

# THE Freethinker

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*It is just as easy to PROVE that an historic Christ never existed as it is to demonstrate that the mermaid, or the moon-calf, the sphinx, or the centaur, never lived.*

—GERALD MASSEY.

## God and the World.

EVERYBODY remembers what an enormous amount of pious nonsense Christian preachers indulged in on the occasion of the terrific disaster that befell the *Titanic*, involving the cruel loss of some sixteen hundred lives. The Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan frankly admitted that the whole thing was to him an insoluble mystery; but after making that admission, he had the hardihood to affirm, strangely enough, that the catastrophe was not an act of God. God was in it, no doubt, but not as cause or instrument. If God was not in it as a controlling factor, what was the use of his being in it at all? If God is supreme he must have either caused or permitted the dreadful accident; but, in either case, he alone is responsible for it. Another reverend gentleman observed that the loss of the *Titanic* "proves that there is an Almighty above"; but how on earth it furnishes such a proof he did not pause to explain. Another member of the cloth exclaimed, "You can see the value of prayer now." Nothing of the kind; it is the value of wireless telegraphy that we see. Heaven did absolutely nothing. Another representative of the holy profession claimed the calamity as an act of God, maintaining that it was a judgment on the present generation of luxury-loving ocean travellers; but the curious thing is that the great majority of those who went down to a watery grave were steerage passengers. The luxury-loving passengers were mostly in the first class; and yet it was among them that the percentage of the rescued was highest. Are we to infer that God on this occasion rebuked the rich by drowning the poor? The truth is that on any theological theory the *Titanic* disaster reflects most unfavorably upon God. His ways with men, especially on such occasions, are incapable of justification.

And yet, in spite of life-destroying shipwrecks, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and thunderstorms, preachers still proclaim the old impossible Gospel that this world is under the control of an all-powerful, all-good, and all-loving Father. There appeared in the *Baptist Times* for May 31 a sermon by the Rev. Charles Brown, D.D., entitled "The Control of God." The text was, "All things are thy servants" (Psalm cxix. 91), yielding the thesis that God's influence pervades, shapes, controls, directs, and utilises everything. Such is Dr. Brown's own faith, and he says of it:—

"It is a faith expressed by some of our modern poets. Says Mrs. Browning,

'Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God.'

It is the greatest thing in the world to feel this, and it may, perhaps, be said that the majority of men do not feel it. So Mrs. Browning continues concerning the bush afire with God,—

'Only he who sees takes off his shoes—  
The rest sit round and gather blackberries.'

The fact that the majority of men do not feel God's

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pervading, shaping, controlling, directing, and utilising influence gives plausibility to the suspicion that the minority who pretend that they do feel it are mistaken. Dr. Brown believes in it simply because he finds it taught in the Bible, not because the facts of history afford any evidence of its reality. The Bible teaches that God is supreme everywhere, "doing according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. iv. 35), and the reverend gentleman accepts that teaching without question, although it is flatly contradicted by the experiences of daily life. He takes the Old Testament history of the Jews as literally true. They were a God-controlled people, chosen before all the nations of the earth to be a peculiar people unto the Lord their God. And yet, even as portrayed in this volume, they impress us as being neither better nor worse than their neighbors. It is a mistake to imagine that the Jews were intense believers in Jehovah, and lived in perfect loyalty to his name. As a matter of fact, the prophets constantly denounce them as idolaters, as a crooked and perverse nation, whose fidelity to their national deity was a broken reed. Despite God's reputed choice of them, his experience as their teacher and guide was so extremely dissatisfactory that he was obliged eventually to reject them. In other words, Israel's faith in God was an illusion, not only having elements of superstition in it, as Dr. Brown admits, but being in its very nature the emptiest superstition.

Dr. Brown's allusion to the history of the Jews was made in order to show that the Old Testament advocates the absolute sovereignty of God as governor of the world; but, taking the history as it stands, nothing can be more undeniable than that the Jews never subjected themselves to such sovereignty. In the Prophets Jehovah and they are represented as being perpetually at loggerheads, and the chief complaint against the people was that they forgot their own God and went after foreign ones. God never did according to his will amongst the inhabitants of Palestine. That is to say, the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty never blossomed there into a fact of history; nor has it done so anywhere else. Dr. Brown says:—

"I believe, and you believe, that there has been a movement of God, a movement of mercy and judgment, in the rise and fall of empires; that their story is not a confusion of accidental happenings, but that there is a gleaming message of God in all. I have always believed that God had as much to do with the destruction of the Spanish Armada as with the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea, and that the great events of this nation's history have had some controlling hand of God in them."

Highly amusing is the comparison between the destruction of the Spanish Armada and that of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea. The latter is undoubtedly a fairy tale which never happened as related. The miraculous crossing of the Red Sea is a pure legend. This is the view held by many Christian scholars. It cannot be proved that the Israelites ever sojourned in the land of Egypt; but even if they did the story of their escape as told in the Book of Exodus is clearly fictitious. The story of the destruction of the Invincible Armada of Spain is perfectly true, but there is absolutely no evidence that God had anything whatever to do with it. It is

true that superstitious Queen Elizabeth attributed her victory to the interposition of Providence, saying, "God blew with his wind and they were scattered"; but, though a strong south-west wind was blowing, the defeat of the Armada was due to the superiority of English gunnery. As the Spaniards voyaged up the Channel they were losing ship after ship. They put into Calais, but the English sent in fire-ships and drove them out. Then followed the terrible fight off Gravelines, during which the Spanish ships were riddled with English shot. Then a mighty wind arose and drove both the Spaniards and the English past the coast of Flanders. As Gardiner observes, "The winds had done their part, but the victory was mainly due to the seamanship of English mariners and the skill of English shipwrights."

Equally unfortunate is Dr. Brown's reference to the present industrial unrest. He believes that there is "a movement of God in it, a clamant call of God to this nation to consider its way, to do justly, to love mercy, to cease from oppression, to regard no men as serfs, at the power and mercy of other men." Now, does it not strike the reverend gentleman as passing strange that, if the Christian God exists, he did not create a pure and noble Democracy countless centuries ago? Why did he allow slavery and serfdom and numberless other social wrongs to arise and grow powerful and become instruments of oppression and cruelty? All through the long centuries of Christian rule the working classes and the poor remained crushed beneath the heels of the rich and powerful followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. The Democracy, as we know it to-day, is by no means a Christian product. It originated outside Christian influence, and was at first severely frowned upon by the Christian Church. Now listen to Dr. Brown:—

"The profound necessity of the moment is that the Democracy should become Christians; that the Church should bend its energies more and more to the evangelising of the masses. More to be dreaded than anything else is a Godless and unbelieving Democracy. It will mean a Democracy swayed by class passion and selfishness; and its domination would mean the sure decay and ruin of England."

This is the pulpit style to perfection. Ignorance is the most confident of all prophets. Dr. Brown speaks from the depths of the blindest and most obstinate prejudice. Hitherto there has never existed "a Godless and unbelieving Democracy." Under Christianity there has never been a Democracy, good or bad; but all sorts of social evil have been rampant in every age of the former's domination. Dr. Brown cannot but admit that up to the present moment Christianity has been a stupendous failure. Had Christianity been a success there would have been some ground for dreading the advent of "a Godless and unbelieving Democracy"; but inasmuch as Christianity has not set the world right, has not abolished poverty and misery and established the reign of peace and prosperity, one would have expected a man like Dr. Brown to be ready to give even "Godless and unbelieving Democracy" free scope to prove its quality. Instead of that, with the lamentable failure of Christianity staring him in the face, he does his utmost to discredit "a Godless and unbelieving Democracy" by ignorantly prophesying evil concerning its absolutely unknown future. Is this fair, is it even honest? Dr. Brown has no right to predict that the domination of Atheism would mean the decay and ruin of England, or of any other country. France is becoming more Atheistic every year, twenty millions having written themselves down Atheists at the last census; but there is less crime in France to-day than there was when the Church was supreme. How does Dr. Brown know that it would be different in England?

Cheap and easy is prejudiced dogmatism. Ignorance is always reckless, and prejudice is ever blind. Dr. Brown, being the victim of both, waxes exceeding bold, and has nothing but evil to predicate of everything that is not Christian. But we have no

hesitation in assuring him that, in our judgment, Atheism would be the salvation of England, Scotland, and Wales. Atheism enables us to take a rational view of the world and its problems. The evils of life, being natural, cannot be removed by supernatural means. Secularism, which is the philosophy of life according to Atheism, proposes to deal with all problems on purely natural lines, and to solve them in a natural manner. Oh, discredited theologian, let it have its innings in peace; and if it loses the game, then drive it out of the field of action, but not before.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Religion and Life.—VI.

(Continued from p. 339.)

IF Mr. and Mrs. Whetham had intended to provide an indictment of Christianity by way of a pretended justification, they could hardly have done it better than in the following passage:—

"The intellectual qualities, the powers of initiative and organisation, which enable people to succeed, are segregated out under forms of religious belief and social organisation, which, disguise it as we may, encourage and acquiesce in the survival of the most efficient and energetic, allotting them the opportunities belonging to their superior racial value."

Under forms of social organisation, yes; but what part does religion play in conserving suitable social forms, and, still more important, in encouraging and developing new ones? Far from encouraging initiative, it is one of the main functions of religion, in all its forms, to discourage any such initiative. Conservative in the worst sense of the word, religion everywhere interposes the fear of the supernatural against change. And in connection with the special subjects of sexual and family relations, it has succeeded in creating an atmosphere that has made rational discussion of these topics a matter of the greatest difficulty. What it has succeeded in doing is to surround with a pornographic interest topics that might otherwise have been discussed as freely as one could have wished. An army of quacks—and worse than quacks—live on the feelings thus generated, while others are deterred from speaking because of the misunderstandings to which they are exposed. Those who are familiar with the course of the discussions on the general question of Malthusianism will need no further proof of what has been said.

And as religion is naturally and inevitably against change, its efforts at organisation are consequently directed to maintain things as they are—when it is not a question of restoring what has been. If this had reference to religion alone, comparatively little harm would be done. But in the course of social development religious ideas become connected with a number of interests that are vitally concerned with the preservation of particular social conditions. With the result, to paraphrase our authors, that the intellectual and other qualities favorable to religion, but, which left alone, would flower healthily in a progressive social life, are so manipulated that they result in the survival of a type of character and of an environment whose chief value is their tendency to perpetuate religious beliefs. An altogether false standard of value is introduced, and one which, to the extent that it is operative, is fatal to the best social life.

As Mr. and Mrs. Whetham are properly concerned with the position of the family in social life, it might have occurred to them to consider what the effect of Christianity has been in this direction. Had they done this their difficulty in estimating the influence of Christianity would not have been so great. I am not now concerned with the general position of women under Christianity, although that is by no means an unimportant subject in this connection. But some words on the question of the family is unavoidable.

When, as is often the case, we read that Christianity took under its care the control of family life, the inference we are invited to draw is that it did this in order to raise and purify an institution that had fallen into decay and disrepute. Nothing could be wider of the truth. So long as we are dealing with Pagan Rome we never lose touch with a people to whom marriage and the family suggested ideas of dignity and value, and which commanded every possible respect. The ordinary Christian notions on the subject are, like most Christian notions in this connection, simply untrue. All reliable Roman history is simply pervaded with the conception of the dignity of the Roman matron, and the pictures of domestic life that have been handed down will compare favorably with any other period of European history.

Whatever grounds there may have been for the laments concerning the declining birth-rate these had certainly no very strong or clear connection with a lowering of family life. Modern France is ample proof that the two things are quite disconnected. Indeed, a strengthening of family ties and affection is far more likely to lead to a diminution of the birth-rate than the reverse. Carelessness is far more often the condition for large families than is strong family affection. Christianity only took marriage and the family under its control as it took, or tried to take, all other things under its rule. Its aim was to control life; and to do so the mastery of the family was vital. To control the child is to control the race, and to control marriage is to secure the child. The protest of the Churches against civil marriage, and the long struggle of the Churches for religious instruction, are illustrations of this.

Christianity had in the Pagan world an excellent basis on which to build a sane treatment of family life had it been so minded. But against this were two fatal obstacles—its conception of the nature of woman and its attachment to the celibate ideal. Like most founders of religions, the New Testament Jesus is presented as a celibate. This was not, in the opinion of those nearest his time, accidental; it was essential to his function as Savior, one of the indications of his "purity." And there is no question whatever that for centuries the overwhelming volume of Christian teaching was in favor of celibacy. Nor has celibacy ever lost its value in the eyes of a fairly large number of Christian teachers. At any rate, the example of Jesus and the explicit teaching of Paul combined were ample to furnish the advocates of celibacy with authority for their teaching. The Rev. Principal Donaldson, in his generally excellent book on *Woman*, professes some difficulty in accounting for the growth among the early Christians of the feeling in favor of celibacy. He remarks that "no one with the New Testament as his guide could venture to assert that marriage was wrong." Not wrong, certainly; but anyone with the New Testament before him would be justified in asserting marriage to be inferior to celibacy. The New Testament is curiously deficient in teachings concerning family life. It is at most taken for granted; and as it must be, some attempt is made to regulate it. But it is neither strongly commended nor recommended, and of its social value there is never a glimpse. And there is much on the other side. Paul permits marriage only to avoid worse. In the book of Revelation there is a reference to 144,000 saints who wait on "the Lamb," and who "were not defiled with women, but were virgins." If one is not justified in speaking of the New Testament as a celibate book, it requires very few additions to provide ample justification for such a description.

The historic fact is, however, that the immediate followers of the New Testament Jesus were, in the main, ardent advocates of celibacy. The social importance of marriage being ignored, the one function remaining was that of perpetuating the race. And the desirability of even this was questioned. The world was nearing its end, and the need for multiplication no longer obtained. It is from this point of view that Tertullian describes children as

"burdens which are to most of us perilous as being unsuitable to faith," and wives as women of the second degree of modesty who had fallen into wedlock. Jerome said that marriage was at best a sin, and all that could be done was to excuse and purify it. Augustine said that celibates would shine in heaven like dazzling stars. Married people were declared, by another authority, to be incapable of salvation; while one set of Christians by self-mutilation made procreation a physical impossibility. A continuation of this practice is found among the Russian Skopsis to-day.

The social consequences of such teachings are not difficult to trace. In the first place, instead of refining the conception of marriage, the whole Christian tendency was to coarsen, to animalise it. Hardly any religion equals Christianity in this respect. A few admirable descriptions of marriage might be gathered from the immense mass of early Christian writings, but the general trend is as stated. The writers are almost exclusively concerned with the sexual relation in its coarsest aspect. Children are seldom mentioned, except as an illustration of some argument, generally to hold up the ignorance and helplessness of childhood as models for the adult. There is little said concerning either their training or education. And, in passing, it may be noted that the much-praised evangelical classic, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, shows an instructive obliviousness to the value of family or even of social life. Dean Milman said that he could not recall a single instance in all the discussions on the comparative merits of marriage and celibacy where the social aspect appears to have occurred to the disputants. Necessary marriage might be, but nothing could quite purge it of its uncleanness.

Another aspect of the matter is one that should have struck authors like Mr. and Mrs. Whetham. It is the consequence of all preaching—no matter what be its subject-matter—to strike the more susceptible. The careless hear and are unaffected. The more thoughtful alone are touched. The result of the Christian teaching was that, on the whole, it debarred from parentage those who were most fitted for its functions. Principal Donaldson notes the absence of home life in the history of Christians, and declares it led to a survival of the unfittest. And he adds, "Perhaps this absence of domestic affection .....this homelessness, may account in some degree for the striking features of the next century, and especially the prevalent hardness of heart." And Sir Francis Galton, whom Mr. and Mrs. Whetham properly refer to as the founder of the Science of Eugenics, says on this question, in his great pioneer work, *Hereditary Genius* :—

"The long period of the Dark Ages under which Europe has lain is due, I believe, in a very considerable degree, to the celibacy enjoined by the religious orders on their votaries.....The Church chose to preach and exalt celibacy. The consequence was that those gentle natures had no continuance, and thus, by a policy so singularly unwise and suicidal that I am hardly able to speak of it without impatience, the Church brutalised the breed of our forefathers. She acted precisely as if she had aimed at selecting the rudest portion of the community to be, alone, the parents of future generations. She practised the arts that breeders would use, who aimed at creating ferocious, curish, and stupid nature. No wonder that club law prevailed for centuries over Europe; the wonder rather is that enough good remained in the veins of Europeans to enable their race to rise to its very moderate level of natural morality."

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded)

The most tyrannical magistrate becomes moderate, the most daring circumspect, when, exposed to the view of all, he feels that he cannot pronounce a judgment without being judged himself.—*Jeremy Bentham*.

## Poets and Others.

What wonder if yon torn and naked throng  
Should doubt a Heaven that seems to wink and nod,  
And having moaned at noontide, "Lord, how long?"  
Should cry "Where hidest thou?" at evenfall,  
At midnight, "Is He deaf and blind, our God?"  
And ere day dawn, "Is he indeed at all?"

—WILLIAM WATSON.

CYCLONES, blizzards, earthquakes, and other natural devastations carry away the lives of thousands of people, many of whom have been devout and trusting, simple souls. With them also are destroyed the tyrant, the coward, and the criminal. No divine finger of selection marks the good from the bad for special patronage, and death the destructor moves them "like pieces off the chequer-board of Night and Day."

The poetical achievement of William Watson, written some years ago, which was not printed in the press during these last few weeks, only echoes the unspoken thought of many who, for various reasons, are unable to give affirmation to the sentiments expressed in "A Trial of Orthodoxy," of which the above is an extract. Time has, with the sedulous assistance of superstitious imposture, so woven in the network of society a pattern of quiet acquiescence to the prevailing dogma that opposition, criticism, or open attack is now classed as "bad form." It is left to such poets as Byron and Swinburne to tweak the beard of the discredited Deity. Poets think aloud; and their whispers are as thunder to the timid. With the death of the last true poet, the world will enter into that mental slavery which has characterised all periods of priestly despotism.

I confess that the reading of "A Trial of Orthodoxy" left me unmoved; it has a reminiscent flavor of Tennyson's famous phrase, "honest doubt." Mildly querulous, it sounds no definite note of rebellion against the cumbersome Jewish deity; it seems to bask in the twilight of doubt, whilst at the same time it belongs to the darkness of vacillating faith. True it is that these glimmerings of scepticism are carried to people inaccessible by any other means but those of diluted doubt, and, therefore, as Freethinkers, we must be thankful for small mercies.

It is to be deplored that there are no giants in these days; in their place we have poet-pedlars in the popular market-place with wares to sell to the highest bidder. The public must have, not what is true and sublime, but something to please their palates and not unduly disturb their minds. And this demand can easily be met by waverers of a versifying turn of mind, who will, for a consideration, write an ode to a gooseberry, or semi-pious piffle of the nature that either condemns or condones anything.

In poetry we find the life of a nation reflected. Taking a survey of the present productions, one may say that the image truthfully represents the current thoughts and aspirations of those who would wear the poet's laurels. Commercialism now traffics with the Muse, and the immortal Nine are retailed at a penny a line. It is not surprising that we should find the poetic excrescence at such a drab level.

The lofty, the noble, the sublime will always appeal to the finer feelings of man; after wading through John Masefield's *Widow of Bye Street*, one is left wondering what audience it is written for. The eternal prostitute, the young scatterbrain, and the mumbling widow; verily we ask for bread and are given a stone. It seems that mankind is surfeited with the incessant babble of piety in almost every work that appears; but where is the man who dare take up the flaming sword once wielded by Swinburne? Through the grim and musty halls of convention echo answers, Where? No daring David can be found; he would rather use an instrument that soothes the senses into a quiet state of acceptance of all the old dogma.

Not one well-known public man has had the moral courage to protest against all the pious rubbish

printed in the press occasioned by one of the greatest disasters at sea the world has ever known. Swinburne, had he been living, would have raised his voice in an indictment as terrible as the one in his famous "Hymn to Proserpine." What a majestic defiance is found in the lines, Promethean in their strength!—

"Though all men abase them before you in spirit,  
and all knees bend,  
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look  
to the end."

The days are gone when the syren voice of intellectual independence resounds through the land; but Hope is the spirit of Freethought, and we may yet live to see the day when it will not be necessary for one to preface his work by saying, "It is nothing to me that what I write should find immediate or general acceptance." It is a fitting prelude to the mighty organ tones of his genius; and his works, with their passionate strength, prove that he was not a drawing-room poet to coquette with a respectable show of reverence with those subjects which our later-day poets have to treat reverentially, either through timidity or that remarkable phenomenon termed "knowing which side the bread is buttered."

J. W. REPTON.

## Modern Materialism.—XII.

(Continued from p. 342.)

"Throughout all the changes which have resulted in the evolution of man, the process has been purely automatic. No thought, no ideas, no plan, no purpose has entered into the great cosmic movement. As the winds blindly obey the physical laws of the earth's especial character, due to its motions, its proximity to the sun, its orbital inclination, and its methodless land and water distribution; as the clouds gather, break, and pour their contents back upon the earth, and then vanish or go flying across the sky, impelled by wild, senseless, and reckless forces; as the cataract plunges and the volcano belches in obedience to stern physical impulses to which no one thinks, except metaphorically, of attributing motive or intelligence—so all the great secular processes of nature, including the development of organic forms and of man, have been impelled by blind and mindless energies, guided by no intelligence or conscious power either from within or from without. The inherent motions of the ultimate atoms of primordial matter, as eternal, uncreatable, and indestructible as those atoms themselves, must be regarded as the all-sufficient cause of all the results we see, however complex and wonderful we may consider those results to be."—LESTER WARD, *Dynamic Sociology*, 1897, vol. ii., p. 5.

A GOOD deal of light is thrown upon the cause of Professor Huxley's contradictory teachings by the following extract from a letter to Sir J. Skelton. Referring to his lecture on "Ethics and Evolution," he says:—

"You must remember that my lecture was a kind of egg-dance. Good manners bound me over to say nothing offensive to the Christians in the amphitheatre (I was in the arena), and truthfulness, on the other hand, bound me to say nothing that I did not fully mean. Under these circumstances one has to leave a great many of its undotted and t's uncrossed" (*Life and Letters*, vol. ii., p. 359).

Professor Huxley has paid the penalty due to his truckling to the social fetish, his name being frequently cited from the pulpit as an opponent of the natural evolution of life; and sometimes—by the baser and more unscrupulous defenders of religion, who will tell any falsehood to bolster up their faith—he is declared to have altered his views in later life and turned round to a belief in God. A specimen of this "lying for the glory of God" appeared—most appropriately—in a leading article in the *Daily Mail*, October 1, 1907, where it is stated that: "Huxley himself before his death virtually abandoned the extreme views which he had taken up in sincere good faith, and owned that his conception of a world without God was an illogical one."

The pious writer of this impudent fiction evidently reckoned he was safe in making the statement, as the Professor, being dead, could not reply; but his son, Mr. Leonard Huxley, lost no time in nailing this

lie to the counter. After observing that he had read this statement "with amazement," he declares: "As a matter of fact, my father remained consistently in the attitude which he defined as Agnosticism." But the sting of the reply is at the end, where he observes: "When the *Daily Mail* solemnly enunciates a misconception of this kind barely a dozen years after a man's death, and while his writings are open to all the world to read, one ceases to be astonished at the mushroom growth of legend elsewhere."\*

Which, to put it more plainly, means: If a statement like this can obtain circulation so shortly after the death of a distinguished man, it is easy to see how the legends accumulated round the names of Moses and Jesus among uneducated and illiterate people.

In 1855 the world was startled by the publication at Frankfort, in Germany, of the famous book, *Force and Matter*. This was the work of Ludwig Buchner, a doctor of medicine; it created a great sensation, a second edition being called for in a few weeks. Since then it has been translated into all the civilised languages of the world. Our copy, which is dated 1884, is the fourth English edition, and is a translation from the fifteenth German edition. The object of this work was, once for all, to clear from the mind all idea of God and the supernatural, and substitute the idea of force and matter in ceaseless activity, bringing forth, by the rigid necessity of purely mechanical laws, all the various phenomena of nature, from rocks to man, as we know them to-day.

Buchner was the first to proclaim to the public, in definite and unmistakable language, the true bearing upon religion of the recently discovered facts as to the indestructibility of matter and the persistence of force. He observes:—

"If Matter and Force (as will be presently shown) are indestructible, and if there is no matter without force, no force without matter—there can remain no doubt that the universe was not created, that it was not called into life by some will residing outside itself, but that it is eternal. That which has neither beginning nor end in time or space can have none in existence. That which cannot be destroyed cannot have been created. 'Matter is uncreatable as it is indestructible' (Carl Vogt). 'If matter is indestructible, then it is also uncreated' (Spiller). 'The Universe as a totality is without cause, without origin, without end.' (*Du Prel*)."

He speaks of—

"the superfluous and monstrous conception that the creative force suddenly and without any definite reason emerged from Nothingness, created the universe (out of what?), and, directly the work was done, sank back into itself, in some measure embodied itself in the world, or dissolved into the universe" (p. 12).

As Mr. Hugh Elliott observes, the book is "brilliantly written," and Buchner "resembles nearly all the Materialists in his hatred of obscurity," declaring "that clear conceptions fall into lucid language."†

Buchner never beats about the bush, he goes straight to the mark; he is never confused, and never leaves one in doubt as to his meaning. Take the following extract, and the book is full of others equally good:—

"With the most absolute truth and with the greatest scientific certainty, can we say at this day: There is nothing miraculous in the world; everything that happens, has happened, and shall happen, happens naturally; that is to say, in a manner that rests exclusively on the regular working together or interaction of materials that have existed from all eternity, and of the natural forces united with them. No revolution of earth or sky, however violent, could have taken place in any other way; no mighty hand, reaching down from the ether, raised up the mountains and limited the seas, nor traced their orbits for the suns and planets, nor created animals and men after its own whim and pleasure; but all this was done by the very

same forces which at this day still make seas and mountains, regulate the course of the worlds, and bring forth living things; and all this took place as the expression of the most stringent necessity."\*

In the preface to the first edition of his book, Buchner observes: "We shall meet with no lack of opponents, and of the bitterest, too. But we shall take no notice of any but those who meet us on the ground of facts and of empiricism." His forecast was amply justified, the *Frankfurter Kirchenblatt*, conducted by the parish priest, Beda Weber, recommending the application of the criminal law.

"The public may thus learn [says Buchner] what these gentlemen are capable of, should they ever become possessed of power. The same bloody hatred with which science was once persecuted by religious fanaticism would revive anew, and with it the inquisition and *autos-da-fé*, and all the horrors with which a refined zealotism has tortured humanity, would be resorted to, to satisfy the wishes of these theological cut-throats."‡

True to the rule he had laid down, not to deal with abuse, or any arguments but those founded on facts, he observes in the preface to the fourth edition of his work:—

"With regard to parsons and ecclesiastics, who never cease to enlighten and assail us with their eloquence, we beg to repeat that we cannot discuss with them. These good people have from the beginning of the world had the privilege of using their zeal and ignorance in crying down everything that does not suit their business. We shall not disturb them in their vocation. No rational man doubts the total incapacity of these gentlemen to enter upon such questions. There is no theological or ecclesiastical natural science, and there will be none, so long as the telescope does not reach the region where the angels dwell."

Our own literature abounds with contemptuous allusions to Buchner and the Materialistic philosophy; but the trouble with these superfine broad-cloth professors is that they will not face the problem as it is put by Buchner. They will answer all sorts of things that Buchner did not say, and give the impression—to those who are not acquainted with Buchner's work—that they are answering what Buchner said. We have seen how Professor Huxley attacked Buchner for teaching that consciousness was a product of matter and force, when all the while his own works abound with passages which, if they do not mean that consciousness is the outcome of matter and force, are absolutely meaningless. Then he indulges in the following sneer:—

"That great champion of Materialism, whom Mr. Lilly appears to consider to be an authority in physical science, Dr. Buchner, embodies this article of faith on his title-page. *Kraft und Stoff*—force and matter—are paraded as the Alpha and Omega of existence."‡

Well, what else but "force and matter" is there "paraded" in the philosophy of Huxley's master, Herbert Spencer? And as for Buchner's authority in physical science. Buchner himself made no such claim; in the preface to the first edition of his book, he speaks with the utmost modesty of his work, styling it a collection of "scattered thoughts and ideas," and on this account—

"A merciful judgment at the hands of my *confrères* is claimed for them on account of the difficulty to which an individual is necessarily subject in grappling with the innumerable mass of materials spread over the vast fields of natural science."

And again: "We do not pretend to bring forward anything absolutely new, or anything that had never been heard of before." Could anything be more unassuming or modest than that statement? As a matter of fact, Buchner studied for five years at Giessen University, and passed his medical examination with honors. He also continued his studies at Strasburg, Wurzburg, and Vienna.

\* The letter is reproduced in full in the *Freethinker*, October 13, 1907.

† Buchner, *Force and Matter*, 1884, p. 13.

‡ Hugh Elliott, *Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*, 1912, p. 148.

\* *Force and Matter*, pp. 95-6. There appears to be a printer's error in this passage, "has happened, and shall happen," appears to have been repeated twice over. We have, therefore, omitted this part.

† *Force and Matter*, 1881; preface to third edition, p. 13.

‡ Huxley, *Controverted Questions*, p. 220.

Then, again, Huxley, who is so painfully careful to get the exact meaning of his theological opponents, is at pains to misrepresent Buchner in the only attempt he made to come to grips with him, for, continuing his criticism, he asks, what would become of things if they lost their qualities:—

"The notion of matter without force seemed to resolve the world into a set of geometrical ghosts, too dead even to jabber.....And if, with Boscovich, I resolved things into centres of force, then matter vanished altogether, and left immaterial entities in its place" (p. 221).

Now, the very first chapter of *Force and Matter* is devoted to showing that matter and force are not to be separated in this manner; the opening lines are a quotation from Moleschott, declaring that "Force is no impelling god, no entity separate from the material substratum; it is inseparable from matter, is one of the eternal indwelling properties."

Buchner gives ten other quotations to the same effect, and observes:—

"With these quotations from well-known investigators, learned men, and authors we commence a chapter that is to serve as a foundation for the subsequent investigations into one of the simplest and weightiest of truths, which is, perhaps, for that very reason, one of the least known and least recognised. No force without matter—no matter without force. One is no more possible, and no more imaginable, by itself than the other."

What Professor Huxley should have done, to prove his case against Buchner, was to show by experiment that force could be separated from matter, a thing he did not do; a thing, moreover, that never has been done, and never will be done. What Huxley did do was to talk about force as if it was something separate from matter, which entered into matter and took possession of it.

Within the last few years astonishing advances have been made in our knowledge of the inner constitution of matter. The atoms themselves, the foundation stones of the universe, have been found to be subject to the law of evolution; they are not eternal; they have their period of existence; they decay, and finally cease to be.

Many pious souls, when they first heard the news, thought that now, indeed, the Materialist had met his Waterloo. But, as Mr. Hugh Elliott remarks:—

"How great has been the advance of both (Materialism and Atheism), in company with the later developments of science! Some very ignorant people (especially metaphysicians) have even thought that Materialism was dead. As though a doctrine originating among the Greeks, and for the last three hundred years gradually advancing, were likely to die in a decade! The only period in which Materialism vanished was in the barbarism of the Middle Ages. One might almost say that the progressiveness and intellectual civilisation of any community in history could be accurately gauged by the extent of its adherence to materialistic views."\*

Let us see how Materialism is affected by the latest discoveries of science.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

#### GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE.

A Cleveland lawyer overworks the telephone to tell us this one:

"A woman came up to my office the other day and wanted to know if she could get a divorce because her husband didn't believe in the Bible. I told her that unless she had something else on him there would be no use in bringing suit.

"But he is an absolute Infidel!" she insisted.

"That makes no difference," said I.

"Doesn't it, indeed?" she cried, triumphantly. "Well, you are a fine lawyer, I must say. Here's the laws of Ohio, and they say that infidelity, if proved, is a ground for divorce!"

\* Hugh Elliott, *Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*, p. 150.

#### Acid Drops.

Senator Smith concluded his speech, in introducing the Committee's report on the *Titanic* disaster, by reciting "Nearer, my God, to Thee." The sentimental orator didn't see that the hymn cancelled all the rest of his rhetoric. If those who perished with the great liner are nearer to God in consequence, it follows that all Senator Smith's rebukes and reproaches are about less than nothing. It also follows that Captain Smith's family should have the medal and Captain Rostron the public reprimand.

The real lesson of the *Titanic* tragedy, according to Senator Rayner, is the necessity for a deeper religious faith. A faith like Senator Smith's, we suppose; all muddle and moonshine. How much of *that*, we wonder, would have saved the *Titanic*, and all on board her, from the impact of that iceberg?

It might do these pious American Senators good to read Thomas Hardy's poem in the *Fortnightly* on "The Convergence of the Twain." The poet represents God (he calls it "the Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything") as getting that fatal iceberg ready as "a sinister Mate" for the biggest ship afloat while she was a-building. Man launched his great ship, and God launched his greater iceberg, and they met just where the "Spinner of the Years" designed, and with the foreseen result.

"I really hate Lloyd George," says the Rev. J. F. H. Parker, vicar of Bleasdale, Lancaster. "I hate the Devil," the reverend gentleman added, "but I hate Lloyd George worse." Very likely. Lloyd George may have injuriously affected the reverend gentleman's finances. The Devil never did that—and never will. He is the clergyman's best friend. Priests and parsons could not live without him. Mr. Parker is sadly ungrateful.

Mr. Lloyd George is quite as pious in his way as the reverend gentleman is who hates him worse than the Devil. In his recent speech at Swansea on Disestablishment our right reverend Chancellor of the Exchequer (we beg pardon, right honorable) gave his audience what he knew would please them. First, he quoted that silly old tag of the Psalmist about his never having "seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." Yet with the very next breath he told them that the ruling classes in this country have the power, and use it, of "consigning men not for weeks but for a lifetime to live in miserable dens, the crevices of which are seething with disease and death." Surely there must be some "righteous" amongst these poor "forsaken" victims of what is, after all, Christian civilisation; for an Atheist civilisation of that character is simply inconceivable. But the great ear-tickler for that audience was to come. "Nonconformity was there," Mr. Lloyd George said, "to train the young in the grand old ideal of a life guided by faith, and of a death freed from fear." Fancy a sensible man in other respects talking such absurdity! The Christian faith *creates* the fear of death from which it *freed* us. Avoiding death is natural; fearing it is the artificial product of the doctrine of hell and damnation.

"If you try the experiment to think with absolute freedom," says the Rev. E. Lloyd Jones in the *Methodist Times*, "the first difficulty is your ancestors." True,—and Christianity represents them and increases the difficulty.

This Rev. E. Lloyd Jones says that "the good man is the great argument for Christianity"; but, unfortunately, the good man is a rarity in Christian circles, or, at any rate, is no more common there than elsewhere. Take any Christian society you please, and you will find that it is composed of good, bad, and indifferent characters; but if the good characters are claimed as Christian products, and furnish "the great argument for Christianity," what about the other characters? Surely, all the types of character found within the Church must be equally Christian products, or equally non-Christian products. The truth is that Christianity produces neither good nor bad people, but admits all who profess to believe, and then allows them scope to develop and express themselves according to their respective natures.

No bigger mistake was ever made than to imagine that the Christian Church has a monopoly of good men. Indeed, Mr. Lloyd Jones himself tells us that his main anxiety is to be "persuaded that the whole of the Christians inside the Church are all right," which they by no means are. We are of opinion that the percentage of good men is higher in the

world than in the Church, and quite as high, to say the least, in Heathendom as in Christendom. If Christianity were to vanish utterly to-morrow, the effect would be the acceleration rather than the retardation of the moral progress of the race.

Rev. Principal Forsyth ought to be canonised even before he dies. He is a born discoverer; and the older he grows the bolder become his discoveries. His very latest is a gem of priceless value, namely, the discovery that in the sight of God mankind have only "an equality of common perdition." How very happy we should all be after that!

An International Pentecostal Convention has been held at Sunderland, and one of the subjects discussed (without illustrations) was the casting out of demons. A Bradford delegate told of a man at Weston-super-Mare (these cases are generally pretty distant) who was "absolutely unmanageable," but the demon was cast out by "faith and prayer" and the man became perfectly well—as, of course, he would do, after getting rid of such a lodger. Other members of this up-to-date Convention described remarkable cures of cancer, appendicitis, etc. These stories will be even more interesting than they are now when they are investigated and certified by the medical profession.

"A very dangerous thin end of the wedge" is Sir John Kennaway's description of Sunday musketry practice. The expression might have reference to familiarising people with the spirit of warfare. But, being a good Christian, this does not trouble Sir John. It is dangerous because the practice is on Sunday, that is all. So long as we do not have war on Sunday no great harm is done. Such, apparently, is the gospel of Sir John.

The Bishop of St. David's says that one danger of the disestablishment of the Church in Wales is that if this is done "thoughtful and cultured people in India, China, and Japan" may jump to the conclusion that Christianity was no longer the secret of England's greatness. The Bishop may cease worrying. Thoughtful and cultured people in India, China, and Japan are under no such delusion. Fools may believe it abroad, as fools profess to believe it at home. And if Disestablishment will make the home-grown variety talk a little more sensibly, we shall all have something for which to be thankful.

We have, it would seem, misread the situation in France. In common with most people, we have been under the impression that religion had little hold on the better class of Frenchmen. According to the *Methodist Times*, this is a mistake. It admits that only a small minority of Frenchmen appear to have any ecclesiastical standing, but it adds that the overthrowing of the statues of the gods does not mean unbelief. But it, at least, means unbelief in them, and that is something to go on with. Next, we are told that the Dreyfus affair was eminently a religious one. This we grant, but the religious element was wholly anti-Dreyfus. It was unbelief that worked hard at rousing the national conscience to a sense of duty, and it was the Atheist Zola who, at a critical moment, threw personal considerations to the wind and spoke the decisive word. But perhaps we are mistaken here also. It may be that Zola was a Christian in disguise. We have no doubt that the *Methodist Times* could turn him into one if necessary.

Another proof of the religious character of Frenchmen is found in the sale of the hymn, "Nearer my God to Thee," in connection with the *Titanic* disaster. Now we freely admit that there is a religious element here. It is untrue, but the lie is too great an asset for religious people to let it go. The original story—published before any details really reached land—was that the ship went down with the band playing "Nearer my God to Thee," and the music was only stopped by, presumably, the water flowing into the instruments. None of the witnesses before the court of inquiry have corroborated this story, and one witness before the American Commission flatly contradicted it. He said the band was playing waltz tunes; but when he passed the band deck later it was deserted, the men having thrown down their instruments and left the deck. Still, Christians are not going to surrender a tale like that because it is false. To Christianity one lie more or less makes little difference. And so the hymn is sold in France, and French people buy it, as they would doubtless purchase any other manufactured souvenir. And as they purchase it there is in the fact proof positive that the French people are at heart religious. The proof is conclusive—to the *Methodist Times*.

Rev. W. Tudor Jones, of Islington, has just told an anniversary meeting in connection with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, that

"there was a tendency among Unitarians to do away more and more with definite Biblical teaching. He contended the coming generation would never be saved until the whole of the instruction in Sunday schools was based on Biblical teaching. Unitarians had the finest theology the world had ever seen, and if they could sink down in the child's soul a religious experience then their creed would conquer the world."

That is what they all say. Give us the children and our creed will conquer the world. Of course it will. And so would any other. But you won't get hold of the children in this free and easy fashion.

In other respects, Dr. Jones shows himself a rank Bibliolator. Thus, he followed up the opinion quoted by saying that "If the whole of the nineteenth century were blotted out, all its philosophic teaching, from Kant onwards, could be derived from the Bible." To most people such a declaration is its own refutation. Considering the various schools of philosophic thought that have flourished during the nineteenth century, one hardly knows whether to admire most the extravagance or the audacity of Dr. Jones. We should like to see that gentleman struggling with the task of deriving the Spencerian philosophy, say, from the Bible. We were under the impression that Christian preachers of standing who derived everything from the Bible were almost extinct. We find they flourish still among Unitarians.

We have every respect for the work of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, although the necessity for such a body forms a grim comment on the purifying effect of Christianity on life. Since the Society was established, twenty years ago, it has taken up nearly two million cases. During the past year there were no less than 54,188 cases reported, involving 156,637 children. Of these cases 47,000 were for neglect and starvation, nearly 5,000 for ill-treatment and assault, while 1,255 died from the treatment received. If this catalogue came from a non-Christian country we should have it attributed to the absence of Christianity. What inference are we to draw when it proceeds from a country so ostentatious as this one in the display of religious belief?

It is only in "civilised" and "Christian" countries that a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is necessary. Heathen countries—like Japan, for instance—cannot understand how the need for such a Society could be possible. Even a Central African negro would think you were "getting at" him if you told him that such a Society existed in "Christian" England. Of course it only shows that the "poor black" doesn't understand Christianity. The voice of nature within him tells him to be kind to his offspring. The voice of nature says the same thing still more loudly in the mother of his children. Systematic cruelty to those blossoms of humanity is only found in "Christian civilisations." Realise this—then think of "missions to the heathen"—and then you will feel inclined to exclaim "A mad world, my masters!"

The Rev. Dr. Cadman says, in *Charles Darwin and Other English Thinkers*, that while "materialistic atheists have adopted evolution, their materialism is assuredly without Darwin's authority." He also describes it as a delusion to assume Darwin's theory to be materialistic. But there is no delusion whatever so long as we use "materialistic" in any justifiable sense. Darwinism—which is not, by the way, the equivalent of evolution—is a purely mechanistic theory. It makes no appeal to, and has no use for, non-mechanistic forces. It excludes the operation of intelligence or purpose in the development of species. It logically reduces vital phenomena to so many problems that are ultimately as completely explainable in terms of determinate forces as any other problems in nature. And in any reasonable sense this is Materialism. For it is wholly fallacious to assume that Materialism is dependent upon any theory of the nature of matter, which is really what most critics of Materialism have in mind. The issue between Materialism and Spiritualism turns on whether the world is the outcome of conscious or non-conscious forces. It is the issue between vitalism and mechanism, and there is simply no real question to the side to which the balance of evidence belongs.

A new objection is raised to King George's title of "Defender of the Faith." Rev. Dr. Edwards, ex-president of the Baptist Union, says that the time has come to do away with it. His Majesty does not defend the Baptist faith. That settles it. King George knows what will happen now,

The regular sermon in *Lloyd's Weekly News* is never of any particular value, but it is sometimes less foolish than at others. A recent one by the Rev. H. Mayne Young was above the common run of these things. For instance, it refrained from hinting that "unbelievers" are all apt to be bad men. On the contrary, it frankly admitted that "Many who are labelled agnostic, heretic, infidel, are among the best and noblest men now living." But the word "labelled" raises a smile. The reverend gentleman seems to hint that there are no real Agnostics or Atheists; such labels being affixed to them by their bigoted enemies; in other words, that they are good Christians without knowing it; which, by the way, is very much like a subtle form of insult.

A horrible story comes from the little village of Kerget, near Lorient, in France. Jean-Marie Pasco, aged twenty-five, the imbecile son of a farmer, suddenly went raving mad and murdered his own mother, afterwards attacking other persons, including his own father. The cause of this violent dementia was religion. "A fortnight ago," the *Daily News* correspondent says, "a travelling church mission came to the village and held several meetings, which Jean-Marie Pasco attended, following the sermons with rapt attention. The intellectual effort proved too much for his feeble mind, and thus his madness was aggravated. He imagined that an important mission had been entrusted to him, and that he must go away from the village in order to save France. His parents tried in vain to reason with him, and the mother said she would on no account allow him to leave home, whereupon Jean-Marie became sullen, and a strong hatred of his parents began to develop in him. At last he decided it was his duty to kill his parents, so as to be able to accomplish his mission." The tragedy is clear enough. To say that the "intellectual effort" was too much for his "feeble" mind is absurd. There was no "intellectual effort" in the case. Religion came along in an exciting form and stirred up all the poor creature's latent madness. The idea of an important mission from heaven is very common in such cases. There is nothing like religion for stimulating vanity.

What a satire it is, after that shocking news from Kerget, to read in the very same number of the *Daily News* that Cardinal Bourne, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, had just started off at the head of an English pilgrimage to Lourdes. Few men were amongst the 850 superstitionists of this party, there were some lads, but the great majority were ladies. All of them, even the cripples, hoped to be cured at the shrine of the Virgin Mary which they were bound for. A number of them hoped to bring their crutches back on their shoulders. And the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster plays a leading part in this tragi-comedy. Yet the Catholic Church is perfectly well aware of the ridiculous frauds that have made Lourdes what it is. But what will not priests do for power and money!

"A Call to Prayer" is the heading of a type-written letter extensively circulated in Scotland. It is drawn up on behalf of the United Free Church of Scotland, and is signed by the Moderator, James Wells, and by two ex-Moderators, John Young and Arch. Henderson. In view of the approaching General Assembly, and its "burden of anxiety," the recipients of this letter are addressed as follows:—

"The one thing lacking in the life of our Church to-day is that deep, pervading sense of the Master's presence and power in the midst of us, assuring all things as possible to us in our effort and enterprise for His glory. The one thing needful is prevailing prayer—believing, earnest, effectual—the all-conquering weapon of the Church in every hour of difficulty and need."

Homes and congregations are therefore asked to pray. For our part, we hope they will do so "without ceasing." It will show what prayer is really worth. Even thrifty Scotland, we should imagine, will make such a cheap sacrifice as this for the welfare of the Auld Kirk.

Divine service was going on at a village church near Teplitz, in the neighborhood of Munich, when there was a cry of "fire!" Instead of welcoming this as a means of leaving earth with a fairly certain through ticket for heaven, the congregation fell into a panic; and in the effort to keep out of the "land of glory" as long as possible, there was a perfect stampede, one child being killed, eight persons seriously injured, and fourteen persons injured in minor degrees. Such is the confident fortitude engendered by true religion!

The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity" over the dead body of John Richard Broadbent, of Prospect Cottages, Wandsworth, who drowned

himself in the Thames. In one of his pockets there were four verses of four lines each, which might have satisfied the jury that the would-be poet was very far gone. But he had with his own hand written under them "rotten"—which seems to show that he had a lucid interval of self-appreciation. One wonders if the "temporary insanity" could stand in these circumstances.

It is astonishing what latitude pious fathers will allow a man who carries a Bible. The following instance of credulity on one side and rascality on the other is taken from the *East London Dispatch*, S. Africa:—

"At Zoutpansberg last week a European named Christian Cloete, described as a farmer and evangelist, was charged with abducting a girl of 16 and decamping into Rhodesia with her. The girl denied that she consented to go with accused and said that the latter had undertaken to prepare her for confirmation. The girl's father explained that he took accused into his house because he was an evangelist and a man of God. Accused always had his Bible with him when he came to the house, and it was on religious subjects that he always talked when with the girls. Accused's story was that he had not, as alleged by the prosecution, gagged and forcibly removed the girl, but that the latter had asked him to let her accompany him to Rhodesia. Why he had signed a false name at the border was because the girl had made him do it. The amount of credence given to the accused's statement by the Court may be judged from the fact that the jury found him guilty and a sentence of eighteen months' hard labor was passed."

"It was on religious subjects that he always talked to the girls." Of course. What else *would* he talk about?

Having had a revolution, the Chinese are now being bombarded with bills for damages done to the property of foreigners. According to the *Methodist Times*, "Our society is making a very careful calculation as to the actual damage done to our property." We do not doubt the careful calculation, and from what we know of missionary methods it will not be the fault of "our society" if it comes out of the transaction a loser.

Methodist missionaries in Italy report an "alarming spread of scornful incredulity among the educated youth of Italy." We are pleased to know that it is a "scornful" Freethought. We have the "reverent" variety of unbelief in this country, and cannot pretend to be greatly impressed. A profession of reverence for a stupid superstition is generally a sign of mental flabbiness, and when critical moments come, little help to genuine Freethought is rendered. Such people seem to have a passion for demonstrating their impartiality and reverence by championing the wrong side.

Clericals let the cat out of the bag occasionally. Father Bernard Vaughan has just said that "The real reason why people do not go to so-called Christian churches is that they have ceased to believe in Christianity." It takes no brains to see this, but a little courage to confess it.

"With God there is no respect of persons." But the Mayor of Godalming is of a different opinion. He was shown into a back pew, instead of into the pew kept for "The Mayor and Corporation" when he went privately with his daughter to the Parish Church. He walked out of the place in disgust, and swears he will never enter it again.

The Pope has given his consent to cinema shows in Catholic churches, especially in country districts, as an aid to the teaching of sacred history. The parish priest, however, must be present as overseer and censor; and (which shows what celibate priests are thinking about) the sexes must be seated strictly apart—like Jews in a synagogue.

They "love one another" still. There is a police guard outside St. Jude's Church in the Hampstead Garden Suburb. Another lot of Christians wanted to get in and kick up a row over a difference of opinion. What a happy family is the household of faith!

Canon James Devonport Kelly, of Dalham Lodge, a distinguished Hebrew scholar, left a fortune of £90,869. We did not know that Hebrew paid so well. There is a special explanation in this instance. The reverend gentleman "had filled many offices in connection with Manchester Cathedral." We understand now.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended until September.)

### To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £142 11s. 2d. Received since:—S. G. Noakes, 5s.; F. de Lisle (N. Zealand), £1 1s.; E. A. Hammond, 2s. 6d.; G. L. Alward, £2 2s.; H. M. Ridgway, £1; Joseph Close, 2s. 6d.

S. G. NOAKES.—You could get the *Freethinker* volumes bound through our publishing office, but you would incur the cost or trouble of sending so many volumes there. You would probably find a decent binder near your address, and binders' prices are all much alike.

J. TOMKINS.—Thanks for the paper enclosed with your letter. Lord Coleridge's summing-up was much abbreviated in the report, and we should not like to criticise him without a verbatim report of what he said. His reference to "blasphemy" was technically correct, but his lordship did not seem to be infatuated with free speech. Few judges are.

D. NIMMO.—Perhaps the material is not as promising as you thought.

R. PETRINOVICH.—We sent on your letter to the publisher, as requested; and he informs us that you did not fill in the requisite details after "Box."

T. A. BATTEN.—See paragraph. Thanks.

R. C. YOUNG.—We thought Mr. Rosetti was sending you the *Freethinker*. Any superfluous copy should, of course, be stopped.

W. H. BARNETT.—By the time the Johannesburg cuttings reach us the *Titanic* tragedy has become stale. The matter you refer to in your letter is being seen into.

A. T. WOODWARD.—We agree with you. It was an odd thing to put a man like Sir Oliver Lodge to write the Introduction to the Huxley volume in "Everyman's Library." We would not call it sinister or mischievous, but it was decidedly maladroit. We are preparing a review of Mr. H. S. R. Elliott's very able book, *Modern Science and the Illusions of Bergson*.

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

R. T. NICHOLS.—"Scarborough" was too vague, so we couldn't drop you a line, but, as you don't miss your *Freethinker*, you will see that your letter arrived safely.

F. DE LISLE.—The lamb arrived all right, and was appreciated, but months after you thought it would be here. We have quoted a passage from your letter elsewhere.

R. H. GRANT.—Glad to hear that the Edmonton Branch's resolution of protest against the imprisonment of Tom Mann, on a charge which could easily be proved not only against Tolstoy but against Jesus Christ himself, has been printed in your local weekly newspaper. Pleased to hear also that the British Museum visit, under Mr. Hecht as chaperon, was so successful.

F. HOLIDAY.—Neither time nor space this week, but shall not be overlooked. Thanks.

E. B.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Thomas Hardy's "God's Funeral" appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* for March, 1912.

G. E. Q.—We will print your letter next week, if you don't mind, and your enclosure afterwards.

JOSEPH CLOSE, who went from Brandon Colliery, Durham, to the N. S. S. Conference at Leeds, says he is glad he went. He was "delighted to see such a splendid audience" in the evening, and he thinks the Freethought party ought to be congratulated on having such speakers. "I have read the *Freethinker*," Mr. Close says, "since 1883, and I always find it a real mental tonic. I only wish you were provided more liberally with the 'sinews of war' to make things hum."

A. HARVEY.—We had seen and noticed both, but thanks all the same.

H. A. FARMER.—Too late for this week. Next. Glad you value this journal so highly.

T. DENNING.—Suggestions shall be considered.

F. T. JONES.—We are obliged. The points raised will be dealt with in our next article.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

Persons remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send halfpenny stamps

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 8d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

## Sugar Plums

Mr. Foote has to defer till next week his further dealing with the matter of "Our 'Boycott.'" He wishes to incorporate some important references to the case of an "advanced" journal which has fallen on evil days, in strong corroboration of some remarks in his last week's article. Our readers will probably look forward to Mr. Foote's second article with some interest. It will really constitute a very serious address by him to the Freethought party—not the less appropriate because he has just been elected for the twenty-third time as President of the National Secular Society, in direct and continuous succession from Charles Bradlaugh.

Mr. Gould and Mr. Mann both refer to us personally in their correspondence *re* Bergson. We don't mind their doing it, but, if we were to express a preference, we should wish they didn't. Anyhow, we are not to be drawn into the controversial whirlpool.

The late Mr. F. Smallman, for many years a vice-president of the National Secular Society, and from the very first a member of the Secular Society, Ltd., died in May of last year, as many of our readers will recollect. In his will he bequeathed the sum of £500, free of legacy duty, to the latter Society. That sum has just been paid over to the Society by Mr. Smallman's executors.

A blessing on Secular Education comes from the pen of a Church clergyman. Rev. J. A. Douglas, vicar of St. Luke's, Camberwell, writing to the *Daily News* (May 29), says that he does not object to undenominational religious education in itself, but he adds:—

"Still, it is not right that the money of Agnostics, Moslems, Jews, Romanists, and others should be taken and applied to the propagation of a religion which is not their own. Nor, indeed, is it so that the money of Churchmen should be applied to religious teaching against which they protest. The educational grievance is the ratepayers' far more than the parents', and until it is removed there will be no solidarity. Secular education is clearly the only way out."

"The only way." That is what we have always called it.

Here is a passage from an appreciative and encouraging letter that has just arrived from a reader of ours in New Zealand:—

"I have much pleasure in enclosing one guinea as my subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund. I see that the appeal is made to the Freethinkers of Great Britain, but I trust it will not be considered out of place for a Freethinker of Greater and Brighter Britain, who has derived much entertainment, and I hope some profit, by the perusal of Mr. Foote's paper during the last two or three years, to send his mite."

Certainly not out of place. We are happy to say that contributions to this fund come from all parts of the world. It may not be out of place, either, to mention that the writer of the genial letter from which the above extract is made belongs to the medical profession. What a funny notion it is which is so prevalent amongst people (especially Christians) who don't know this journal, that the *Freethinker* is written for illiterate working men. Just as though illiterate working men buy twopenny papers, to begin with.

A subscriber at Trinidad writes:—

"Perhaps it may interest you to know that after I have read the *Freethinker* (without which I should be miserable, I pass it on to others. Much, I regret to say, cannot be done in that way on this island, as the people's ideas are doubly dyed in superstition and ignorance."

It is easy to understand how welcome the *Freethinker* must be in such circumstances.

Mr. G. L. Alward, of Grimsby, is one of our oldest friends. We have known him more years than we care to count. He was one of the stalwarts in Charles Bradlaugh's time. We made his acquaintance in his ideally happy home when we first lectured at Grimsby in those fighting days; and we have told him more than once that he was one of the luckiest men we know in the possession of such a sensible, homely, good-natured wife—an excellent type of the Freethinking mother. It may be imagined, therefore, how pleased we are to read what Mr. Alward says in a letter to the N. S. S. secretary, enclosing a cheque for the President's Fund. "We are having some very fine articles in the *Freethinker*," he says, "and they are enjoyed by my wife, son, and self."

## Old Testament History.—XIII.

(Continued from p. 347.)

HAVING concluded the history of Manasseh of Judah, as given in 2 Kings—which king, it will be remembered, served all the gods of Canaan during the whole of his long reign—we come now to a most remarkable event alleged to have occurred in the reign of Manasseh, which is recorded only in the lying book of Chronicles. In 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—18 the mendacious writer says that the god Yahveh sent "captains of the host of the king of Assyria"—the name of the king not given—against Judah, who "took Manasseh in chains, and bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon." In this city Manasseh "besought Yahveh his god, and humbled himself greatly.....and prayed unto him"; whereupon that appeased deity "brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom." After being thus reinstated, Manasseh became a changed man. He cleared Jerusalem and the temple of all strange gods, idols, and altars; he "built up the altar of Yahveh, and offered thereon sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and he commanded Judah to serve Yahveh." Thus, after being the worst of the kings of Judah "in the sight of Yahveh," he suddenly became one of the best.

With regard to this Chronicles' story, the first point to be noticed is that the god Yahveh rendered no assistance to Manasseh's father Hezekiah, who "did that which was right" in his sight. And when, five years after Hezekiah's tribute, Manasseh ascended the throne, every man in the kingdom knew that Yahveh was a broken reed to trust to; hence, the discredited deity was discarded and new gods chosen. If Yahveh was powerless to aid a good king like Hezekiah, he was equally powerless to assist his son Manasseh.

The next point to be noticed is that Manasseh had paid homage and tribute to the only two kings of Assyria who entered Palestine during his reign. There was therefore no pretext for seizing him and taking him in fetters to Babylon, or to Assyria.

The third point to be noticed is that the compilers of 2 Kings knew nothing of the Chroniclers' story. This is evident, not only from the fact that it is not mentioned, but because Manasseh's repentance and change of conduct was a circumstance they would have been pleased to record. As it is, it is clearly implied that the religious practices of that king were "evil" throughout his whole reign, and that the final captivity of Judah by Nebuchadrezzar was sent as a punishment for the great wickedness he had committed. If this be not the case there is no meaning in the following passages:—

2 Kings xxi. 17.—"Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written," etc.

2 Kings xxi. 20, 21 (Manasseh's son Amon).—"And he did that which was evil in the sight of Yahveh, as did Manasseh his father. And he walked in all the ways that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served."

2 Kings xxiii. 26.—"Notwithstanding [the putting away of all idolatry by Josiah], Yahveh turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal."

Again, the reason why the god Yahveh permitted the people of Judah to be carried away into captivity in Babylon is thus stated:—

2 Kings xxiv. 3—4.—"Surely at the command of Yahveh came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did," etc.

Thus, the sins of Manasseh, throughout his long reign of 53 years, were so great that the god Yahveh, who was "slow to anger and of great mercy," could neither forgive them nor forget them. There was no repentance and change of conduct as stated in the Chronicles.

The last point I need notice is that of the succession of the kings of Judah. Had Manasseh been

carried captive to Babylon, a new king would have stepped into his place the day after his departure. His son Amon would then have ascended the throne at an earlier date, or some other claimant would have been made king: there would have been no interregnum. In any case, if Manasseh returned, he would never reign again: he would certainly not find his kingdom kingless and awaiting his return. The whole story is, of course, a fabrication; of this there can be no doubt whatever.

Bearing this fact in mind, what are we to say to the following statement by the Rev. A. H. Sayce (*Assyria, its Princes, etc.*, p. 47):—

"It was while Esarhaddon was holding his winter court at Babylon that Manasseh of Judah was brought to him a prisoner" (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11).

Here we find our greatest Assyriologist playing to the orthodox Christian gallery, and quoting the lying book of Chronicles as a trustworthy record of historical facts.

The Rev. Professor knew, of course, that the last king of Assyria who reigned over both Assyria and Babylonia was Esarhaddon; so that if Manasseh was carried a prisoner to *Babylon*—as stated in Chronicles—the deportation could have been only in that king's reign. And what is the evidence which our Professor believed to be sufficiently strong and reliable to warrant him making such a confident assertion? Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askalon: the only evidence upon which the Rev. Sayce founded his unwarrantable statement is the fictitious story in 2 Chronicles. Knowing nothing of Biblical criticism, he takes the latter book as quite as historical as 2 Kings. Speaking as an Assyriologist, one would think that the rev. gentleman had found evidence of what he asserts on Esarhaddon's inscription: such, however, is not the case; Manasseh's name is not mentioned, save as attending, with the other kings named, Esarhaddon's levee (as already stated), and, of course, paying tribute at the same time.

The case stands thus: In 676 B.C. Manasseh did homage to Esarhaddon; in 668 B.C. he did homage to Assurbanipal. Between these two dates, so it is said, Manasseh was carried in fetters to Babylon, and, after praying and crying to Yahveh, that god "brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom"—the throne having been left vacant for him—in time to do homage to Esarhaddon's successor, Assurbanipal. Taking the middle date between the two homages (*i.e.*, 672 B.C.)—the Rev. Sayce, of course, gives no date—Manasseh "did that which was evil in the sight of Yahveh" during the first 23 years of his reign, and he "did that which was right" during the remaining 30 years. Yet neither the compilers of 2 Kings, nor the god Yahveh, knew anything about Manasseh's reform. According to that book, the editors and the god Yahveh believed he had continued in his evil courses down to the last day of his life. The compilers had found no record of Manasseh's reformation in the more ancient histories from which 2 Kings was compiled, and the fierce anger of the god Yahveh—kindled by Manasseh's sin—burnt as fiercely as ever, that god never having heard of his repentance.

One circumstance, however, still requires explanation. Sennacherib with his whole army was unable to take Jerusalem or to capture Hezekiah its king; but a comparatively small force—some "captains of the host of the king of Assyria"—apparently found no difficulty in effecting an entrance into that city, and in carrying away Manasseh, its king, in chains. Here I must leave Professor Sayce's gratuitous misstatement: too much time has already been wasted on it. If any reader should care to peruse Manasseh's prayer to Yahveh when in Babylon, he will find it in the Apocrypha of the Old Testament—to which division of doubtful writings should also be relegated the book of Daniel and the two books of Chronicles.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

## National Secular Society's Annual Conference.

The Annual Conference was held at the Assembly Rooms, Briggate, Leeds, on Whit-Sunday, May 26.

The Vice-Presidents attending the Conference were:—Messrs. C. Cohen, R. Chapman, F. A. Davies, W. Davey, John Grange, W. Heaford, R. Johnson, Miss. K. B. Kough, J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, R. T. Nichols, V. Roger, W. H. Spivey, S. Samuels, T. J. Thurlow, Miss E. M. Vance, F. Wood.

The delegates from Branches were as follows:—C. Cohen (Bethnal Green); H. T. Smallwood, E. Clifford Williams (Birmingham); Mrs. Alice Lee (Blackburn); F. A. Davies, V. Roger (Camberwell); W. H. Spivey, Mrs. Spivey (Huddersfield); W. Davey, J. W. Hartgill (Kingsland); W. McKelvie, C. McKelvie, J. B. Palphreyman (Liverpool); R. Johnson (Manchester); V. Page (Nelson); M. J. Charter, T. H. Elstob (Newcastle); Miss K. B. Kough (North London); R. Chapman, J. Fothergill, J. T. Horsman (South Shields); Dr. R. T. Nichols, E. T. Brewster (West Ham); W. Stewart (Wood Green).

The visiting members included:—Messrs. Atkinson, Crowther, Whitehead, J. H. Beresford, Tabrum (Huddersfield); George Berrisford, Grimes, May (Sheffield); W. Dodd, F. J. Williams (Cannock); Mr. and Mrs. Greevz Fisher, Mr. and Mrs. George Weir, J. Lucas (Leeds); J. W. Gott, Miss Alice Gott (Bradford); W. A. Holroyd (Nelson); D. Mapp (Manchester); F. Cohen (Birmingham); Mrs. Brewster, Messrs. W. Bean, T. A. Matthews (London).

The Minutes of last Conference were taken as read.

The Executive's Annual Report, which appeared in last week's *Freethinker*, was read by the President. On the motion of Mr. R. Johnson (Manchester), seconded by Mr. T. J. Thurlow (London), the same was adopted.

The Financial Report was then unanimously adopted on the motion of Mr. W. H. Spivey (Huddersfield), seconded by Mr. F. A. Davies (Camberwell).

Election of President:—The chair was vacated by Mr. Foote, and Mr. C. Cohen took his place. It was then formally moved and seconded by Miss Kough (North London) and Mr. Davey (Kingsland)—“That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President.” It was supported by Mr. A. B. Moss (London) and Mr. V. Roger (Camberwell), both of whom had been associated with Mr. Foote since he first became President twenty-two years before, and who warmly testified to the way the duties had been fulfilled by him. Mr. Cohen, in submitting the resolution to the meeting, said that he also during that period had learnt to appreciate Mr. Foote's judgment on the general conduct of the Society, and his tact and patience in handling the Society's business, and he hoped that this formality of re-election would be repeated for many years to come. The motion was agreed to with acclamation.

Mr. Foote, on resuming his position in the chair, acknowledged the honor that had been paid him. He said he would have been personally better satisfied if there were more candidates for the Presidency, but this was not likely to be while the Society had to do plenty of work with very little means, and had to run the gauntlet of all sorts of insult and ostracism. He had never considered that the success of their work consisted in a large list of members. Advanced movements were always conducted by a small body of people. It was like a stage army, always visible, apparently numerous,—but only a few. The great thing was, was the work done? What was their function after all? Their main function was to make Freethinkers; and if they went on doing that, even if the members' lists did not increase, their activity was producing its fruit. The great body of the people was permeated with their ideas, and in that way they became, as it were, the preparatory school of all the other advanced institutions of the country. Take the Freethinkers out of them, and what was the residue worth? He valued this post for what it enabled him to do, in consort with his fellow-members of the N. S. S., on behalf of what George Meredith, in a letter to him many years ago, had called “the best of all causes.” The newspapers would not report that; our Society and our cause were boycotted; but they could at any rate value the appreciation of a master of English letters like George Meredith beyond that of the hireling journalists and lying journals that flourished on public ignorance and credulity.

Election of Vice-Presidents.—It was agreed that the following be re-elected as Vice-Presidents: J. Barry, W. H. Baker, J. G. Bartram, E. Bowman, R. Chapman, Victor Charbonnel, E. A. Charlton, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, H. Cowell, W. Davey, F. A. Davies, J. G. Dobson, R. G. Fathers, Léon Farnmont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, J. Hammond, W. Heaford, S. L. Hurd, R. Johnson, Miss Kathleen B. Kough, W. Leat, J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, James

McGlashen, G. B. H. McCluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, W. T. Pitt, C. G. Quinton, J. T. Ross, Miss Mary Ross, G. Roleffs, Mrs. Roleffs, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, S. Samuels, T. Shore, H. Silverstein, W. H. Spivey, Miss Alma Stanley, Charles Steptoe, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, Miss E. M. Vance, F. E. Willis, C. J. Whitwell, Frederick Wood, G. White.

Mr. W. Heaford moved the suspension of the Standing Orders, which was seconded by Mr. A. B. Moss, and agreed to, in order that the name of Mr. Eugène Hins be added to the list of Vice-Presidents. Mr. Hins was the editor of *La Pensée*, and an able and influential representative of continental Freethought. This was supported in a most cordial manner by the President, and also by Mr. Roger, and carried unanimously.

Election of Auditors.—Mr. H. G. Farmer and Mr. A. B. Savill were unanimously re-elected Auditors, on the motion of Mr. W. Davey, seconded by Mr. F. Wood.

It was moved by Mr. W. Davey (Kingsland), seconded by Mr. J. W. Hartgill (Kingsland): “That the rule with regard to members whose subscriptions are in arrear be altered as follows: That members whose subscriptions are twelve months in arrear be notified to that effect, and be struck off the roll if the arrear of subscription is not paid within six weeks.” This motion was opposed by the Birmingham delegates, on the grounds of it being possibly harsh at times towards dilatory, though well-meaning, Freethinkers. Mr. Davey explained that the intention of the motion was to be able to deal on occasions with undesirable people who claimed to be members of the N. S. S. on the strength of a subscription paid at some time or other. The President pointed out that if the membership subscription were not paid, the person was not then a valid member of the Society, owing to his not having fulfilled the conditions of contract. Finally, Mr. Davies moved as an amendment: “That the first clause of paragraph 5 of the Rules of Membership be deleted.” The Kingsland members agreed to accept this as the substantive resolution, and it was seconded by Mr. Smallwood (Birmingham), and carried unanimously.

Mr. Clifford Williams (Birmingham) moved: “That the names and addresses of all Branch secretaries be published regularly in the *Freethinker*.” Mr. F. Wood seconded, and Mr. Smallwood supported. Mr. Victor Roger pointed out that the space of the *Freethinker* was not at the disposal of the N. S. S. for such purposes; but the President expressed his willingness to give the space for this purpose, as he had always done in the past. He suggested that the list of Vice-Presidents be added to the notice. The motion, with the President's suggestion embodied, was agreed to by the Conference.

Mr. Stewart moved, for the Wood Green Branch: “That it is desirable that a half-yearly meeting of N. S. S. members resident within the London district be organised for the purpose of discussing policy, propaganda, etc.; such meeting to be held in March and October.” He considered that, in view of the various attempts recently to persecute Freethinkers, such meetings for exchange of counsel and suggestions were more than ever necessary. Mr. Chapman (South Shields) seconded. He thought meetings of this kind would be useful, and the example of the London Branches could be followed by the provincial Branches if they thought fit. It was agreed to omit the specification as regards the months of meeting, and the motion so amended was agreed to unanimously.

Miss Kough moved, for the North London Branch: “That this Conference, feeling that the increased circulation of the *Freethinker* is of the highest importance to Freethought propaganda, and realising the difficulties experienced in obtaining it locally in consequence of the general boycott by the newsagents, hereby instructs the Executive to make it an absolute condition in future that every Branch of the N. S. S. shall appoint at least one member to undertake a weekly sale, such member's name and address to be published in the *Freethinker*, and terms to be arranged by the Executive.” Miss Kough, in supporting, spoke of the difficulties met with in numerous localities in obtaining the *Freethinker*, and of the suggested plan being an addition to, and not a subtraction from, the ordinary trade channels of circulation. She also expected a slight revenue would accrue to the Society. Mr. Stewart seconded. Mr. A. B. Moss objected to the resolution, as he considered it was the better policy to concentrate on breaking down the trade boycott where it existed. Several delegates took the same point of view. Mr. Greevz Fisher moved, and Mr. Chapman (South Shields) seconded, that the words “one person” be substituted for “one member,” as they considered it to relieve the motion of some unnecessary stringency. Mr. Davies objected to the word “absolute” in the motion. After much discussion, the following modified motion was agreed to by the mover and seconder, and carried unanimously: “That this Conference, feeling that

the increased circulation of the *Freethinker* is of the highest importance to Freethought propaganda, and realising the difficulties experienced in obtaining it locally in consequence of the general boycott by the newsagents, hereby instructs the Executive to make it a condition in future that every Branch of the N. S. S. shall appoint at least one person to undertake its sale in connection with propagandist meetings."

Mr. F. A. Davies, for the Camberwell Branch, moved: "That it be an instruction to the Executive to advertise the *Freethinker* as widely as possible in any locality where any *Freethinker* is being prosecuted, either for 'blasphemy' or on any other charge that may be the result of Freethought advocacy." He considered it would be good business from all points of view to bring the *Freethinker* before the people on such occasions. Mr. Wood seconded. Mr. Stewart suggested that the words "and circulate" be inserted in motion after "advertise." Mr. T. H. Elstob (Newcastle) suggested that special advertising could be done on several occasions apart from Blasphemy cases, and instanced good results having been obtained from advertising the *Freethinker* in Newcastle at the time of the Church Congress there. The President agreed to Mr. Stewart's modification, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Motion 13 of the Executive was formally moved by the President:—"That this Conference hails with much satisfaction the formation of the Rationalist Peace Society, whose object is to dissociate the labor of non-Christians for peace from the intrusive piety of Christian workers in the same cause, and to promote the peace of the world on secular lines; and that this Conference promises the Rationalist Peace Society full support and wishes it all success." Mr. W. Heaford, as one of the Committee of the Rationalist Peace Society, seconded. He spoke enthusiastically of the progress of the Society, and said they had gone about the task of co-operation with other branches of the Peace movement on rational and intelligent lines. Mr. Cohen, in supporting, said when it came to a decisive question the Freethinkers would be the only ones to be depended upon to say a sane word at an insane time. They stood for the truest and best internationalism and humanitarianism, and it was only on those lines that you could get peace in any lasting form. Carried unanimously.

Mr. Cohen moved:—"That this Conference is greatly pleased at the failure of the Single-School Areas Education Bill and trusts that the same fate will overtake the promised Education Bill of the Government if framed on similar lines of Nonconformist advantage." He expressed his satisfaction at this Bill having been dropped, as it was perhaps the most vicious Education Bill during the life of the present Liberal Government. He referred to the tacit assumption always made that there were only two parties worth consideration, the Church party and the Nonconformist party. Even if such a miracle occurred as an agreement between these parties, there was still another party—the Secular Educationalists. This strong party would never be satisfied with any Bill that made religious education part of the education of the State schools. Mr. W. H. Spivey (Huddersfield) seconded. Mr. Davies, in supporting, blamed Freethinkers for the Government's view that they were an inconsiderable party. If wholesale advantage had been taken of the Conscience Clause the educational machinery would have been so disturbed that Secular Education would have been, by now, an accomplished fact. Considerable discussion on this point took place, some delegates holding that it was not right to make children martyrs in this manner. The President said he was willing to lay down a rule which he considered to be of universal application, that no person had a moral right to allow his child to be taught as true what he knew to be false. Carried unanimously. It was also agreed to send a copy of the resolution to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Education, and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd moved:—"That this Conference expresses its indignation at the latest revival of the Blasphemy Laws, which takes place only under Liberal Administrations, and severely condemns the ill-informed and insolent attitude of the Home Secretary in relation to the prosecutions and imprisonments at Leeds; and that this Conference welcomes the effort now being made in London to form a National Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws." He said they must all recognise that orthodox Christianity is of necessity intolerant. The recent prosecutions of the Church were the result of its increasing weakness. The clause in the resolution relating to the Liberal Government he was not surprised at, on account of the Nonconformist alliance with Liberalism, and Nonconformists were the greatest bigots in the country. They should do their best to quicken in the public mind a sense of duty in this matter, and so get rid as quickly as possible of that ancient instrument of cruelty and wickedness, the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. Geo. Weir (Leeds) seconded. In the Leeds prosecution, he pointed out, the blame could not be

laid at the doors of the Nonconformists. There the Church of England had been the prime mover. Mr. Jno. Lucas (Leeds) took exception to the political reference as unnecessary, and objectionable probably to many Secularists, who were naturally of all shades of political opinion. The President said that Mr. McKenna had absolutely justified the action of the prosecution in these cases, and that the clause objected to was a simple statement of fact. Mr. Lucas moved and Mr. Greevz Fisher seconded as an amendment that the words "which takes place only under Liberal Administrations" be omitted from the motion. Mr. Chapman supported. The amendment was lost. The original motion was then put and carried by a large majority.

Mr. Heaford moved: "That this Conference considers it advisable, and even necessary, that the N. S. S. should be amply represented at the approaching International Freethought Congress." Freethought, he said, was an international movement, not a national one; and it behoved the English Freethought party to do all in its power to make the first International Congress ever held in Germany a huge success. It was to be held on August 31 and the three following days, and it was in every degree probable that Ernst Haeckel would be there on that great occasion. Mr. Victor Roger seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

In winding up the Conference, the President spoke of the value of such gatherings in bringing Freethinkers from all parts of the country in close touch with each other. Before separating, he wished to ask them to prepare themselves for possible trouble in the ensuing year. Encounters with the bigots were in every way probable. As their President, he promised he would exercise the greatest vigilance, and would not avoid any responsibility that may arise.

T. H. E.

### Conference Excursion.

THE excursion party, composed of delegates and local friends, left the Hotel Metropole in brakes at 9.30 on Whit-Monday morning, and, after an exhilarating drive through beautiful Yorkshire scenery, arrived at the historic little town of Knaresboro' in time to do ample justice to an excellent luncheon at the Elephant and Castle Hotel. Mr. Greevz Fisher most kindly undertook to act as guide to one wing of the party, while the remainder accompanied Mr. John Grauge, both gentlemen exerting themselves to the utmost to interest and amuse the visitors.

The "Dropping Well" proved the chief centre of attraction, and the Castle and other places of interest having been visited, the party returned to the hotel for tea.

A shower of rain on the return journey failed to damp the spirits of the "saints." Indeed, the only subject for regret during the day was that Mr. Foote's editorial duties had summoned him back to London and prevented his being amongst us.

Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Heaford, Moss, and the Secretary, voicing the sentiments of the party, expressed, as far as that was possible, their great appreciation of the kindness of Mrs. Greevz Fisher, who had undertaken, and so successfully carried out, all arrangements for what had proved to be one of the most successful Conference excursions of late years.

K. B. K.

The *Transvaal Chronicle*, the only morning paper in Pretoria, doesn't seem to labor under any fear of the clergy. There was an article on "Pulpit and Press" in its issue for April 30, in reply to the Rev. Dr. Ross, of Johannesburg, who had been making light of the "Black Peril." The following passage is notable:—

"The priest, as Dr. Ross will admit, has his functions clearly defined. His place is in the old-time institutions, traditions, and beliefs of the past. He must keep up the old customs, defend the things that have been, and maintain generally a *noli me tangere* attitude."

This is tolerably plain speaking. We wonder how the Rev. Dr. Ross (and other men of God) like it.

The person laying claim to "the grand old name of gentleman" has been described in many ways, but the latest, and perhaps the most original, definition comes from a bright board-school boy. In his opinion, "a gentleman is a man who wears a watch and chain and who loves Jesus." Here we see the confused effects of combining correct observation with "simple Bible teaching."

**Welsh Disestablishment and Secular Education.**

*An Open Letter to Nonconformists by the Executive Committee of the Secular Education League.*

FELLOW CITIZENS,—

Your just demand for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Anglican Church in Wales is based upon several grounds, not the least of which is the historic Nonconformist principle that the teaching of religion is an obligation resting on those who profess it, and should not be undertaken by the State, and that the endowment of the tenets of any church or religious communion is a negation of the principle of religious equality.

Nonconformists deny that the State has a right to teach religion to its citizens. It is a primary reason of their Nonconformity. You claim that religious teaching is the business of voluntary organised religious communions, and that the duty of the State is to remain neutral respecting a matter outside its province. You claim also that you ought not to be compelled to pay for the upkeep of a Church in which you do not believe, whose services you cannot attend, and whose ministrations you cannot accept; and your conviction upon this matter is so absolute that, rather than consent to pay Church rates, you have allowed your household goods to be seized and sold by public auction, and have endured the hardships of personal imprisonment.

The Secular Education League, at this crisis in the history of the cause of religious equality, appeals to you as Nonconformists for the consistent application of your fundamental principles; and it asks you to remember that there is another State-established and endowed religion as well as that of the Church. That religion is endowed in your State schools, and what is wrong in one case cannot be right in the other. As Nonconformists, you complain of the violation, by the State, of the principle of religious equality, while at the same time a great number of avowed Nonconformists are joining hands with the Established Church in inflicting upon other sections of the community the very injustice of which you complain. Many minorities of conscientious people are compelled to pay for the teaching, in the public elementary schools, of religious tenets which may satisfy you, but in which they do not believe, and against which they continually protest. Is their grievance less worthy of redress than your own; and can you consistently ask the State to treat you with a favoritism in the State schools which you resent being shown to other people in the State Church?

If it is wrong to use public money for the teaching of religion to adults in the Church, must it not be also wrong to use public money for the teaching of religion to children in the schools? On the other hand, if it is right for the nation to endow, out of the taxation paid by all citizens, the religion of Cowper-Templeism in the Schools, or any other religion, can it be wrong for the nation similarly to establish and endow Anglican religion in the Church? If, as many Nonconformists assert, a State religion is just in the case of the child, why not also in the case of the parent? And if not for the parent, why for the child?

Your Nonconformist principles commit you just as much to the adoption of State neutrality towards religion in the Schools as in the Church, and you cannot withhold your support from complete State neutrality without betraying your own cause. Religious equality is not a principle that can be applied by halves; it is the inherent right of all citizens, and its violation is equally unjust in school and church. The Secular Solution is no new question. Its justice was recognised by the Nonconformists of the last generation, and it received the enthusiastic support of such great leaders of Dissent as Edward Miall, Henry Richard, Dr. Dale, Carvell Williams, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and Dr. Joseph Parker. Their work the Secular Education League is carrying on. More than seventy Nonconformist ministers joined the League last year. State neutrality in religion must prevail, and the Secular Solution is as inevitable as the disestablishment of the Church.

The Secular Education League simply demands for the school what you demand for the Church, viz., complete religious equality, State neutrality in religious teaching; and to you as Nonconformist citizens it confidently appeals for support.

For the Committee,

HALLEY STEWART, *President.*

H. SNELL, *Secretary.*

[Copies of this letter for judicious free distribution can be obtained of the League secretary, 19 Buckingham street, Strand, W.C.]

**Correspondence.**

**BERGSON AND FREETHOUGHT.**

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—In reply to Mr. F. J. Gould's strictures, I may say that I have no desire to prevent anyone from reading Professor Bergson's works—I trust they will be read, for, as Mr. Hugh Elliott observes, "We can hope for nothing better in the interests of the mechanistic theory than a wide circulation of Bergson's works." For the reader will then see by what a mass of flimsy verbiage this new champion of religion seeks to dispose of Materialism, Darwinism, and the whole theory of modern science.

As a matter of fact, and I stated it plainly enough in my article, I did not draw attention to Mr. Elliott's book because it was a refutation of Professor Bergson's fallacies, but because the writer accepted "Scientific Materialism as the only true and solid foundation of science, and that this view is endorsed by the acknowledged leader of science in this country, Sir Ray Lankester."

Mr. Gould cites you, Sir, as a Freethinker and a student of the Bible; but I am perfectly sure that you would be the first to repudiate the suggestion that you were unique in that respect.

Professor Bergson declares that "Intuition" is of more value than experiment and experience. He insists that time or "Duration" is a thing, "the very stuff of reality." He argues against the dependence of mind on the brain. He denies that memory is the result of mental images stored up in the cells of the brain.

Doubtless, Mr. Gould can reconcile all this with his peculiar Rationalism—which includes, I believe, membership of the Positivist Church—but, having swallowed so many camels, why boggle at Moses and the Prophets?

W. MANN.

**MOSTLY NOISE.**

"I see they have put a sounding-board at the back of the minister's pulpit," said Baron. "What do you suppose that's for?"

Egbert replied: "Why, it's to throw out the sound."

"Gracious," said Baron, "if you throw out the sound there wouldn't be anything left to the sermon."

**CAUGHT!**

It is the story of a resourceful young woman at a bazaar. Business was in full swing when a young man strolled around the various stalls, with no intention of purchasing anything. As he passed a large, beautifully decorated stall the young lady seller detained him.

"Won't you buy a cigarette holder, sir?" she asked.

"No, thank you, I don't smoke," was the curt reply.

"Or a pen wiper worked with my own hands?"

"I don't write."

"Then do have this nice box of chocolates."

"I don't eat sweets."

The young lady's patience was exhausted. "Sir," she said grimly, "will you buy this box of soap?"

The young man paid up.

**ONE THING SURE.**

Kenneth is the son of a sceptical father and likes an argument. The kindergarten teacher in a Niagara Falls school explained to the pupils—as she had no right to do in a secular school—that all the lights at night were "God's lights." She was proceeding to name them, the sun, the moon, etc., when Kenneth interposed:

"Well, he doesn't own the electric lights, anyhow."

Though the acting in the old days was good enough in its own way, the performers often put little feeling or life into their work. They were generally miserably paid. As the country manager once said to Kean in his younger days: "Feel, my good fellow, feel—throw life into the part—be angry." "Feel," replied Kean; "be angry. Who can be angry and feel upon five shillings a week!"—"Under Five Reigns," *Lady Dorothy Nevill.*

**THE CHARITABLE VIEW.**

"And where's the gardener who used to work here?"

Gardener: "Dead, sir."

Visitor: "Dead? Joined the great majority, eh?"

Gardener: "Well, sir. I wouldn't like to say that. He was good enough man, as far as I know."

**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, C. Cohen, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6, F. A. Davies, Lectures.

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

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Salvation by Faith."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Age of Man."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Miss K. B. Kough, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Mr. Davidson, "Christianity on Crutches."

**COUNTRY.****OUTDOOR.**

LAINDON, ESSEX (opposite Luff's Hairdressing Saloon): Saturday, June 8, at 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Prayer."

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

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

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire by ballot) each year,

but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

The Society's solicitors are Messrs. Harper and Battcock, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C.

*A Form of Bequest.*—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—"I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy."

Friends of the Society who have remembered it in their wills, or who intend to do so, should formally notify the Secretary of the fact, or send a private intimation to the Chairman, who will (if desired) treat it as strictly confidential. This is not necessary, but it is advisable, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid, and their contents have to be established by competent testimony.

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