in the world but matter and force; and that all the phenomena of nature are explicable by deduction from the properties assignable to these two primitive factors."

He says that Buchner parades force and matter as the Alpha and Omega of existence. "But all this," says the Professor, "I heartily disbelieve," and he continues:—

"It seems to me pretty plain that there is a third thing in the universe, to wit, consciousness, which, in the hardness of my heart or head, I cannot see to be matter or force, or any conceivable modification of either, however intimately the manifestations of the phenomena of consciousness may be connected with the phenomena known as matter and force."

He goes on to observe that if Descartes and Berkeley are right in stating that our knowledge of these things "does not extend beyond our states of consciousness," then "our one certainty is the existence of the mental world, and that of *Kraft und Stoff* (Force and Matter) falls into the rank of, at best, a highly probable hypothesis."†

So that the Professor commences by declaring his hearty disbelief in Materialism, and concludes with the admission of it being "a highly probable hypothesis."

Yet, in the very same book, in dealing with the first appearance of consciousness in the world, Professor Huxley observes:—

"Granted that a fowl feels; that the chick just hatched feels; that the chick when it chirps within the egg may possibly feel; what is to be said of it on the fifth day, when the bird is there, but with all its tissues nascent? Still more on the first day, when it is nothing but a flat circular disc? I certainly cannot bring myself to believe that this disc feels. Yet, if it does not, there must be some time in the three weeks, between the first day and the day of hatching, when, as a concomitant or a consequence, of the attainment by the brain of the chick of a certain stage of structural evolution, consciousness makes its appearance. I have frequently expressed my incapacity to understand the nature of the relation between consciousness and a certain anatomical tissue, which is thus established by observation. But the fact remains that, so far as observation and experience go, they teach us that the psychological phenomena are dependent on the physical" (pp. 42-3).

Going further back in the history of the world, the Professor points out that consciousness may be granted to the highly organised fishes and insects

which occupied the earth before the appearance of the higher animals and man; but there was an earlier period when consciousness did not exist; therefore, it is evident that consciousness or "feeling dawned in consequence of the organism having reached the stage of evolution on which it depends."

Well, that is just the position of the Materialist and Atheist, who declare that feeling and consciousness have been evolved from unconscious matter by the operation of natural laws without the aid of the supernatural.

Moreover, in a footnote, Professor Huxley explicitly declares:—

"For myself, I am bound to say that the term 'Nature' covers the totality of that which is. The world of psychical phenomena appears to me to be as much a part of 'Nature' as the world of physical phenomena; and I am unable to perceive any justification for cutting the Universe into two halves, one natural and one supernatural."

That is to say, the world of consciousness, feeling, and mind, is as much a part of Nature as the world of matter and force. What, then, distinguishes Professor Huxley's philosophy from that of the Materialist? Nothing but words and a desire to avoid a charge of Atheism and Materialism. His position is the same as Professor Tyndall's, who, as we have seen, declared that we know nothing of the intimate character of matter and force; that the highest powers of our microscopes fail to reveal the structure of matter; therefore we cannot understand how the grouping of the atoms and molecules can result in life and consciousness; and all the while they cry "Hands off" to anyone who would introduce supernatural powers into the process!

There are thousands of other things that science is unable to explain, but nobody but a savage or an imbecile would think of attributing them to the supernatural. For instance, take a handful of common cotton-wool, or some ordinary glycerine; treat them with nitric and sulphuric acid in certain proportions, and—if properly prepared—the cotton has been transformed into a powerful explosive—gun-cotton. And the harmless and mollifying glycerine has become another terrible explosive—nitro-glycerine. Can anyone make any intelligible picture of the grouping of the atoms which has produced this tremendous change? They cannot; but no one but a fool would pretend that there was anything supernatural about it; why, then, should they in the case of consciousness and life?

With all his great powers of lucid exposition and charm of style, Professor Huxley was not a great original thinker. There was no man in the world like Huxley for developing and popularising an idea when someone else had discovered it. He did more than anyone else to popularise the Darwinian theory, and always spoke of himself as "Devil's Advocate" to Herbert Spencer. It was he who founded the gospel of Agnosticism upon Spencer's philosophy of the "Unknowable."

Huxley was Spencer's most intimate friend; they lived within two minutes' walk of each other; they had a standing engagement for a walk in the country every Sunday afternoon; and Spencer would often call for Huxley at the Jermyn-street Museum when Huxley was leaving for the day.† This must be borne in mind, for the influence of Spencer can be traced through all Huxley's works.

His was not a great constructive mind like Spencer's or Darwin's, but he had a genius for destruction, and was of a most combative disposition. He acted the part of Saul to the evolution theory, turning completely round, from being a strong opponent, into being its strongest defender.

Herbert Spencer has told us how—before Darwin had written the *Origin of Species*—Huxley used to demolish all his arguments for "progressive development."‡ Then he made a savage attack upon

* Huxley, *Life and Letters*, vol. i., p. 68; vol. ii., p. 333. Also in *Science and Christian Tradition*, p. 123.

† Spencer, *An Autobiography*, vol. i., p. 505; vol. ii., p. 1.

‡ *An Autobiography*, vol. i., p. 505.

* Carl Snyder, *New Conceptions in Science*, title-page.

† T. H. Huxley, *Essays on Controverted Questions*, 1892, p. 220.

Chambers' *Vestiges of Creation*, which was also written before Darwin's work; and did good work in popularising the Nebula Hypothesis and the development theory—although the author was no scientist, and was wanting in accurate knowledge. Darwin himself speaks of "its powerful and brilliant style," and of "its excellent service" in "preparing the ground for the reception of analogous views."*

Professor Huxley, years afterwards, had the grace to admit that it was "the only review I ever have qualms of conscience about, on the grounds of needless savagery."† And then, he tells us, that his first reflection upon reading Darwin's *Origin of Species* was, "How extremely stupid not to have thought of that."‡

Huxley's position towards Materialism was a repetition of attitude towards the question of the "Origin of Species" before Darwin solved the problem. Because science was unable to explain exactly how consciousness arose in matter, then Huxley declared we were not entitled to say that it did so. And in the meanwhile he was ready to fight any supporter of creative, or supernatural, interference in the matter. And although in public he always vehemently repudiated the title of Atheist and Materialist, yet we find him, in a private letter to Kingsley, observing—

"I know that I am, in spite of myself, exactly what the Christian world call, and, so far as I can see, are justified in calling, atheist and infidel. I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomena of the universe stands to us in the relation of a Father—loves and cares for us as Christianity asserts."§

And as for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul! He declares: "I have never seen an argument on that subject which, from a scientific point of view, is worth the paper it is written upon." What a pity Professor Huxley did not follow Professor Clifford's example, and declare openly the beliefs to which he confessed privately.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Dr. Gore on the Evidence for Christianity.

IN the *Freethinker* for February 8, 1908, I noticed a course of lectures by Dr. Gore on the historicity of the Gospels.¶ "Though of no value as science," I wrote, "his addresses are, nevertheless, interesting as showing how a bishop reasons." Dr. Gore has lately been lecturing on "The Reconstruction of Belief"; and, if I ask the reader to bear with me while I review his latest utterances on the evidence for Christianity, it is only because they are a very good illustration of the nonsense that passes current in religious circles as sober reasoning.

Addressing himself to those without any special knowledge of the subject, he tells them that they may take for granted several things which, as a matter of fact, are not taken for granted by scholarly critics. If he does not know this, he is a blind leader of the blind; while, if he is aware of it, it is not easy to see how he could be absolved from a charge of deliberately misleading his hearers. He refers to Baur, Strauss and Harnack, but has nothing to say about Schmiedel, Schweitzer, Drew, or John M. Robertson. He calls attention to an article in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1907, by Dr. Ryle, a physician, who denies *in toto* that certain of the alleged miracles are explicable on godless lines. But he is silent regarding an article that appeared in the same place some four years later by the Rev. K. C. Anderson, D.D., who holds that, without intending

any such result of their labors, the Higher Critics have made belief in the historical character of the Gospels impossible for serious students.

To those who foresaw that this must be the result of the Higher Criticism of the New Testament, Dr. Gore replies as follows:—

"Let it be said with the greatest possible emphasis that there is no possibility of admitting criticism to one area of history and endeavoring to exclude it from another, but that the same method, the same process, produces totally different results according to the condition of the evidence and the relation of the evidence to the events of the different period. In all history it is so obvious that it can hardly need saying that the same historical criticism applied to the period of King Arthur and Henry VIII., or to Romulus and Augustine, results in different conclusions, and that is our simple claim. We claim not to exclude criticism from the New Testament, but to apply it with a different result, because of the nature of the evidence and of the relation of the witnesses to the events."

Now this is special pleading which can satisfy no serious student. Sane criticism applied to any period or periods of history always produces the same result so far as miracles are concerned. When we read the history of Romulus and Remus, the alleged founders of Rome, that they were children of the god Mars, and were suckled by a wolf; or of Osiris coming upon earth for the good of mankind, with his titles of "Revealer of Truth" and "Manifester of Good"; of his being put to death by the malice of the evil one; his burial and resurrection, and his becoming the judge of the dead, we disbelieve the narrative. We know that this sort of story, whether met with in India, Persia, Egypt, or Rome, is fable, myth, or legend. There is nothing new in the Gospel narrative; and Dr. Gore fails to give a reasonable explanation of his acceptance of it when it comes to us from Judæa, while rejecting it in Hindustan, Egypt, or Rome. What he really means is that, since the historical character of the Gospels has to be saved somehow, we must adjust our criticism accordingly, and take for granted whatever is necessary to that end. That he should himself adopt such a course is, of course, a necessity of his position; but for serious students it is impossible.

From beginning to end what he says on the subject of the evidence is simply a dexterous evasion of the difficulties that confront the student. He talks glibly about Christ, Paul, and the Apostles, just as though their historical character is not the very matter in dispute. One might imagine that he is unaware of the fact that there is a twofold demonstration of the myth of the Twelve Apostles. As regards the hero of the Gospels, one would like to know his explanation of the silence of Josephus. Does he defend the forgery to which resort was had to get over the difficulty? And, regarding Paul, it would be more to the purpose if, instead of boldly saying that "1 Cor.....was written about the Spring of the year 55," he gave us some hints how to confute Rev. Edwin Hatch, D.D., who, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. ix., tells us that we have no means of knowing when Paul was born, or how long he lived, or at what dates the several events of his life took place. To refer to Paul as a witness to the Gospel narrative is absurd. The only passages in which the "genuine" Epistles present a narrative coinciding with the Gospels are 1 Cor. xi. 23-26 and xv. 3-8; and, as pointed out by John M. Robertson in the *Free Review* for April, 1894, p. 3, these passages are obvious forgeries, of which the second has been worked over at least twice.

"Each passage is introduced with a formula which confesses forgery at a glance. Take away these passages, and the writings of Paul, so far from corroborating the Gospels, exhibit such a complete ignorance of the subject that it is plain the Gospel matter was not current in Paul's world any more than the documents. His Jesus is a crucified spectre; and of the Twelve Apostles he has no knowledge."

Among other details which Dr. Gore takes for granted, and asks others to take for granted, is the tradition that the writer of our second Gospel was

* Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 1901, p. 17.

† *Life and Letters of T. H. Huxley*, 1900, vol. i., p. 168.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

§ *Huxley's Life and Letters*, 1900, vol. i., p. 241.

¶ See the article headed "The Bishop of Worcester on the Gospels."

Peter's companion and interpreter. But any student of the subject could have told him that this tradition rests on this basis: A says that B says that C says that D says.

"Secondly, [said the bishop] you may take it quite for granted that the common matter—the matter which is substantially common to the First and Third Gospels (St. Matthew and St. Luke), which it is the custom now to call by the letter 'Q,' the initial letter of the German word *Quelle*—was probably earlier than St. Mark's Gospel, and was a document written down in Apostolic times, mainly consisting of our Lord's discourses."

But what sort of Christ does this "Primitive Gospel," as it has been called, give us? Just consider these facts:—

1. There is no birth story; and no mention of Mary and Joseph.
2. Jesus is never described as "of Nazareth."
3. The passages describing the choice of the twelve, and naming them, are absent.
4. The narrative stops abruptly, with no mention of the betrayal, passion, arrest, trial, or crucifixion.

Dr. Gore should have dealt with these "difficulties of belief" if he is aware of them. Instead, he throws dust in the eyes of those he addresses. He warns them against the "all or nothing" policy, and talks about the trustworthiness of St. Luke's narrative. Now, this is simply trifling with the matter in dispute. No serious critic holds the "all or nothing" view as Dr. Gore evidently wishes it to be understood. And what he says about St. Luke just amounts to this: since Luke can be shown to be correct on a point of Roman procedure, therefore, he ought to be accepted as a credible witness to the miracles!

If the reader is not already tired of Dr. Gore's nonsense, I propose, in my next contribution, to notice what he has to say regarding the Resurrection, the Virgin Birth, and, possibly, other points.

Meanwhile, I must acknowledge my indebtedness to the writers I have made use of and mentioned, as well as to some I have not named.

ANDREW LIDDLE.

The Ilkeston "Blasphemy" Case.

(From the "Daily Express," May 24.)

ONE of the worst cases of blasphemy on record came before the Ilkeston magistrate yesterday, when Frederick Chasty was charged with wilfully and indecently making use of profane language, and Douglas Coghill Muirhead was charged with aiding and abetting him.

The evidence showed that on Sunday, May 12, Chasty addressed a crowd in Ilkeston Market-place on "The Crimes of God."

He described himself as an Anarchist, "not a bomb-throwing but an intellectual Anarchist." Muirhead was in the chair.

Among other things, Chasty was stated to have said:—

"If there had been a God we should have been a better civilised nation than we are."

"Three-parts of you go on your knees and pray to God instead of putting your shoulders to the wheel and helping social reform."

"God is an ignorant savage; he always believed in blood, murder, and slavery."

"I don't believe there is a God."

"The devil in hell is a better man than God."

"The devil spoke the truth in the beginning; God told a lie."

The crowd became hostile, and the men were taken to the police station.

Chasty was fined £2 13s. 6d., including costs, or fourteen days' imprisonment, and Muirhead £2 17s., including costs, or seven days' imprisonment.

Violence may constrain the outer shell and form of things. It can win the acquiescence of fools and the applause of parasites. It can kill those who dispute its commands. But it cannot make truth into falsehood, or falsehood into truth. It may replant a dead tree, and insist that it shall be considered as alive, but it cannot give back to the tree its vital functions, or arrest the law by which it has been sentenced to destruction. That which is dead is dead, and that which is dead decays, and the skillfulest embalming will not save it from falling into dust.—J. A. Froude.

Acid Drops.

The *Daily Express* account, through its New York correspondent, of the last minutes of the Rev. Clarence Richeson, who poisoned a girl he was engaged to in order that he might marry a wealthy "society" girl, is too illuminating to be left buried in the columns of a daily newspaper. We therefore reproduce the most important part of it for a longer preservation:—

"New York, Tuesday, May 21.

"The Rev. Clarence Richeson, murderer of Miss Avis Linnell, was electrocuted at 12.10 a.m. to-day at Boston. Three shocks were sent through the body of the clerical murderer, who showed no fear throughout the short preliminaries. It is officially denied that he was drugged.

"He was told shortly before midnight to prepare for death. Two clergymen visited him in his cell, and the three sang, 'Safe in the arms of Jesus.' Then one clergyman marched ahead reading the fifty-first Psalm, while the other followed with his arm through Richeson's, who wore the robes of a Baptist minister.

"Richeson mounted the death-chair without exhibiting any emotion. One clergyman began to weep while the other put a series of confessional questions to Richeson as the chair straps were being adjusted. Richeson replied:—

"I confess Christ as my Savior. I have the peace of God in my heart. Christ gives me strength. I know God will take care of me, and I pray for all."

"Richeson closed his eyes, and the clergyman said:—

"Do you repent your sin?"

"I do," came the answer.

"Are you willing to die for Jesus' sake?"

"I am willing to die," Richeson answered, and at that instant, while the word 'die' was on his lips, the chief warder, standing in the doorway between the death chamber and the electrician's room, raised his cane.

"As soon as the current was turned on, Richeson's body strained forward beneath the straps. Then, as the electricity was turned off, the muscles relaxed in death. Two other shocks were administered as a precautionary measure before the body was removed for burial."

What a tragical farce! The murderer was *willing* to die, because he *had* to die. He had tried his utmost to get his sentence commuted to imprisonment for life. His willingness to die was *for Jesus' sake*. The United States' law never consulted that personage.

If human beings go into another world when they die, and recognise each other there, the Rev. Clarence Richeson may have met Miss Amy Linnell whom he murdered. Perhaps they have got engaged again. Who knows? The heart of woman is as soft as butter to the man she loves. She will not stand his indifference, but she will stand any number of his crimes—even crimes against herself. But how will the case stand when the disappointed society girl comes along? The only solution we can see is the good old Bible doctrine of polygamy. Clarence will then walk out with the ladies one on each arm, as Jacob may have done with Rachel and Leah.

The *Daily News* declared the morning after the trial of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Pankhurst that "the sentences cannot be allowed to stand." It called upon the Executive to make good the error of the courts. With all this, of course, we had no quarrel. But we were much struck with what followed:—

"But in any event the thought of these three devoted persons imprisoned in felons' cells is a torture and an outrage to every sensitive mind, that sees a world so plentifully lacking in nobility of spirit and so bitterly in need of it."

We won't even quarrel with that. But how is it that our contemporary's "sensitive mind" works so spasmodically? It never winced, much less felt torture and outrage, when two Atheists were recently suffering in felons' cells at Leeds for the artificial and preposterous crime of "blasphemy." They were poor men, and we admit that to be poor as well as an Atheist is a very shocking thing. But they were quite as "devoted" as Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Pankhurst. And they had broken no windows, they had committed no offence whatever against their neighbors, they had merely stated their opinions to persons who chose to listen to what they had to say. Will our contemporary kindly explain its passionate heat in the one case and its perfect indifference in the other? On the face of it, one is tempted to conclude that prisoners who have lots of friends are *martyrs* while prisoners who have few friends or none are *malefactors*.

One of the growing dangers of government by political parties, with the right of bringing anything whatever before the House of Commons, and getting it voted on there, though no vote is actually taken, is that the legislative assembly will usurp the functions and powers of the judi-

ary. Courts of justice are reviewed by the Home Office, the Home Office is reviewed by political groups in the House of Commons, and the House of Commons is reviewed by nobody. We have therefore a judicial dictator in the Home Secretary, and considering how that official is appointed there is no need to wonder at the policy of his decisions. First, he assumes an attitude of complete ignorance when he is questioned; this is followed by an attitude of lofty impartiality; then the right honorable gentleman takes an estimate of the forces pressing him in a certain direction, makes up a profit and loss account of yielding to them or otherwise, and, having followed the lead of self-interest all through, finally announces his decision as if it were the result of a painful inquiry as to what is best for the public welfare. Mr. McKenna has become quite an expert in this species of humbug. His plan of action has at least the merit of simplicity. If a prisoner's friends kick up row enough Mr. McKenna liberates him or reduces his sentence. If they are not numerous enough to kick up a serious row Mr. McKenna decides that "he cannot see his way" to advise His Majesty to do anything; and the man stops in prison.

Dr. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, offers some excellent advice to the Christian Evidence Society. He advises that most courteous and able Society to get hold of some "first-rate scholar" who would give a "crushing reply" to books like Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs* and Professor Drew's *Christ Myths*. Now this is good advice, and we feel sure that both writers would welcome the criticism of a "first-rate scholar" on their respective works. But the request is easier made than complied with. Scholars—whether first-rate or second-rate—who are out in defence of Christianity know better than plainly to face the direct Freethought attack. They prefer to ignore it, or, what is more contemptible even than ignoring it, to refer to it as though there was really nothing in it that any serious-minded person need bother about. In reality they know better. But it is the most profitable policy for them to adopt. To meet the attack boldly is to invite a public defeat. To refuse to fight certainly gives them a longer lease of life, and manages to deceive those who confuse mere existence with health. In fact, the position of the Christian world at present is that those who do fight are hardly worth powder and shot. Those who are worth powder and shot know too much to risk fighting.

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, advises people who have their doubts about a future life to trust to the nature we know, which changes everything and destroys nothing. People will have to be desperately hard up, and almost as badly muddled, to get much comfort out of this. It is true that nature changes everything and destroys nothing; but it is equally true that nature changes everything and preserves nothing. And the belief in a future life really depends upon the preservation of special forms, which is quite contrary to all we know of nature. That everything which goes to make up our personality will be preserved is accepted as true by both believer and unbeliever. But this does not bring us a step nearer immortality. What is needed is to show that all that goes to make us will be perpetuated in the same combination that now exists. And nature nowhere offers a single instance of any combination of forces that is more than transitory. The mere fact of a combination beginning offers ample proof of its coming to an end.

One can hardly pick up a religious paper nowadays without finding an article dealing with what is called the social responsibility of the Churches. All of them take it for granted that it is the function of the Churches to take in hand the social organisation, or reorganisation, and that unless the Churches do this the outlook is hopeless. We do not agree with this for a moment. At best the social responsibility of the Churches is of a negative character. It is responsible so far as it obstructs social development; but it is no part of the legitimate function of the Christian Church to reorganise society. Its work is spiritual salvation; the assumption that it is anything else is the result of the weakening of religious faith and the growth of the social consciousness. The Churches talk about social responsibility because such talk is in the air and interest is weakening in purely religious matters.

While one gathers from the articles referred to that social life is supremely important, they really offer evidence in quite the opposite direction. The appeal to the Churches, as Churches, implies that in virtue of some power not possessed by other organisations, the Churches are alone fitted to take in hand the moulding of human society. And this is undiluted Mediævalism. The mediæval theory was that the Church was supreme in virtue of its supernatural

origin, and must, therefore, take charge of social life. This is still the Catholic theory, and it is curious to find other Christians, and particularly Nonconformists, unconsciously endorsing the Catholic theory. Stranger still it is, to find Socialists making constant appeals to the Churches to the same end. The modern theory is that the Church is not supreme, but is itself a social product, and, therefore, instead of talking about the responsibility of the Churches for the social state, it is much nearer the truth to talk of the responsibility of society for the state of the Churches. To ask the Churches to save society is like asking a fever to save the patient. Individually, each member of a Church has a social responsibility which is shared by members of any and every other organisation. Collectively, a Church has no greater social responsibility than a chess club or the Royal Astronomical Society. To make the Churches responsible for social development, and to teach people to look to them for social salvation, is simply to re-establish the philosophy of the Dark Ages.

In the *Educational Record* Lord Sheffield has some pithy notes on the religious situation and education, as dealt with by Professor Sadler, Mr. A. Riley, and Mr. Cyril Jackson. We are glad to see Lord Sheffield pointing out that "in our school system the demand of the parent for definite religious teaching, and, in fact, for any religious teaching, is very weak or non-existent." We believe this to be no more than a statement of the simple truth. If complete Secular Education could be established to-morrow, and if parents were left alone, we do not believe that any but a very small minority would bother about it. But parents are not left alone. The clergy of all denominations set to work, and their success in raising any sort of a parental demand for any sort of religious instruction really depends upon the fact that parents do not trouble about the matter. They care so little that they readily yield to clerical pressure; and say whatever the clergy wish them to say. As we have often said, the religious question is not a parent's question, a child's question, or a teacher's question. None of these really want it. It is a parson's question and a reformer's question. The former wants religion in the schools, because it helps to train clients for themselves; and the latter wants religion out of the schools, first, because it has no right to be there, and, second, because it blocks the way to much needed improvement.

Lord William Cecil, who is also a reverend gentleman, according to the *Daily Chronicle* of May 20, is very jocular over those Church lands that his ancestors appropriated. Mr. Lloyd George's strong observations on the subject are causing the Cecil family "enormous amusement." The cream of the joke is that the Church lands in question melted away in a peculiar manner. "Some of my ancestors," Lord William says, "were too fond of the gaming table, and I am afraid those Church lands, like so many other fortunes, have gone that way." This is what causes the Cecils "enormous amusement." One may judge them by that.

Rev. Joseph Sorrell, the aged rector of Holton Parish Church, Somerset, went through divine service on Sunday morning, May 19, with only one worshiper besides himself—that one being a representative of the *Daily Chronicle*. The sermon was not omitted, but duly preached to the congregation of one. No wonder the reverend gentleman remarked "there was a decay of religious worship" in England.

Thirty-nine members of the Bristol Liberal Club, all Churchmen, of course, have sent a round robin of protest to the Government against the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in Wales. These gentlemen tell Mr. Asquith that the Bill "will dishearten all who care for Christianity" and "strengthen and encourage the forces of materialism, secularism, and atheism." We hope this is true.

The late Mr. W. T. Stead is in the exploiting hands of the Spiritualists already. We see by an American exchange that he has been communicating by "mental wireless" with Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond, of Chicago. This lady told her audience what she knew of Mr. Stead, and then went off into the trance state, during which Mr. Stead was supposed to be using her organism and talking through her lips. He told them all about his last hours on the *Titanic*, but there is really nothing in his message which Mrs. Richmond could not have supplied herself.

Would it not have been a more convincing proof of "spirit" communication if Mr. Stead had been warned beforehand of the danger he risked by sailing on the *Titanic*? It seems odd to be silent before the tragic event and so talkative afterwards. But it was ever thus. Spirits generally avoid anything like tests.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended until September.)

To Correspondents.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

LUX.—You cannot detest the Romish Church more than we do, but in this country Protestantism is the religion we have to fight most, as it possesses the field and wields the power. Don't you see that?

WILLIAM KAY.—Only just able to find room.

T. R. N.—Will deal with it next week.

W. BAILEY.—Unavoidably deferred till next week. Always glad to hear from you. Thanks.

D. C. MUIRHEAD.—There is something grotesque about your being fined for "aiding and abetting" Mr. Chasty's "profanity." Even an Ilkeston magistrate might perceive that the chairman of a meeting, in itself lawful, could hardly anticipate what any lecturer was going to say. We wish the case could be carried to the Court of Appeal.

SEVERAL correspondents will please look for answers in our next issue.

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LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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Sugar Plums.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference took place at Leeds on Sunday, and a report of the proceedings will appear in our next issue. All we can manage this week, owing to the holidays, is the Executive's Annual Report, prepared and read by the President, which was in type before the Conference assembled. We may add that the utmost harmony prevailed, and that some very useful work was done. Mr. Foote was unanimously re-elected President.

The splendid public meeting in the evening at the Assembly Rooms, Briggate, gladdened the eyes of all upon the platform. There could not have been a more appreciative audience, they cheered every time they had a chance, and they seemed as fresh and lively at half-past nine as they were at seven. Nor could there have been a more orderly audience. It is evident that the Leeds police made a mistake—and we hope they recognise it.

It must be admitted that the N. S. S. provided the public meeting with a great array of platform ability. The list of speakers included Mr. John Grange, Mr. F. A. Davies, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. W. Heaford, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, Mr. C. Cohen, Miss Kough, and the N. S. S. President. In pronouncing the benediction the President doubted if such a collection of speakers had ever appeared on a Leeds platform before, and the remark was loudly cheered.

A brief report of the N. S. S. Conference appeared in the *Leeds Mercury* and a longer report in the *Manchester Dispatch*. The latter was mainly devoted to Miss Kough's speech at the evening meeting, in which she advised Freethinking young men and women to marry each other instead of religious outsiders, so that there might be no doubt about the children being brought up free from priestcraft and superstition.

Mr. Foote deeply regretted that he could not join in the Conference excursion to Knaresboro on Monday. The weather was fine, and everything looked very inviting, but he was absolutely obliged to return home and attend to the *Freethinker*. He has no sub-editor, no secretary, not even a clerk. Everything has to be done with his own hands. 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true!

We have longer reports of the Ilkeston "profanity" case to hand on Tuesday morning, but we have neither time nor room for more than a few lines supplementary to the *Daily Express* report which appears in another column. The two solicitors for the defence—Mr. Huntsman, of Nottingham, and Mr. G. N. Barker, of Ilkeston—made excellent speeches against such prosecutions and in favor of the right of the defendants to the same freedom of speech on religion as obtained on other subjects. One police witness said the meeting was disorderly, but another said it was quite orderly. It is worthy of notice that the magistrates declared that they had no desire to interfere with free speech. But what do they mean by this? One of the "profane" sentences laid to the defendants' charge was: "If there was a God we should have been a better civilised nation than we were." This is a perfectly courteous statement of the speaker's opinion. Where on earth does the "profanity" come in?

The Derby solicitor who prosecuted on behalf of the Chief Constable said that they did not prosecute the defendants for "blasphemy" because they did not want to advertise them. But they have advertised them, for long reports appear in the local newspapers, and the "profanity" is spread far and wide. The Chief Constable of Ilkeston is a pious person, but he should confine his worship of God to his attendance at his regular place of worship, and not mix it up with the town's business.

Owing to the N. S. S. Conference as affecting the editoria department, and the holidays as affecting the printing and publishing departments, there are inevitable shortcomings in this week's *Freethinker*. We will try to make compensation in our next issue.

Mr. Foote has had a pretty long lecturing season in 1911-12. He is glad now to take a three months' rest from platform work. Not by any means, though, a rest from work altogether. He has to pick up his arrears of correspondence, write several things already projected, and see some new things through the press for early publication. He never has a chance of complete idleness.

Correspondence.

BERGSON AND FREETHOUGHT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Our good friend, W. Mann, commits the same sin against freedom of thought as has been recently committed by our good friend Mr. Edward Clodd. On a recent public occasion, Mr. Clodd advised Rationalists to read Mr. Elliott's book on the illusions of Professor Bergson; but he never advised us first to be honest enough to read Bergson's great work on *Creative Evolution*. Mr. Mann has made the same omission. How on earth can you secure the free play of reason unless you study both sides? I am not a Christian because I have carefully studied Christianity; just as I keep myself steadfast in politics by habitually reading books and papers written by the opposition parties. You, Sir, like the late Charles Bradlaugh, have been an accurate student of the Bible; hence you have both the right and the power to criticise it with effect. The Freethought which cannot both permit and recommend the examination of the other people's case is trumpery stuff and miserable Devil's dust.

As to Professor Bergson, I affirm my belief that, in the end, his philosophy will act as an effective extinguisher of theology, and a lively aid to progress. His *Creative Evolution* is not a Theistic book. It is not dogmatic; it is the exploration of an ingenious, profound, and honest mind. In the name of Freethought I recommend intelligent people to (1) read Bergson; (2) then read Elliott's or anybody else's criticisms of Bergson. That is fair play. F. J. GEULDE

Old Testament History.—XII.

(Continued from p. 332.)

HAVING examined the Old Testament account of the siege of Jerusalem in the reign of Hezekiah, we now turn, for fresh light upon that event, to Sennacherib's own record of his campaign in Palestine. In 701 B.C. that king appeared in the north of Canaan, and captured the city of Sidon, whereupon the other cities in the district tendered their submission. At a levee which this king held near Sidon all the tributary kings of Canaan (save Hezekiah) attended. These included the kings of Sidon, Arvad, Gebal, Ashdod, Beth-Ammon, Moab, Edom, and *Menahem of Samaria*. From the last-mentioned name it will be seen that the kingdom of Samaria had not come to an end, as stated in the book of Kings; but we have no information as to the duration of the reign of Menahem II. of Samaria.

Continuing his advance southward, Sennacherib captured Askelon, Joppa, Ekron, and other cities. At Ekron he found that the priests and princes of that city had risen against Padi their king, because he had remained faithful to Assyria, and had sent him bound to Hezekiah, who had immured him in a dungeon. Sennacherib at once sent a force to Jerusalem, and brought back the dethroned king, whom he reinstated, but not until he had first impaled all the leaders of the rebellion on the city walls. The Assyrian record respecting the kingdom of Judah is as follows:—

"As for Hezekiah king of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his strong cities, and fortresses and small towns without number which depended on them, by overthrowing of walls and by open attack, by battering, mining, and missile, I besieged and captured. From the midst of them I brought out 200,150 persons, small and great, male and female; horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep without number, and *as spoil I counted*. Hezekiah himself like a caged bird within Jerusalem his royal city I shut up. A line of forts around him I raised, and I kept back his foot from going forth out of the gate of his city. His cities which I had spoiled, I cut off from the midst of his country; and to Metinti king of Ashdod, to Padi king of Ekron, and to Zilbaal, king of Gaza, I gave them, and *made his country small*. Besides the former tribute and yearly gifts, *I added other tribute*, and the homage due to my majesty I laid upon him. The fear of the greatness of my majesty overwhelmed him, even Hezekiah, and to Nineveh my royal city after me he sent as gift and tribute, the Arabs of his garrison, whom for the defence of Jerusalem his royal city, he had caused to enter, with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, stones bright and precious, lapis lazuli, a couch of ivory, thrones of ivory, elephants' hides, elephants' tusks, rare woods of every kind, a vast treasure, and his daughters, the women of his palace, dancing men and dancing women. And he sent his ambassador to do homage and give tribute."

From the foregoing historical record it would appear that no serious attempt was made to capture Jerusalem, that city from its position and fortifications being considered impregnable. Sennacherib contented himself with a strict blockade under one of his generals, while he himself over-ran the country capturing the other cities. When about to return to Nineveh, he made a considerable addition to the amount of tribute to be paid by Hezekiah, and left Palestine with the major portion of his army, leaving at Jerusalem a force sufficiently strong to continue the blockade until the tribute was paid. The 200,000 captives from the cities of Judah were escorted to Assyria by the main army under Sennacherib; the tribute received from Hezekiah was conveyed to Nineveh later on by the returning investing forces. Hezekiah was then free: but what a price had he paid for withholding the original tribute named by Sennacherib and for trusting to the god Yahveh for protection. The most important of the cities of Judah (save Jerusalem) had lost a large proportion of their inhabitants; while 46 of these cities no longer formed part of the kingdom of Judah.

Hezekiah himself had lost his daughters and his concubines, his dancing men and his dancing women, besides all his gold, silver, and treasures.

With respect to the carrying away into captivity of 200,150 of the people of Judah, the Bible "history" is discreetly silent. The capture of "all the fenced cities of Judah" is recorded; but nothing is said of the deportation of a large number of the inhabitants of those cities. When 27,280 of the people of Samaria were carried away by Sargon, the Bible historians declared that the kingdom of Israel had ceased to exist, and that all Israel had been carried away. Yet when more than seven times that number of the people of Judah were carried into captivity by Sennacherib, not a word is said about it, and the kingdom of Judah goes on as before. It is quite clear, then, that the post-exilic editors belonged to the kingdom of Judah.

With regard to the statements in 2 Kings xix. 35 and 37, it need only be said that with one exception—"And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead"—they are all pure fiction. There was no disaster "in the camp of the Assyrians"; Sennacherib did not worship "in the house of Nisroch his god"; there was no such god known in Assyria; Sennacherib had no sons named "Adram-melech and Sharezer"; he lived twenty years after his campaign in Judah, and during that time he fought many battles.

In 2 Kings xx. 8—11 we have the account of a miracle analagous to that of Joshua and the sun, of which I need only say that in every respect it is quite as credible.

Hezekiah king of Judah was succeeded in 695 B.C. by his son Manasseh, who reigned, according to the book of Kings, 55 years. This long reign I have found it necessary to reduce by only two years; hence, it is the longest reign of any king of Israel or Judah. Yet this king, according to the Bible account, was the very worst that reigned in either of the two kingdoms. This long-lived Manasseh "did that which was evil in the sight of Yahveh, after the abominations of the heathen." He rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed, and erected altars for Baal. He worshiped "all the host of heaven, and served them," and even built altars for these gods within the temple and in the courts of the temple. He "made his son pass through the fire," and "used enchantments," and had dealings "with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards." He also "set up a graven image of [the goddess] Asherah" within Yahveh's temple. No such desecration of that sacred edifice had ever been perpetrated before. After these innovations had been continued for a long time, the god Yahveh by the mouth of "his servants the prophets"—no names given—made the following declaration:—

2 Kings xxi. 10—15.—"Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did.....Behold, I bring such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.....I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. And I will cast off the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hands of their enemies," etc.

After the deportation of over 200,000 of the people of Judah, and the loss of "forty-six strong cities," which had been cut off from Judah and given to the kings of Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza in the 24th year of Hezekiah, what was left of that kingdom might truly be called "a remnant." The foregoing threat, however, is due to the post-exilic editors, who knew that in less than half a century after the death of Manasseh Nebuchadrezzar would carry captive the residue to Babylon. This king was the man who was to wipe the Jerusalem dish and turn it upside down.

Turning now to the records of Assyria, we find that two kings of that country invaded Palestine in the reign of Manasseh. The first of these was Esarhaddon I., who had an account to settle with the king of Sidon for having thrown off the Assyrian

yoke. After capturing that city and beheading its king, Esarhaddon held a levee which was attended by twenty-two kings of Syria, Palestine, and Cyprus (676 B.C.). Amongst these kings we find: Baal king of Tyre, Manasseh king of Judah, and Abi-baal king of Samaria. Thus, Manasseh of Judah was wiser than his father Hezekiah, and, by paying tribute and doing homage, saved many thousands of his subjects from deportation, besides paying a much smaller tribute. We also see that the carrying away of some thousands of the inhabitants of Samaria by Sargon (722 B.C.) did not seriously affect the stability of the kingdom of Israel.

Later on (668 B.C.), Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, came to Palestine against Baal king of Tyre, who had revolted from the Assyrian yoke. Having besieged Tyre and reduced the city and its king to submission, Assurbanipal says:—

"The daughters proceeding from his body and the daughters of his brothers, for concubines he brought to my presence. Yahu-melek his son, the glory of the country, of unsurpassed renown, sent forward to make obeisance to me. His daughter and the daughters of his brothers with great dowries I received."

This Assyrian king also held a levee, which was attended by twelve kings, amongst whom were: "Baal of Tyre, Manasseh of Judah.....Abi-baal of Samaria, Aminadab of Beth-Ammon, and Ahimelech of Ashdod." The names of the last two kings, it will be seen, are distinctly Hebrew. It may also be noticed that Baal king of Tyre must in earlier days have been a worshiper of the god Yahveh; otherwise he would never have named his son Yahu-melek—"Yahu is king."

ABBRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

National Secular Society's Annual Conference.

ANNUAL REPORT.—BY THE PRESIDENT.

In presenting this Annual Report, with the Balance-sheet, to the present Conference, the Executive finds it still necessary to repeat an old warning. Neither the Report nor the Balance-sheet covers anything like the whole work of the Society or of the movement which it mainly represents and embodies. The Branches of the Society, throughout London and the provinces, are all autonomous, carrying on their own operations and raising and expending their own funds. The Central Executive exists to do certain collective work which the Branches cannot do separately. This work has never, except on special occasions, involved a large expenditure of money. It must also be borne in mind that a good deal of the most expensive work is now undertaken and financed by the Secular Society, Limited; including costly series of lectures and the principal part of the Secretary's salary. The expenditure of that Incorporation amounts to several hundreds of pounds per year, nearly all of which represents effort running parallel to, and in harmony with, that of the National Secular Society. The Incorporation also makes grants of money to the N. S. S. Executive and Branches which are in need of greater financial assistance than the Executive is able to render.

During the past year the preoccupation of the public mind with political questions has continued and even been intensified. This always means a certain check to advanced movements of a non-political character. It is something, therefore, in the circumstances, to be able to report that the N. S. S. has fairly held its own. Its leading lecturers have been well employed, and its organ of publicity (though not officially so), the *Freethinker*, has not gone backward but slightly improved in circulation.

There are no public debates, however, to be reported this year. The result of those between some representatives of yours and some of the Christian clergy, reported last year, has not apparently encouraged the orthodox to put forward fresh champions. Probably the old truth has been rediscovered, that discussion is Freethought's opportunity and Christianity's undoing.

An effort was made to organise a special outdoor propaganda through the Midlands and Lancashire and Yorkshire during the present summer, and the Board of the Secular Society, Ltd., was appealed to for assistance in this respect. That Society, with its greater command of funds, entered into an engagement with Mr. F. A. Davies, one of the N. S. S.

vice-presidents, and a well-known London speaker, to undertake such a propagandist tour; but before the engagement could take effect Mr. Davies was fortunate enough to secure a permanent post in the service of the Trade Union to which he belongs; consequently, the project fell through, but it is not to be forgotten and only awaits another opportunity.

The special item of "Outdoor Propaganda" in the new Balance-sheet refers to the open-air Sunday lectures in the London Parks and other open spaces under the control of the County Council. The Council issues permits for collections and the sale of literature at these meetings; in return the Council requires a proper statement of income and expenditure, and this is best managed, in the case of the N. S. S. Branches, through the collective action of the general Executive. It may be added that a vast number of people hear the gospel of Freethought, taking the whole summer propaganda through, by means of these lectures; the meetings being many, the audiences satisfactory, and sometimes very large, and nearly always orderly.

Special demonstrations were organised by the Executive during the summer in several parts of London, including Victoria Park, Brockwell Park, Finsbury Park, and Parliament Hill Fields. Most of the speaking fell to the lot of Mr. Cohen, Mr. Moss, Mr. Heaford, and Mr. Davies. The demonstrations were all very successful. This was partly due to the handsome assistance rendered by Mr. E. Wilson, who provided a platform on each occasion in the shape of a brake and a splendid pair of horses.

In addition to the lecturing work carried on by your Executive there is lecturing work carried on by the Secular Society, Ltd., largely, of course, by means of the N. S. S. machinery. Successful courses of Sunday evening lectures took place at the Shoreditch Town Hall and the Stratford Town Hall,—the latter a fine large hall and the former one of majestic proportions. Sunday evening lectures have also taken place at the Queen's (Minor) Hall throughout the winter, with the exception of January. Finally, two special Sunday evening meetings were held further east in London, at South Place Chapel, which is associated with the name and memory of the late M. D. Conway, for so many years its regular lecturer, who made it famous over the whole civilised world.

The trouble at Birmingham, referred to in the last annual report, remains pretty much as it was. Local bigotry made a serious interference with the Secularists' use of the Town Hall. It looked as though they were to be denied the use of it altogether. But a foothold was still left them. The Town Council Committee agreed to grant two Sundays for lectures by the N. S. S. President. Any other application than that seems very unlikely to be successful at present; and even that may be objected to as soon as the bigots think it advisable to go upon the warpath again. Fortunately, by the generous aid of the Secular Society, Ltd., the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch has been able to carry on fairly regular Sunday meetings in the King's Hall, Corporation-street. These have been well attended and must have done a great deal of good. But the financial loss has been considerable in consequence of the necessitated policy of trusting to collections.

Freethought propaganda has been well sustained at places like Glasgow and Liverpool, where large audiences are the rule rather than the exception. Your President always has large meetings at Manchester, but other lecturers are less fortunate there, and the reason is probably the want of adequate organisation. Manchester might well be the centre of a bold and extensive Freethought movement, and this might be brought about by co-operation between the local forces and the Central Executive in London. The difficulties at Liverpool do not arise from lack of audiences but from lack of funds. This is mainly due to the arbitrary action of the police. Acting not on the law of the land, but a law of their own, the Liverpool police exercise a terrorism over all who use licensed halls for Sunday meetings. To charge for seats is perfectly legal, but the police say (at least to the Secularists) it shall not be done. After stopping the sale of tickets at the door they proceeded to stop the sale of tickets at all. Their power to do this is an absolute usurpation. But the police have their own way of harassing and ruining the proprietors or lessees of premises licensed for music and dancing who try to resist their dictation. In these circumstances the Liverpool Branch has had to submit. It might have had to close too, but for the liberal assistance of the Secular Society, Ltd. Here again it is proved how valuable that Incorporated Society has been to the cause of Secularism.

In this connection it may be mentioned that the late F. Smallman, one of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, whose death was recorded in last year's report, together with the fact that he had bequeathed the Secular Society, Ltd., the sum of £500, free of legacy duty, in his will, was one of the earliest to see the great importance of that Incorporation. He fol-

lowed its career with close attention from its birth upward, and laughed at those who thought its founder was too sanguine. Mr. Smallman knew better. He put the Incorporation in his will for a handsome legacy, and the £500 has just been paid over by his executors in the ordinary way of business.

This stage of the report may be the most suitable to refer to the death of two other vice-presidents during the past year; Mr. W. H. Wood, of Birmingham, and Mr. Horace W. Parsons, of Great Hampton, near Evesham. Mr. Parsons was a man of exceptional parts, who lent a lustre to any cause which commanded his support. It is curious that, although he had been so long an ardent supporter of the N. S. S., and a warm personal friend of Charles Bradlaugh and afterwards of Mr. Foote, he had only joined the list of vice-presidents less than a year before his demise. He was gratified at the honor conferred upon him at the last Conference at the President's suggestion, and it added a touch of pleasantness to the last months of his life.

Last year's report referred to the narrow escape the N. S. S. had had of losing another vice-president who also happened to be its secretary. Miss Vance is still amongst us, and better than many of us expected her to be. The resolution to raise a testimonial to her after so many years' service was carried out through the *Freethinker*; and at a crowded social gathering at Anderton's Hotel on October 5 the President had the pleasure and satisfaction of handing her a cheque for £151 17s. 9d., with the wish—the impossible wish—that it were ten times as much. The speeches made on that occasion and reported in the *Freethinker* obviate the necessity of a long reference now. The Conference is glad to meet Miss Vance again in 1912 and hopes to see her for many years to come.

With regard to the unveiling of the Ferrer Memorial at Brussels, it has to be reported that the function was a striking triumph, and that the N. S. S. was represented on the spot by W. Heaford, whose glowing account of the proceedings was published at the time. Since then a judgment of the Supreme Military Court at Madrid has still further vindicated Ferrer's memory. It was alleged, and held to be proved—indeed it was on that ground he was shot—that he was the actual leader of the revolutionary riots at Barcelona. The Supreme Court found, incidentally, that there is not the slightest evidence in favor of this allegation. Ferrer was thus innocent of the crime for which he was executed, and his murderers are left with no excuse but their own bigotry for sacrificing his life. Short of a special inquiry by order of the Cortes, nothing could better demonstrate that Ferrer's death was an assassination.

No doubt the Ferrer matter will be dealt with once more at the International Freethought Congress at Munich in the autumn. No doubt, also, the motion on the Agenda that the N. S. S. should be strongly represented at that Congress will be carried with acclamation.

Some other matters of very great importance, though not calling at this stage for a detailed report, may be mentioned before passing on to late prosecutions for "blasphemy" and "profanity." Resolutions carried at the last Conference concerning a Bradlaugh Lectureship, a Program of Courses of Study in Freethought, the Organisation of unattached Freethinkers with a view to the formation of new Branches, and the foundation of Freethought Lectureships for the benefit of young men who could advocate Freethought in the press or on the platform—all these have been discussed and reported on again and again, and should take definite shape in the Executive's hands very shortly. To discuss them at this stage would be little but a waste of time. The sub-committees' reports, as finally adopted by the Executive, will be published in the *Freethinker*, and opinions and suggestions from members throughout the country will be received with welcome and considered with care before positive action is taken. The apparent delay in these matters has been quite unavoidable. They have proved to be far larger and more difficult than was anticipated, besides promising to involve a considerable expenditure of money, for which special funds might have to be raised.

In turning to the matter of the prosecutions in London and Leeds, it should be observed that your President has for many years been reminding Freethinkers in particular, and advanced parties in general, that a big wave of reaction was spreading over the whole of Europe. His prophecy of trouble to come in the not very distant future was almost unheeded, but the trouble has come and it threatens to increase before it diminishes. It has even affected the political world, as may be seen in the prosecution of Mr. Tom Mann and the Syndicalists. It burst upon the Freethought world in the first prosecution of Mr. Boulter, and afterwards in the proceedings against him at Streatham Common. The authorities found Mr. Boulter of an accommodating nature whenever his peril reached a crisis, and people ceased to be interested in his adventures with the

police. The prosecution of Messrs. Gott and Stewart under the Blasphemy Law met with a more stubborn resistance. They defended themselves with spirit and took their punishment with fortitude. Whether they pursued exactly the best course in other respects is open to discussion.

The position of the N. S. S. in relation to the Leeds prosecution was naturally a waiting one. It could make no move except by the invitation or consent of the prosecuted parties. Some people do not appear to understand this. They criticise the action of the N. S. S. as if it had a free field. All it could do was to offer help—of course, on reasonable conditions. And that it did. It would gladly have raised money and employed counsel and made the case look more "respectable" according to British standards, besides attracting a more general public attention. The whole question of "blasphemy" required to be argued afresh, after Mr. Justice Phillimore's and Mr. Justice Darling's endorsement of Lord Coleridge's statement of the Common Law at the *Freethinker* trial in 1883. These considerations were presented to one of the defendants in the Leeds case when he sought your President's advice in London; but he elected to go his own way, as he had a perfect right to, and a very important opportunity was lost. Even the N. S. S. offer to provide for the defendants' families during their imprisonment was declined almost contemptuously. This aspect of the matter is not worth dwelling upon, but it shows conclusively that the N. S. S. did what it could, and could go no farther because it had no status in the case.

Your Executive asked the Home Secretary to receive a deputation. He declined to do so. Your Executive then organised a protest meeting at South Place Chapel. It was a crowded meeting, it was unanimous, and it was remarkable, not only for the presence of the Rev. S. D. Headlam in the chair, but also for the presence of the late Mr. W. T. Stead as one of the speakers on the platform. Mr. Stead hoped that a Committee would be formed to bring about the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and promised to serve on it; he did not live to keep his word, he went down with the *Titanic*, but the bold step he took that evening on the platform of South Place Chapel will be remembered to his honor by every lover of equal freedom for all religious (or irreligious) opinions before the eye of the law.

Persecution has taken a new form at Leeds since the imprisonment of Messrs. Gott and Stewart. The "blasphemy" law is dropped, action is taken under the old Police Act of 1847, Mr. T. A. Jackson is charged with "using profane language" in the streets, and sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment, which is the last minute the Act allows. Mr. Marshall, the Assistant Stipendiary Magistrate, calmly decided that "profanity" and "blasphemy" were the same thing, and that evidence for one was good evidence for the other. That decision, however, would undoubtedly have been upset in the Court of Appeal.

Another case has occurred at Ilkeston. Two members of the N. S. S. Branch went over from Nottingham to Ilkeston on Sunday, May 12, one delivering an open-air lecture and the other taking the chair. The police proceeded against the lecturer for using "profane language" and against the chairman for "aiding and abetting" him. Messrs. Chasly and Muirhead sought and received your President's advice and assistance. The summons was heard on Thursday last (May 23), but the result has not been communicated to your President.

A movement is on foot for organising a powerful National Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. Your Executive is represented by Mr. Lloyd and the President during the preliminary stages. What will come of this effort remains to be seen. It is to be hoped the new Committee will be more effectual than the old Committee, whose life went out of it when the brave Rev. W. Sharman died.

Members of your Executive sit, though unofficially, on the Committees of the Secular Education League and the Rationalist Peace Society. The former is doing excellent work. The latter held a very successful meeting at Queen's (Minor) Hall on "Peace Sunday" evening (May 19), with Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., in the chair, and your President and Miss Kough in the list of speakers. Its representatives had also taken part in the International Peace Congress at Caxton Hall during the previous week, valuable speeches having been made there by Mr. H. S. Swinny and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner.

In closing this report your Executive wishes to cast the usual glance at Freethought in other lands. Priestly intrigues are not able to upset the Republic based on justice and toleration in Portugal, neither is the Church able to arrest the growth of the Freethought party in Spain. Ferrer's spirit is potent there as Cæsar's spirit was after his assassination. The notion that a dead man cannot serve a great cause is one of the delusions of tyranny. France continues to be practically a nation of Freethinkers.

German Freethought advances under the intellectual leadership of Haeckel. Russia is not cowed into complete superstition by the worst despotism in the world: Freethought is active amongst the educated classes and the skilled workmen of the towns. Japan and China are as far off Christianity as ever. We salute the growing body of Freethinkers in China especially. We salute also our comrades throughout the English-speaking world. The New York *Truth-seeker* still flourishes in the hands of Mr. George Macdonald, the *Examiner* in the hands of Mr. W. W. Collins in New Zealand. In South Africa the Freethought movement is rapidly advancing. May it promote there, as it does elsewhere, the ever-growing spirit of mental liberty and human brotherhood.

Aphorisms and Epigrams.

You men in black: the only color that shames the light.

Christianity is a vain, forlorn, deadening belief in three unproven gods of ancient superstition.

I have preached Christ for many years; now I must undo some of the evil I have done and have begun with myself.

The "Scandalous Chronicle" of Europe is church history; the blackest line running through the records of human thought and action. Not the "History of the Church," by the Venerable So-and-so, but the real chronicle of the thinkings and doings of the professional religionist.

The Church cannot commit a greater wrong against the mentality of man than teach its little dogmas as final truth at a time when science is opening hundreds of new avenues into the universe.

The doctrine of faith alone is enough to brand the Church with infamy. The teaching of a little child to believe what a man cannot prove is a business worthy of its own imaginary Satan.

It is bad enough to teach faith in a God unknown and a Devil unproved, but worse for hundreds of thousands to make a living out of it and cost the country every year over fifty millions of pounds. That is the sharpest practice in the history of-commerce.

Englishmen are, of all men, the most miserable if the Church of England, or any other church, has been given the first and last word in truth, knowledge, and philosophy.

Think of it; fifty thousand paid pulpits in one small island betraying truth twice every Sunday of the year by preaching visible errors and lies historical.

Jesus may or may not have lived; but, anyway, why so much fuss about one poor possible Jew two thousand years ago, when better men, with finer truths in their mouths, live and die obscurely among us in our own century?

All the old churches in the world, though they have cost men trillions of money to build and millions of lives to defend, are not so much to me as this pretty blue flower in my hand that whispers to me so modestly: *truth is known by its freshness and sweetness.*

I tell you, men, that all divine religions are big with lies and false to humanity. Shake off your dreadful childish, feverish fears. Truth is not heard there, in this little church or on that gaudy altar. Truth has no priests, but comes like the sun streaming down upon us all, and has always before her three Jove-runners: Freedom, Science, Justice.

Glory to God in the highest! Ah, no! Glory to man the maker of gods! For who has made can unmake, and the time is coming when man will break down the idols he has made and serve only the simple truth in nature. Then, indeed, shall nature herself cry out: Glory to man and honor to woman. For nature will know nothing higher or more beautiful.

Tell me not of the self-sacrifice of the priest; that simple woman yonder, dying of hunger to save her children, has lost and suffered more. Tell me not of the high mission of the Church; that poor man who

gave his life yesterday to rescue a stranger had a mission higher. Tell me not that the worship of God must be maintained at all costs. No; I say there is one more worthy than your God, and his name is Truth. Him shalt thou serve and him only shalt thou worship.

JULIAN ST. OREY.

THE POINT VIEW OF YORICK.

Religion is merely a point of view. This is proved by the lineage of the Christian religion, which grew out of the ancient religious cults of Asia, and having organised under the direction of Saul of Tarsus, converted from a persecutor of Christians to be an apostle of the Gentiles, almost immediately began to split up into warring sects, none of which have been reconciled, many of which were destroyed or absorbed, and all of which, after two thousand years of earnest, faithful, persistent proselytising, have failed to convert or absorb the original Oriental religions, themselves rent by dissension and constantly separating into independent congregations of sectarians and schismatics. The proper census comparisons between Christian and "pagan" religions should be in the sectarian classifications; the Buddhists with the Roman Catholics, the Shintoists with the Methodists, the Brahmins with the Episcopalians, the Parsees with the Presbyterians, the Taoists with the Baptists, and so on through the vast and ever-shifting list of human beliefs. If my critic had been born in Asia of Asiatic parentage, he would have been anything except the Christian he is, and his faith would have been quite different from the one he acquired after he was born a Christian. His birth was an accident anyway; his receptivity for any faith that might be offered after birth was coeval with his birth, and that faith would have accommodated itself to his religious environment. If he had been born without faith capacity, it would have mattered not at all where he was born; he would have rejected all religion and set up a religion of his own. But his "license" to write or speak on religious matters would not be abridged.

I remember distinctly when I had all the faith necessary to make me a member in excellent standing in the "established" Church of the place where I was born; notwithstanding that I was born without faith. Long before the Christian religion was introduced I was born an Egyptian, but I could not believe in the dominant religion of that country nor subscribe honestly to the superstitions preached by the priests of Isis and Osiris; but when the priests threatened to immure me in the deepest dungeon beneath the pyramids I readily announced my submission to the tenets of Apis the sacred bull. When I was born a Babylonian I scoffed at the Syro-Phœnician gods, but the priests of Baal soon convinced me that I was blaspheming the only true religion; they converted me by offering me the alternative of living a Baalite or dying the death of a heretic. When I was born a Persian I refused to worship the sun god, but I thought better of it when the towers of silence loomed large and portentous in the sentence which the priests prepared for my serious consideration. In all matters of religion I have invariably conformed to the teachings of the religion in power; and to-day, no doubt, if similar conditions existed I would assume any faith though I possessed ever so little of it. Millions have changed their faith at the first turn of a thumbscrew; and other millions have renounced the god of their fathers at the mere mention of the muscle-wrenching rack or the flesh-tearing pincers of a better faith. The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church; but many religions have been perpetuated by just such timely prevention of martyrdom as I have described from the experience of my own conversions and reconversions through an endless cycle of reincarnations. I may be of little or no faith as that term is defined in the theological lexicon of my critics, but like Barkis I am always "willing" to believe anything that anybody can compel me to believe. *Yorick, in the "San Deigo Union."*

Obituary.

ANOTHER old and noble Freethinker has fallen from the ranks by the death of Mr. James Leach, of Blackburn, at the age of seventy. It was an oft-expressed wish of his that Mr. G. W. Foote should have read the Burial Service; but, owing to his sudden death and the sad effect upon his aged widow, it was not carried out. However, Mr. Sidney Wollen very ably officiated, and gave an impressive address upon the noble qualities of the deceased, who had for so many years been a regular reader and admirer of the *Freethinker* and its noble editor. The world is poorer by his absence.—W. KAY.

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.**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, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, a Lecture.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, Miss Kough, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, a Lecture.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Mr. Allison, "The Future of Freethought."

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