

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*The other side of this desire for truth is a passionate hostility to those who are engaged in imposing this system of false teaching and swindle of salvation upon the ignorant and the innocent at the national expense. As Celsus said of the Christian legends, made false to fact by an ignorant literalisation of the Gnosis,—“What nurse would not be ashamed to tell such fables to a child?”—*GERALD MASSEY.

The “Boycott” Again.

IN returning to this topic, after a fortnight's interval, we desire to refer once more to the difficulties attending the maintenance of all really “advanced” periodicals. We shall have to mention the case of a contemporary in doing so, but we are using only public information, and we are not in any way reflecting on the conductors of the periodical in question.

The Twentieth Century Press, Limited, was registered on October 19, 1891. There were incidental objects set forth in the Memorandum of Association, but the main object was the publication of *Justice*. This weekly journal had been conducted by Mr. H. M. Hyndman and appears to have been his sole property in the technical sense of the word—for Mr. Hyndman was never out to make money in such a cause. The sum of £850 bought him out. We suppose it represented some portion of the money he had sunk in the paper, and even this was payable only partly in cash and the rest in shares. The capital was originally £1,000, but was increased in 1897 to £5,000 in 5s. shares. We gather from the official report that the £5,000 has all been lost—that is to say, expended—and that there are liabilities to the extent of £3,820 15s. 5d. besides—with no available assets. The Twentieth Century Press, Limited, is therefore in bankruptcy, and the liquidation is left in the hands of the Official Receiver.

Now the long and the short of the whole affair seems to be this. Some nine thousand pounds has been spent on *Justice* in the course of some twenty years, and it has come to grief at last. No blame is attachable to anyone. The expenses were very far from excessive, and the pen and personality of Mr. Hyndman have all along (we understand) been an unpurchased asset of the enterprise. There was also the advantage of association with a definite political party, and the further advantage of representing a cause which was said to be making great headway amongst the people. Yet twenty years of an intellectual well-written organ of a growing cause only spells bankruptcy at the end.

The *Clarion* has had a much larger circulation than *Justice*, but Mr. Blatchford has, we believe, no more made his paper pay than Mr. Hyndman has. And if these two men cannot make such papers a commercial success, how is the thing to be done at all? The fact is that it never was, and probably never will be, possible to advocate principles—nothing but principles, and especially unpopular principles—on a purely commercial basis. Even if a journal of pure principle pays its way, in the fullest

sense of the word, it will only do so by virtually “sweating” its editor and regular contributors. This is the practical, though crude, way of putting it; for those who work incessantly for such a journal are always animated by love of “the cause” rather than by any motive of self-interest.

Let us now turn to the case of the *Freethinker*. It has existed for thirty-one years. During the whole of that time it has represented only Free-thought. It has no collateral advantages—political, social, or otherwise. Generally speaking, indeed, one might say that the dice were loaded against it. It has made a purely intellectual appeal. It has promised no personal profit to its readers except mental freedom and moral elevation. It has never suggested that the millennium was rapidly approaching, or even that any Freethinker's wages would be raised so much as a shilling a week. All that it has promised is that in time (nothing is done without time) the world will be better in all sorts of ways for Free-thought; and that if the harvest of its seed-sowing has to be waited for (as all harvests must) it will be as sure as it will be good for posterity; and that a Freethinker, when his time comes, may lie down and die in peace if he can behold in his mind's eye the picture of his children, or even his children's children, in the land of promise which he himself was only to enter in imagination.

And then consider the difficulty of making a paper constantly interesting with such a restricted scope. A daily newspaper has all the world to choose from. If empires are not falling there is a big ship sinking; if there is no war there is an enthralling murder case; if there is nothing else there is the sea-serpent or the big gooseberry. Setting ourselves aside altogether, we have often wondered how our leading contributors keep it up week after week. There is only one explanation. When a great English painter was asked what he mixed his colors with he replied “With brains, sir.”

A good deal of money has been spent on the *Freethinker*, though not as much as that spent on *Justice*, unless the editor's unpaid services are added to the bill. Contributors get something. The editor gets nothing. When the Free-thought Publishing Company came to the end of its resources, and we took over the business so as to secure the continuity of the *Freethinker* (the all-important thing) we paid all the Company's debts out of a legacy we had received, and then went on working without salary as before, and bearing the burden of sheer loss in addition to the extent of some £100 a year. Happily matters have improved somewhat. The loss is nearly extinguished,—indeed the paper would yield us something now if the insecurity of its position did not drive us into a printing and publishing business under conditions that naturally suggest the truth of the old proverb that it is generally cheaper to buy milk than keep a cow. A paper that has once been prosecuted for Blasphemy is never safe. The timidity of ordinary printers and newsagents might half ruin it, or wholly ruin it, at any moment of persecution. We are determined, therefore, at whatever cost, to keep the production and central distribution of the paper in our own hands.

These special conditions add to the burden of our work. They necessitate expenditure of energy, pre-occupation of mind, and consumption of time. And

as we have had no sub-editor since 1898, and are not able to employ a secretary or an assistant of any kind, and have to do everything with one head that does not grow younger, and one pair of hands that do not grow more active, it may be imagined how little we lie upon a bed of roses.

With all its drawbacks the *Freethinker* makes steady progress in circulation; steady, but slow, and with no immediate prospect of an income for the editor. Such a paper, in most parties, would depend upon a subvention. It is the pivot on which everything else turns; it is our channel of publicity; it is "the thing by which we live," the Freethought party might say, quoting old Shylock, who at any rate understood business; in short, it is positively indispensable.

Next week we intend to take our readers still further into our intimacy. We shall make a careful statement of what we mean to do in the way of advertising this journal, and how its friends may help us in the effort. And we shall speak as plainly on this subject as we speak on all others.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Life.—VII.

(Concluded from p. 355.)

THE influence of Christianity in lowering the general level of social life has never, I think, been adequately recognised by historians; or, if it has been seen, it has certainly not received adequate treatment. The habit of writing with an eye on the Christian public is so general that doubtless those who saw the truth of what has been pointed out thought it the wiser course to say nothing. I do not know what are the religious opinions of Mr. and Mrs. Whetham, but it is pretty clear that they either incline to religious prepossessions, or one must attribute to a hasty and uncritical acceptance of the teachings of religious writers the tone of the chapter that I have been criticising. The fact is clear that, so far as "essential" Christianity is concerned, its influence on family life, and ultimately on social life, has been bad. That it was not more disastrous is due to the indestructible character of those feelings that cluster round domestic and social life.

As a selective force there is even a still deadlier charge that lies against all religion, and particularly against Christianity. That in very early societies the heretic should be treated as an enemy to social well-being, is one of the inevitable facts of the situation. As everything that contributes to the tribal welfare is dependent upon the goodwill of supernatural powers, and to offend these exposes the tribe to injury, the primitive heretic is suppressed as a social danger. And when, added to this, we have the growth of various interests that are vitally concerned in keeping religious belief alive, the psychological impulse is strengthened and enforced by a direct economic interest. At a later than the purely primitive stage, we still see the close association between religious belief and the conception of the welfare of the State; and in Christianity, with its elaborated doctrines of future rewards and punishments and of the unimportance of this life, hatred of heresy reaches its strongest and most venomous expression.

Under one or another form the elimination of the heretic has been a constant function of religion in all ages. In this, religion has operated as a true selective force. It has favored the survival of some and discouraged the survival of others. And it has done this by direct elimination, and also by the creation of a social environment unfavorable to the development of a non-religious type. In each direction the influence of religion has been distinctly hostile to progress. For while it is plain that orderly progress is largely dependent upon a free and rational criticism of existing beliefs and institutions, and on

a freedom of intercourse between people, the suppression of heresy strikes directly at both of these things. The heretic or the unbeliever can only be suppressed so far as he is known, and self-revelation is practically the only condition of discovery. It follows, therefore, that all criticism of existing beliefs implies a certain independence of mind and strength of character that is not necessarily indicated by the acceptance of current teachings. It is, of course, conceivable that the heretic may be in the wrong; but, right or wrong, there is no question that the strength and independence implied by heresy is a social asset of far greater value than is implied by orthodoxy.

It follows, therefore, that all punishments for the expression of opinion, from the most savage to the most recent times, and whether the punishments be that of death or of business boycott and social ostracism, eventuates in a patronage of cowardice and hypocrisy and a discouragement of independence and honesty. If one is without the ability to think clearly, or the courage to speak honestly, religious persecution is, for such a person, non-existent. Cowardice, mental slothfulness, and hypocrisy will secure safety; plain speech and fearless criticism will invite attack. A man's private opinions are safe; it is his expressed opinions only that are the occasion for punishment. And consider the cumulative effects of this policy on the mental character of the race. Generation after generation, persecution, so far as it is effective, is engaged in selecting honesty, courage, and ability as objects of punishment. So far as it can, religion divides people into two classes: the credulous and cowardly, and the critical and courageous. The latter it suppresses, the former it cultivates. Consciously or unconsciously, it puts into operation the principles that a breeder of animals would whose sole aim was to cultivate docility, and who carefully weeded out all showing a tendency in the opposite direction. To religion in general, and to Christianity in particular, one type is anathema, and that the type of greatest value to the development of the race. And when we bear in mind for how long this policy of elimination has been carried on, that, to take one instance, in Spain between 1471 and 1871, there were no less than 82,000 people burnt and 291,000 punished in other ways for heresy, we can form some slight conception of what a demoralising force Christianity has been.

On this point I prefer to again quote from Sir Francis Galton, who says, after the opinion already given on the effect of the Christian teaching of celibacy:—

"The policy of the religious world in Europe was exerted in another direction, with hardly less cruel effect on the nature of future generations, by means of persecutions which brought thousands of the foremost thinkers and men of political aptitude to the scaffold, or imprisoned them during a large part of their manhood, or drove them as emigrants into other lands..... The Church.....made another sweep of her huge nets, this time fishing in stirring waters, to catch those who were the most fearless, truth-seeking, and intelligent in their modes of thought, and therefore the most suitable parents of a high civilisation, and put a strong check, if not a direct stop, to their progeny. Those she reserved on these occasions, to breed the generations of the future, were the servile, the indifferent, and, again, the stupid. Thus as she—to repeat my expression—brutalised human nature by her system of celibacy applied to the gentle, she demoralised it by her system of persecution of the intelligent, the sincere, and the free."

If one were not used to writers closing their eyes when the evidence told against Christianity, one might feel surprise at Mr. and Mrs. Whetham saying that we could not yet form an opinion as to the influence of Christianity on racial development. There are ample data for such a judgment, if only those who write can muster candor and courage enough to deal fairly with it.

Great as was the evil wrought by religion in the shape of direct elimination, another and possibly

greater evil has been the creation of a social environment strongly inimical to the development of the higher moral and mental qualities. However drastic persecution may be, considered by itself it can only directly affect a percentage of the class aimed at. And for that reason the actual number of people killed, while it appeals with greater force to the imagination, is probably the lesser of the two evils inflicted. Great as was the injury done by Christianity to those whom it murdered, it did still greater injury to those whom it spared. On these were impressed the burdens of dissimulation and hypocrisy. Each generation grew up in an environment in which it was manifestly dangerous, and therefore considered unwise to behave with courage and straightforwardness in relation to accepted beliefs. Driven to seek safety by dissimulation, the practice became so general that men ceased to find anything in it that was dishonorable. Deceit and dissimulation became glossed over with expressions about respect for the opinions of others and concern for the public order. In this way the whole tone of public life became vitiated; the standard of mental integrity lowered, and if the result has not been a generation to whom courage and truth-speaking are alien things, we certainly have not to thank Christianity for the survival of these qualities.

At any rate, there can be no question that centuries of religious and Christian rule have left a deep impression on our social life. When it is pointed out that the average person attaches little importance to an opinion, one might well ask how it could be expected to be otherwise with our heredity and traditions? The martyr is at all times the exceptional character. And when men find truth-speaking and criticism met with varying degrees of punishment, these things become the luxuries of the few instead of the everyday qualities of the many. And the outstanding features of our public life is precisely its lack of courage and straightforwardness. I am not now referring to the lower domain of politics, but to the higher intellectual regions, which, were they better than they are, would not be without its influence on political life. None but a special pleader, with but small concern for strict accuracy, would deny that a very large proportion of our leading men of science and of letters are neither Christian nor religious in any genuine sense of the term. Yet how many have the courage to say frankly what their real opinions are? If pressed for an expression of opinion, the majority find refuge in evasion, or in some far-fetched description of themselves hardly less dishonoring than complete silence. There is a wilderness of words about genuine religion, the essential spirit of Christianity, and a hundred and one other windy expressions, all designed to hide the fact that their users do not believe, but lack the courage to say as much in so many words. And the situation is the more dishonoring because the day has gone by when open and deadly pressure could be brought to bear upon the heretic. To open and organised force it is possible for one to yield without sense of personal degradation. But to the indirect force exercised by the blocking of one's chances of worldly advancement, by loss of social prestige, or by other forms of boycott, no one can yield to without almost irreparable degradation. And if the degradation is not felt, this can only be so because it is the more complete.

It is not, then, very difficult to see the general outline of the effect of religious belief on the life of the race. As religious belief, it has been evil. Unless we believe that man is susceptible to some "divine illumination," we are bound to believe that experience is man's only teacher, and that the good attributed to religion is solely owing to the modifications forced upon religion by the pressure of social life. But it is the business of the scientific inquirer to disentangle the essential from the non-essential, and to promote the understanding of the former by the exposure and rejection of the latter. In its origin religion is a blunder, and nothing but a

blunder; and while man may, in pursuing a blunder, stumble upon the truth, it is idle to derive truth from error. The development of error results in error, even though the error be inescapable. But to assume that because religion has been perpetuated for so long, therefore it must play a useful part in the life of the race, is to lose sight of the conditions of its perpetuation, and in vainly seeking for the secret of its goodness to still further strengthen its possibilities of inflicting injury.

C. COHEN.

Legend and History.

LIBERAL Christianity is a sort of half-way house between orthodox Christianity and Freethought. We, who have vacated it and now inhabit a dwelling founded on the impregnable rock of truth, are bound to characterise it as a house built upon the sand which cannot resist the powerful attacks of historical criticism and of common sense. The peculiarity of Liberal Christianity is that it has dropped the supernatural Christ, but seeks to retain a historical Jesus. The Rev. Dr. Anderson, of Dundee, maintains that criticism, having carefully examined the Four Gospels and the Epistles, has been logically driven to the conclusion that their central hero is either a Divine Being, sojourning in human flesh, or a purely mythical character. Professor Bacon, of Yale University, on the other hand, asserts that scientific criticism has led all sensible people to the conviction that, "as Teacher and Leader of humanity toward the ideal of a brotherhood of the race under the Fatherhood of God, the figure of Jesus of Nazareth still dominates all the records of the past." Here we find two divines flatly contradicting each other. The Dundee oracle declares in the most emphatic manner that the Higher Criticism has proved entirely destructive of the historic basis of the Gospels, while Professor Bacon, with equal coolsureness, declares that it has done the exact opposite, namely, brought out into the full light of day the historic Jesus embedded in the Gospel legends. We now come across a third divine, the Rev. Principal Griffith-Jones, of Yorkshire United College, who confidently assures us that both Dr. Anderson and Professor Bacon are Double Dutchmen floundering in a continent of theological and critical mud, and that what true, reverent criticism finds in the New Testament is "the Incarnate Son of God, who lived a true human life, died a sacrificial death on the cross, and rose from the dead on the third day." What an illuminating spectacle meets us here—three divines, three men of God, occupying three hostile camps, and each of them absolutely sure that he alone possesses the truth on the subject in dispute!

Principal Griffith-Jones says that we must have "a historical revelation or nothing," and we agree with him. If a revelation was ever granted it was necessarily a historical one, and could not have been any other; but what the Principal utterly fails to do is to adduce the slightest evidence that such a revelation was ever given. Nothing in the world is easier than to dogmatise on subjects that lie outside the range of knowledge. A man who talks glibly to theological students about the Incarnate Son of God living a true human life, dying a sacrificial death, and rising from the dead on the third day, cannot be an honest critic, and has no right to sit in judgment on him who is; and consequently one is not surprised at the unintelligent sarcasm of the following condemnation of the attempt to divorce Christianity from history:—

"This extraordinary theory would not be worth considering were it not that it has a certain momentary vogue, as any new and sufficiently confident religious theory has in these days of religious unsettlement. In Germany, the land of its birth, it is already dead and almost forgotten, slain by the final attacks of all reputable students of history; but here it seems to have a few adherents who are active in its advocacy in a weak and imitative way. The trouble is not in any fear that

such a notion will prevail, but that it serves to spread the impression that Christianity is not really so dependent on history as has been imagined, and so to unsettle the faith of many who have no time or competency to go exhaustively into the subject."

It is true, no doubt, that Christianity as expounded by Dr. Anderson has no future, and that the form of orthodoxy championed by Dr. Griffith-Jones is more likely to secure the support of unthinking people; but the claim that the historical events in which Christianity is said to be rooted actually occurred is absolutely incapable of verification. Virgin births and resurrections are merely alleged events to be blindly believed, not critically examined.

Now, Liberal Christianity rejects the Christ of theology altogether, but clings to an ideal man whom it professes to discover in a conglomerate mass of legends. In a remarkable article which appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* for July, 1911, Professor Bacon makes the following frank admission:—

"We have no prejudice whatever against recognition of the mythological element in the New Testament. Why should we? Myth is but philosophy in the making. We cannot conceive any other vehicle of thought or speech through which the preachers of the new religion could give utterance to their undisciplined sense of the teleological significance of what they themselves had witnessed."

What was it that those early preachers had themselves witnessed and could only express in the Messianism of Peter and the Hellenistic incarnation doctrine of Paul? Professor Bacon lays great stress on the alleged distinction between myth and legend, and speaks disdainfully of those who "display a fundamental ignorance" of it. But who display this "fundamental ignorance"? They who "talk of the story of Jesus' career as outlined in Acts x. 37-39, and developed with more or less of legendary embellishment in Mark i. 14—xv. 39, as mythical." At the expense of "magnifying tenfold the proof" of our "lack of sanity," we beg to inform the Professor that, in our judgment, Acts x. 37-39 is a highly mythical passage. The anointing with the Holy Ghost is a wholly mythical performance, as the Holy Ghost himself is a purely mythical being. So, likewise, the healing of all that were oppressed of the Devil was an entirely mythical feat, just as the Devil himself was and is a totally mythical creation. There is not a more mythical passage in the whole Bible than the one now under consideration. We challenge anybody to specify from those verses the exact good Jesus went about doing. Let us now pass on to legend. Professor Bacon, speaking in the name of Liberal Christian experts, confesses that they do not "retain the prejudice of orthodox traditionalism against the recognition of legendary elements in the Gospel story," and then proceeds thus:—

"Why should we? Legend is to us but history in the making, the embroidered robe of traditional fact, the undisciplined first effort of the historic sense to differentiate among the characters and events the permanently significant from the commonplace. Our business is to interpret legend, not to cast it out."

This is a novel view of legend in its relation to history. We hold that the invasion of legend always means, not the making, but the unmaking, of history, and that the business of a true historian is not to interpret legend, but to seize the fact, if any, that lies covered up or exaggerated by it. It may be true that Liberal Christians "are concerned with the essence of Jesus' message and the permanent significance of his personality and work"; but if we do not accept the Gospels and Epistles as wholly historical, "the essence of Jesus' message and the permanent significance of his personality and work" are the very things that are hidden from our ken. We do not assert that the Gospel story has absolutely no historical basis; but we do positively deny the possibility at this time of recovering it. There may have been a historical Jesus around whom the Gospel fiction was woven; but he is now irretrievably lost. His biography was never written. In the very oldest documents at our disposal he is the only

begotten Son of God who became incarnate in order that he might die for the sins of the world and rise again and return to his seat on the right hand of the Father. This is the first interpretation of "the permanent significance of his personality and work." On the supposition that he was a teacher, his message to the world was not committed to writing, even according to Professor Bacon, until it was found necessary to counteract the mythical teaching of Paul, and that message, as contained in the Four Gospels, is fatally self-contradictory and quite incapable of translation into conduct.

It seems to us that the position of Liberal Christians is more impossible and absurd than that occupied by the orthodox Church. It is fully as rational to believe in a supernatural Christ as in a supernatural God, and a believer in the latter should experience no difficulty in swallowing the former. If you must have supernaturalism at all, why boggle at the quantity? Professor Bacon has great confidence in the future of his cause:—

"Liberal Christianity, as we understand the term, is but beginning its career, and already rejoices as a strong man to run its course. It is absolutely fearless of the corrosion of historical criticism; for it knows that the more truly human the Jesus it reveals, the greater his value to right religious apprehension. With the great opponent of Docetism of the beginning of the second century, it interprets faith in Jesus as the trust of one that 'believeth not in me, but in Him that sent me.'"

But what is to be gained by reducing the God-man to the stature of a mere man? In revealing his Fatherhood and love to Jesus, God wasted his time and energy, for the revelation has remained a dead letter to this day. Professor Bacon says that "the permanent significance of the personality and work" of Jesus must be determined by expert scholars; but he forgets that expert scholars are split up into so many opposite schools, and that so far as scholarship is concerned he is no greater authority than the orthodox Professor Denny, who has written on the subject quite as learnedly, and perhaps quite as rationally, as himself. And it is to be borne in mind that, while the expert scholars are quarreling about Jesus, the masses are losing their faith in every form of supernaturalism, because they are finding out that no form of it has ever been of the slightest benefit to them.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Defence of Kano.

NORTH of the Gulf of Guinea, and between Southern Nigeria and the French Soudan is a huge African colony over which the British flag floats protectingly. This is Northern Nigeria, and, as its name implies, it is pierced by the mighty stream of the Niger, which curves through forests, glistens among great ferns and palms, and winds among wide sandy flats. The light-tinted Fulani people are herdsmen and shepherds. With them are mingled shaven-headed Hausas, who are agriculturists. The land is dotted with villages and cities, built of sun-dried clay. Kano, for instance, is twelve miles round; it has thirteen gateways; its history is recorded for nearly eight centuries. On the fertile soil, the people work diligently, raising crops of maize, millet, locust-beans, cassava, cotton, ground-nuts, and so on in rich variety. Weaving, iron-smelting, and leather-working are busy industries. Cattle are reared, and in a spirit unknown to Smithfield Market or the slaughter-yards of Chicago. Mr. E. D. Morel, whose interesting work on *Nigeria: its People and its Problems* I am here following, says:—

"The Fulani is very fond of his cattle. He does not breed them for slaughter, but because he literally loves them. He knows every one of them by name, and lavishes as much attention upon them as he does upon his children. This is peculiar to him not in Nigeria only but all over Western Africa. Often have our officers in Northern Nigeria found it impossible to resist

the pitiful appeal of some old Fulani herdsman or his wife, begging with eyes full of tears for the restitution of a favorite ox or heifer taken with others under the 'jangali' assessment."

The religion of Northern Nigeria is Mohammedanism, and it has been so for a long period. At dawn, the cry of "Allahu Akbar!"—"God is the greatest"—rings over the dwellings of the people, and calls them to their daily labor. Islam supports the polygamy which accords with West African traditions, and which keeps up a standard of decency hardly surpassed by the midnight streets of London; and it fosters a temperance in drink which obviates any need for Local Veto or loud lectures against drunkenness. Mr. Morel expresses no little anxiety lest the efforts of missionaries and dangerous "philanthropists" should disturb the peace of the colony, divide the people into sects, and destroy the ancient ideals of art, manners, and worship. For myself, I trust that, at some future date, West Africa and all the rest of the world will adopt the Religion of Humanity which announces for its creed, "Love for principle, and order for basis; progress for end." Meanwhile, I should prefer that Nigeria should retain its Mohammedan faith and practice.

Mr. Morel paid a visit to the Emir of Kano, and was received with a call of trumpets, and conducted to the prince's residence within a vast walled enclosure. Seated in conversation with Emir Abbas, the Englishman praised the industry of the Nigerians, and the activity of its traders. Then he turned to the topic of religion. It was the desire of certain British propagandists, he said, to bring the doctrines of Christianity into Kano. The natives could listen, or not listen, as they pleased, but the disciples of Christ wished at least to offer information and make a free and open appeal. In saying this, Mr. Morel was no ambassador for the May Meetings of London. As a matter of fact, he considers that it would be better to leave Kano and its creed respectfully alone. But he wanted to know what Abbas thought.

"For some time," remarks Mr. Morel, "the Emir kept silent, his fingers twitching nervously." Then he replied:—

"Mohammedanism is a matter of the heart. Our fathers and our grandfathers were Muslims. For many generations we have been Muslims. What is the use of preaching if there are no converts? Even if the Christian missionary tried to meet the native on equal terms he could not do so, because all white men are Sarikis (chiefs), and the people cannot help so regarding them. The missionaries might not wish to use force. But they would exercise pressure amounting to force, because of the prestige all white men have, and the people would be disturbed and troubled in their minds. There would be unrest."

One naturally reflects that if, all through the history of the contact between White Christianity and Black Fetishism and Islam the African mind had been able to defend itself with this dignity and common sense, the agitators known as missionaries would have far less power to overturn old customs of marriage, religion, costume, and innocent mirth. They could have confined themselves to the task of refining and educating, and evoking mutual respect between Africa and Europe. Mr. Morel wisely requested the Emir to reduce his views to writing. In the course of an Arabic letter subsequently received, Abbas observed:—

"Praise to God who only is to be praised. Salutations. This letter is directed to the stranger, Mr. Morel, who has come. Know that as regards the preaching [of Christianity] which we discussed here, my opinion is that it were better to stop it altogether from the first—because, if our people are disturbed about their religion, they will become suspicious and afraid.....Also, as regards white men living in the city of Kano, if they do so many of our people will leave it, since the white men are too strong, and every one of them is in our eyes a great man and powerful. The lion and the lamb cannot lie down together....."

Mr. Morel will earn no thanks from the British missionaries. He is attempting to set up a barrier

between them and a spiritual conquest. He has assisted the city of Kano in a moral victualling of its inhabitants and an intellectual manning of its walls. My sympathies are with the threatened city.

F. J. GOULD.

Modern Materialism.—XIII.

(Continued from p. 358.)

"Our mental furniture shows the *bric-à-brac* of prejudice beside the fashion of the hour; our opinions are made up of shadowy associations, imperfect memories, echoes of other men's voices, mingling with the reactions of our own sensibility. Thus it is that a mass of incoherent and unreasoned premises are brought to bear on the evidence for any new opinion, as for any novel fact: this is the unrecognised standard by which the conclusion is determined. The most rational of men mingles with premises logically assignable obscure premises, of which he can give no account. It is only in the exact sciences that conclusions are clearly reasoned out."—G. H. LEWES, *Problems of Life and Mind*, 1879, p. 167.

"For ten years not a single scholar in the world could be found who would even consent to discuss it. (The principle of the Conservation of Energy.) In vain did its immortal author, Dr. Mayer, of Heilbronn, multiply his memoirs and his experiments. Mayer died of despair, and so unknown that, when Helmholtz repeated the same discovery a few years later, taking as a basis only mathematical considerations, he did not even suspect the existence of his predecessor. The critical mind is so rare a gift that the most profound ideas and the most convincing experiments exercise no influence so long as they are not adopted by scholars enjoying the prestige of official authority."—GUSTAVE LE BON, *The Evolution of Forces*, p. 40.

"Every step towards truth has had to be fought for, and there has had to be abandoned for it almost whatever otherwise human hearts, human love, human confidence in life, are attached to."—NIETZSCHE, *The Antichrist*, 1899, p. 323.

THE whole of modern science is based upon Materialism, a Materialism which, as Mr. Hugh Elliott remarks, and, as we have had occasion to observe in the course of these articles, "which may, indeed, be repudiated as a philosophy by men of science themselves, but which, nevertheless, lies at the basis of all their efforts."*

In the early efforts of the Greek philosophers to explain the origin of things, various theories were formulated. Thales regarded water as the origin of all things. Anaximenes held it to be air. Heraclitus declared for fire, and Pythagoras for number, a conception that may be classed with Professor Bergson's declaration that time is a thing. The beginnings of philosophy illustrate again the true observation of Herbert Spencer—that mankind has tried all the wrong roads before finding the right.

Democritus, the greatest of Greek philosophers, was the founder of Materialism; he declared that everything is composed of atoms. This was developed by the Roman, Lucretius, in his *De rerum Naturæ*, the highest and latest effort of ancient philosophy. Lucretius not only accepted the universality of law, and explained life as the outcome of purely natural causes, but he definitely discarded all idea of gods and the supernatural, declaring that man would never be free until these ideas were rooted out from the mind.

Then came Christianity, and humanity, staggering under the heavy burden of the cross, descended into "the valley of the shadow of death" of the Middle Ages, which lie between the fall of the Roman Empire and the re-birth of science in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During the intellectual degradation of these "Dark Ages"—the ages of Faith—Materialism disappeared. As Mr. Hugh Elliott, in his capital summary of the subject, in his chapter on the "Progress of Philosophy," observes:—

"Finally, reason gave way to faith, and philosophy flickered out altogether. For more than a thousand years religion took the place of science and philosophy, and enthralled the intellect of men. The blackest barbarism and superstition had to be passed through

* Hugh Elliott, *Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*, p. 105.

before humanity once again stirred uneasily beneath the chains which bound them, this time to reach an enlightenment far transcending the wildest dreams of the ancients."

The matter of which our world and everything upon it, including ourselves, is composed, consists of about eighty substances (the latest table contains eighty-two), such as carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, iron, hydrogen, etc. Everything that exists is built up from combinations of these eighty elemental substances. For instance, water is composed of the two elements, oxygen and hydrogen. Air, of oxygen and nitrogen, and so on. (Of course, most of our readers know all this, but we wish to make ourselves clear to the beginner in this subject). These compounds can again be decomposed into their constituent elements; but the elements themselves are not decomposable by any means at the disposal of the chemist.

"A particle of iron [says the famous scientist, Dubois Reymond] is, and remains, exactly the same thing, whether it shoot through space as a meteoric stone, dash along on the tyre of an engine-wheel, or roll in a blood-corpucle through the veins of a poet. Its properties are eternal, unchangeable, untransferable."

And Professor Stewart, in his book on the *Conservation of Energy* (p. 7), declares that:—

"A simple elementary atom is truly an immortal being, and enjoys the privilege of remaining unaltered and essentially unaffected amid the most powerful blows that can be dealt against it—it is probably in a state of ceaseless activity and change of form, but it is nevertheless always the same."

The ancient Greeks had no real knowledge of the atom; it was merely a happy guess; and it is only through an immense amount of labor and experiment that modern science has succeeded in establishing, beyond the shadow of a doubt, what is now known as the atomic theory of matter.

The chemist found that when two or more elements combined together to form a compound, they always did so in exactly the same proportions; thus, 2 parts by weight of hydrogen combines with 16 parts of oxygen to form water. Air is composed of 23 parts by weight of oxygen to 77 parts of nitrogen.

John Dalton was the first to propound a theory to explain this phenomena; he suggested that the elements were composed of very minute particles, or atoms, and that the elements always combine atom by atom. Taking the atomic weight of hydrogen, the lightest of the elements, as 1, Dalton used it as a scale to measure all the other elements by. Thus, 8 parts of oxygen combine with 1 of hydrogen; therefore, their atomic weights were 8 and 1 respectively. Dalton's theory was perfectly sound, but he fell into error in computing the number of atoms in the elements, and it was not until Gay-Lussac had demonstrated that the atomic number should be computed by the *volume* relation between the gases, and not by their *weight*, that the theory was placed upon a sound basis; by this method the atomic weight of oxygen works out at 16 instead of 8, as computed by Dalton. These atomic weights range from hydrogen 1, up to uranium 238.5.

In 1864 Newlands read a paper before the Chemical Society of London, in which he propounded what he called the "Law of Octaves." He showed that if the elements were placed in a row, according to their atomic weights, there was a very marked similarity between every eighth element of the series. Newlands' paper was not treated as a serious contribution to science, and the law was restated in a much extended and improved form by Mendeléeff and Lothar Meyer, quite independently, and is now known as the "Periodic Law," and when the elements are arranged by eighths in this manner it is called the "Periodic Table." Now, when the elements are arranged in their natural sequence, several vacant places appear, as if some of these elements were missing. Mendeléeff predicted the discovery of some of these missing elements, describing their properties and atomic number; these elements

have since been discovered, thus filling up three of the gaps, in exactly the same manner that the mathematicians discovered the existence and position of Neptune before it had been seen, and then told the astronomers where to look for it. The atomic theory of matter is no longer an hypothesis, but a demonstrated fact. Matter and force, the atom, and energy, indivisible and indestructible—that is the first and last word of science.

But, we may be asked, "Is it not a fact that the atom of radium has been decomposed into electrons; and, if so, is it not probable that the other elements may also be decomposed?" It is true that the atom of radium has been decomposed, and it is probable that all the elements have been evolved from some primal substance, a problem upon which we shall touch later on. Yet, as Mr. Frederick Soddy, who has a first-hand knowledge as an experimenter and discoverer in radioactivity, observes:—

"After all, what has an atom to fear from the utmost that can be done to it in the laboratory? Has it not been subjected in the laboratory of Nature to temperatures immeasurably higher, and to pressures of which science has no conception? Its simple existence is eloquent of its fitness to survive. Not without reason have the atoms been termed the foundation stones of the universe. The title is derived, not from the laboratory experience of chemists only, for, by the aid of the spectroscope, the materials of the most distant star can be analysed into their constituent elements. Sun and stars tell the same story. The atoms out of which they are composed are the same, with possibly one or two exceptions as those found on the earth. It seems almost presumptuous to hope that the atoms which continue to exist unchanged under conditions so transcending any that can be reproduced in the laboratory will ever by any conceivable advance of science be displaced from the proud position they occupy in the economy of Nature."

"Through metaphysics first, then through alchemy and chemistry, through physical and astronomical spectroscopy, lastly through radio-activity, science has slowly groped its way to the atom. Through the various ideas of phlogiston, imponderable fluids, attractions, repulsions, affinities, and forces, science has ended with the simple universal conception of energy. The discovery of the relation of the atom to energy within the last decade recalls the strange mediæval myth that the Philosopher's Stone, which had the power of transmuting metals, when discovered, would prove also to be the Elixir of Life." *

It should be remembered that the atom of radium was not broken down by scientists in the laboratory. The dissociation of the radium atom is quite spontaneous; it cannot be hastened by any process at the command of the chemist, not even by the heat of the electric furnace; it cannot be retarded by the extreme cold of liquid air. And when we bear in mind that the ordinary elements exist unchanged in the sun at a temperature of 6,500° Centigrade, and this is nearly twice the heat that can be attained by the electric furnace (about 3,500°), it will be seen that there is small hope at present of our breaking down, or transmuting, the eighty odd elements, in spite of the airy way in which the halfpenny press speaks of the problem as if it were all but accomplished.

Yes, science has, after infinite labor and search, finally "groped its way to the atom" and "the simple universal conception of energy." Force and matter, one and indivisible, that is the first and last word of science.

(To be concluded.)

W. MANN.

The Archdeacon of London preached the "Vegetable Sermon" recently at the Shoreditch Parish Church. This is the 183rd year the sermon has been given as the result of a legacy by Fairchild, a gardener. The association of gardening with the Christian superstition is not very extensive; but, maybe, the preachers have rung the changes on "the forbidden fruit" and "the Garden of Eden."

* F. Soddy, *Matter and Energy*, 1912, p. 244-5.

Acid Drops.

The "suffragette" prisoners are to be first-class misdemeanants for the rest of their terms of imprisonment. We are not objecting to this. What we do object to is the Home Secretary's treating Suffragist prisoners as persons of principle and conviction, and treating Freethought prisoners (and boasting of it in the House of Commons) as mere vulgar criminals,—when everybody who knows anything at all about the matter knows that there is less to be made in the service of Freethought than in that of any other cause on earth. The explanation of Mr. McKenna's attitude is very simple. First of all, he is a typical time-serving politician and office-holder, always ready to please those who could get him out of his office, or make his presence in it intolerable—and always ready to indemnify himself by insolence to all whose power to injure or annoy him is slight enough to be disregarded or even despised; secondly, he is himself a Christian, with the type of mind and character that takes a pleasure in the suffering and humiliation of dissidents. These are the reasons why it pays better in the present state of things to destroy other people's property at a venture, in order to advertise yourself and your cause, than merely to offend their prejudices by advocating opinions in opposition to their own.

General Booth has gone blind at the age of eighty-four. It must be admitted that he has had a good innings of eyesight. There are people who go blind far younger than General Booth and make much less fuss about it: Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, for instance. The old man's description, in his "message" to his "Army" is painful reading. He is kind enough, however, to assure them that he still believes in the goodness of God. "The Lord's will be done!" he exclaims,—which (if there be a Lord) he may rely upon, whether he is favorable to it or not. Finally the aged "General" listens to the voice of vanity. "Perhaps," he says, "the wonderful wisdom of God may foresee, even by the great loss I have suffered, the bringing about of the great end of my labors in a more effective manner than ever." Blindness is not a very rare affliction—thousands of people suffer from it—but when it falls upon William Booth at the fag end of a very long life he feels sure that it is a special effort of Divine Wisdom.

Two male lunatics escaped from the county asylum at Brentwood, Essex, lately. One of them, Thomas Large, was suffering from religious mania. He was recaptured at Grays while addressing a meeting of dock workers,—who, by the way, might be a little more particular about the orators they allow to harangue them. Perhaps the mad orator on this occasion fancied himself a second Jesus Christ, if not the original one.

Poor Miss Kitty Melrose! This popular actress, who committed suicide in consequence of an unfortunate love affair, left a letter to the man in the case in which she said, "God forgive you, as I hope He will forgive me." No Atheist, anyhow.

"How," asks the *Christian Commonwealth*, "could men in the first century give directions as to what a State ought to do in entirely different circumstances twenty centuries later?" How, indeed? And yet, once we admit this principle all round, what becomes of the social value of Christianity? A mere vague aspiration after righteousness offers nothing new in the history of the race, and offered nothing new twenty centuries ago. Pagan literature is full of it, as has been the literature of all ages since. The claim of Christianity has always been that it did contain rules of life suitable for all times and peoples; and it is against this that Freethinkers have always protested. If we are to take Christianity as we should take any other system, testing it by present-day knowledge and needs, we shall be putting into practice a sound rule of guidance, and one that Freethought has always stood for. And to try Christianity by this standard rules it out as effectively as its bitterest opponents could desire.

Referring to the Dock Strike, Mr. Kingsley Wood, L.C.C., complains that not a single dignitary of the Established Church or the Nonconformist Churches have apparently moved a finger to endeavor to settle the present unhappy condition of affairs. Of course not. The Churches only move when their interest, as Churches, are served by either side. And in the present instance decided action on either side would mean loss of favor. In the main the instinct of the Churches follows the interest of the Churches, and it is decidedly to their interest to remain quiet when

speech or action means loss of favor with the masses or loss of patrons with the classes.

Mr. R. J. Campbell thinks that Mr. Bernard Shaw need not go farther than Jesus Christ to find what he is seeking. Well, if he gets that far, we agree that it would be folly to look for more. G. B. S. sitting at the feet of Jesus—and R. J. Campbell—is a picture that should appeal to George Bernard Shaw himself in his most cynical humor.

The trouble in Belgium over the further success of the Catholic party in the new elections is not merely the common resentment of defeated politicians. Before flinging about censure too freely one ought to know what it is that the Progressives of all shades are so angry about. This may be seen from the following statement in the *Daily News* on the morning after the elections:—

"Yesterday was an important day in Belgium: the nation had to decide whether the clerical regime, which has had an uninterrupted run for 28 years, was to come to an end, or be given a fresh lease of life. As in Spain and Portugal, the political power of the Catholic Church has profoundly influenced the progress of the country both in a moral and an economic direction.

"The civil service, most of the public institutions, all charitable establishments, and, above all, the schools, have been clericalised and made the means of Church domination. To take but one instance, it is noteworthy that Belgium has to this day no compulsory education, and that whereas the number of elementary communal schools has since 1884 diminished from 4,787 to 4,684 (in spite of the considerable growth of the population), that of the clerical schools has increased from 10 to 2,906. At the same time, even in the communal schools religious teaching is obligatory and of a strictly denominational character, and their management lies in the hands of the clergy, as the majority on the communal councils is clerical.

"Again, since the year the Clericals came to power the number of monastic and conventual establishments has increased from 2,124 to 4,136, and the number of monks and nuns has grown from 32,461 to 85,744. The congregations are engaged in a number of industries, such as lace, linen, and even diamond-cutting industries, and are successfully competing with private enterprise.

"The revolt against this regime has been growing steadily during the last fifteen years. In 1898 the clericals still possessed a majority of 72 in the Chamber; in 1910 it dropped to six. Owing to an addition (necessitated by the increase of population) of twenty seats in the Chamber, which hitherto counted 166 members, the election this time was held in all constituencies, and not, as the rule is, only in half; and the allied forces of the Socialists and Liberals were directed towards the one aim: the overthrow of the clerical domination."

Is it surprising that men's wrath flames out when they see their liberties strangled before their eyes? Especially when the hope of redress is so small. The people in Belgium have one vote each—the propertied, professional, and clerical classes have two and sometimes three.

Judge C. D. Wilbur, of the Superior Court of Los Angeles, California, is described as "queer" by the *Christian World* on account of what we regard as a most sensible decision. The Judge ruled that no part of the Bible should be read in public schools, because there is no authority competent to select parts of the Bible for school use without the selection being sectarian. The decision of Judge Wilbur was that "the only means of preventing sectarian instruction in the schools is to exclude altogether religious instruction by means of the reading of the Bible or otherwise." The *Christian World* professes amazement at such a decision, which merely shows how confused are its own notions of justice. It points out that all School Boards in England were able to agree upon an unsectarian syllabus. We beg to state that the old School Boards did nothing of the kind. All they ever did was to produce a syllabus that satisfied a number of the sects; and even that was only agreed in so long as there was no chance of upsetting it. The *Christian World* is obsessed with the notion that none but Christians are worth considering. And this is sheer impertinence. Judge Wilbur's decision grasps the central fact of the situation, which is that in relation to the rest of the community Christianity itself is a sect, and any arrangement in the interests of Christianity must be of a sectarian character. The realisation of this fact by Christians is one of the essential conditions for just action.

In an article on "The Fascination of Warsaw" the *Daily Chronicle* correspondent says it is a city of "violent contrasts" and "startling ironies." There is lavishly displayed wealth side by side with the most heart-rending poverty. "The robes of the people," too, "have been squandered to raise magnificent churches with gilded domes, and to adorn them with costly art,"—and "half-starved barefoot little

children play on their steps." Well, what of that? We are only astonished at the writer's astonishment.

An interesting feature of some newspapers is the reproduction of news items from its columns fifty or a hundred years ago. The *Observer* is an old Sunday paper, and the other day it reproduced half a column or so from its issue of May 31, 1812. Two of the items included will interest our own readers. Here is one:—

"Daniel Isaac Eaton, for publishing the third part of Paine's *Age of Reason*, stood in the pillory over against Newgate, on Tuesday. The concourse of people was not great, and those assembled appeared very friendly to the culprit, who stood or walked as he pleased—occasionally exchanged words with all around him, and was repeatedly cheered. A handbill, narrating the persecution he had suffered, and reflecting on Lord Ellenborough and Sir V. Gibbs, was circulated by some of his friends."

After standing in the pillory in this way Eaton had to undergo eighteen months' imprisonment. It is pleasant to note the friendliness of the crowd. It is also pleasant to recollect that Eaton's martyrdom on this occasion (there were others in his bold career) called forth young Shelley's fine *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*—the judge who inflicted upon the prisoner that infamous sentence.

When men could be punished by the "authorities" as Eaton was it was no wonder that ecclesiastics had a fine old time. Next to the Paine item in the 1812 *Observer* came the following:—

"The Bishoprick of Ely, for which Dr. Sparkes was lately Gazetted, is one of the most desirable dignities in the Establishment, being worth £12,000 per ann., with a palace at Ely and a superb mansion in Dover-street. A patronage belongs to it of more than 100 very valuable dignities and benefices. It is, besides, a royal franchise. The Bishop exercises *jure regalia*, having jurisdiction over all cases, criminal and civil."

Twelve thousand a year for the hypocritical preacher of "Blessed be ye poor"—and prison and the pillory for the poor Freethinker who published one of the best and most useful books ever written. Thus the world wagged then. And is it so much better now? Yet we are told that this world was made, and is still managed, by a God of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. It is enough to make a hungry Siberian wolf stand and howl with laughter.

The state of things generally in England in 1812 may be imagined. Here is the third item from the same old *Observer*:—

"Monday, Daniel Redesh sold his wife in Sheffield market-place for sixpence, and actually delivered her to the purchaser in a halter, which cost ninepence!"

That is the sort of thing which happens when religion rules the roost.

The *Church Times* of May 31 gave a long report of the Annual Meeting of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa. One passage was positively amusing. It occurred in a letter that was read from Bishop Hine, of Northern Rhodesia, the *C. T.* giving the following summary:—

"The speaker then referred to the want of equipment for the new diocese of Northern Rhodesia, where Bishop Hine had at present one English priest, one English deacon, one schoolmaster, one architect, and one evangelist, whilst there was a population of seven hundred thousand people. In a very amusing letter, in which he pictured the scene, Bishop Hine spoke of the efforts of other missions—the Seventh Day Adventists, for instance, who thought it God's will that the Sabbath should be kept on Saturday, who were also teetotalers, and regarded smoking as a deadly sin. Also, quite close to Bishop Hine, were 'The Brethren of Christ,' a mission which consisted of a maiden lady—(laughter)—and Brother Taylor and his wife; they washed each other's feet, and dined at four in the afternoon. (Laughter.) Besides these, the Bishop said, there was an American Episcopal Methodist missionary, who travelled about with a wife and a kind of barrel-organ—scattering the seed, as he said. (Laughter.) There was also the Dutch Reformed Mission—a man with a yellow moustache and a cast in his eye—(great laughter)—and many more. The Bishop gave other details, which he would not venture to read."

This is how the happy household of faith are "converting" the natives of Africa. And they expect to succeed!

For some years the decrease in the Methodist Sunday-schools has ranged between 1,000 and 3,000. This year there has been a change in the direction of breaking the record. The decrease for the year has reached the figure 12,495. Methodist preachers attribute the decline to lack of co-ordination between church and school, lack of good teachers, etc. For our own part we are inclined to regard it as one of the many signs of the decline of religious faith,

and, probably, of a little more concern for allowing children to spend their Sundays in a healthier manner. The main reason why children have attended Sunday-school is that their parents sent them. If their parents still sent them they would still go. And one may take it that parents do not send them because they have ceased to attach so much importance to religious teaching, and are allowing children to indulge their natural tastes in a healthier direction. And the older children become, the more determined they are to leave Sunday-school alone. The Methodists are simply feeling in the schools the pressure of the same forces that are affecting attendance in church.

The Pope has sanctioned the use of bioscope pictures in Catholic churches. The Biblical story of Jonah and the Whale should prove a fine comic film; but what will the censor say to Lot and His Daughters?

A dramatised version of *Ben Hur* has been produced at Drury Lane Theatre. In the book Christ is introduced; but in the play the second person of the Trinity is represented by the limelight and some spangles.

Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. Rev. Hugh Corrie Frere, rector of Roydon, near Diss, has to pay £1,000 damages for libel to Mrs. Agatha Mary Gabrielle Frere, wife of the local squire. The reverend gentleman has our sympathy—in a way.

Another libel action was that tried at Carnarvon between the Rev. Evan Jones, Calvinist Methodist minister, and the Rev. Dr. Pau Jones, Congregational minister,—the former being awarded £15 damages. The judge made several appeals to the parties to settle the matter amicably. He forgot that the old "How these Christians love one another" has long ceased to apply—if it was ever anything but a solemn joke.

"Not loyalty nor the most cordial of ententes can prevent the Printer's Error. The program of the children's concert at the Paris Hôtel de Ville contained the startling item, 'God Shave the King.'—*Observer*, June 2, 1912.

Rev. Charles Frederic Gore, of Brighton, left £109,781. The most pleasant spot in the place where he now resides, if the Gospels be true, is in the draught near the door.

The late Mr. W. T. Stead's estate is sworn at £13,000 gross. Not a very great one in the circumstances. Really a small one in comparison with an estate announced in the same list in Tuesday's newspapers—that of the Rev. William Spencer, of Coseley Vicarage, Bilston, which is sworn at £87,417. "Blessed be ye poor."

Two curious press passages recently caught our eye. One was in a morning paper, and concerned with the effect of cinematograph pictures on eyesight. It was explained by one in the business that this had now been guarded against, as the light only affected those sitting near the sheet, and the higher priced seats were placed behind. Presumably the right of those who could only afford the lower prices was of no great consequence. The second passage was in the *Church Times*. Reviewing a pamphlet on "Problems of Sex," by Messrs. Geddes and Thomson, the reviewer remarked that the style of the pamphlet made it by no means easy to the popular understanding. And he added, "Perhaps it is as well, since the subject demands cautious treatment." The meaning is plain. So long as information is not spread broadcast it may be pardoned. The crime is to write so that the man in the street understands. This, in reality, has always been the offence committed by aggressive Freethought. The Christian world might overlook heresy wrapped in obscurity. It could never forgive heresy that could be appreciated by any person of ordinary understanding.

The Rev. F. C. Spurr, late of London, writes a very frequent Australian letter to the *Christian World*. Some-one, however, ought to check his remarks. For instance, he writes that in Melbourne on Easter Sunday a deluge of rain reduced the church congregations by one-half. Later on, when he wishes to impress English readers with the strength of religious feeling in Melbourne, they are informed that the churches were splendidly attended, and the rule in the city was overcrowding. A reduction of one-half in the attendance which still leaves the churches overcrowded is quite phenomenal in these days of declining church attendance.

The *Glad Eye* is an attraction at the theatres, but in the churches the sad eye is all the rage.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended until September.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £147 4s. 2d. Received since:—J. Barry, £1; H. Wyllie, £1 1s.; A. J. Fincken, £5.

J. BARRY.—Your subscription is doubly valued as coming from a member of the N. S. S. Executive and a member of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Ltd. You know what goes on "behind the scenes" as well as "before the footlights."

E. B.—Much obliged for cuttings.

A. STAPLES.—We had seen it, but thanks all the same. We hope to deal with Jane Harrison's book ourselves before long.

A. LYON.—Glad to hear you have found "both reason and comfort" in the *Freethinker*. With regard to further Freethought reading, we should advise in your case the study of Tylor's *Primitive Culture and Anthropology*, Professor Clifford's *Essays*, Büchner's *Force and Matter*, Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, and the great Book I. in Darwin's *Descent of Man*.

S. CLOWES.—We have read the article you refer to in the June *English Review*. Thanks for the reference. Also for your letter generally, and for your successful efforts to promote our circulation. Write again whenever you please.

A. T. E. BLANKS.—The breaking down of the newsagents' boycott is, of course, the most important thing. See our this week's article. Glad to hear that this journal and our own speeches have been so helpful to you. With regard to Mr. Greevz Fisher, if you write him a letter addressed to our office it shall be forwarded to him; and the rest, of course, will lie between you.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for ever welcome cuttings.

H. G. FARMER.—No room this week. In our next.

R. H. ROSETTI.—We note that you have sent an uncut copy of this journal to Mr. Young regularly since the date of your promise.

C. BRIDGE.—We could not do the card printing at our office at present. We only add a printing office to our other troubles because we cannot afford to put the *Freethinker* at the mercy of outside printers who might "rat" when the air is thick with threats of prosecution. Beyond that we do not wish to go.

T. DENNING.—Suggestion noted. Glad you "highly appreciate" this journal and "would like to see its sale increase."

H. A. FARMER.—Pleased to hear that the *Freethinker* "has been a real education" to you.

F. WILSON.—Glad to hear of progress at Ilkeston, but Tuesday is too late for paragraphs, especially long ones.

Some correspondence unavoidably stands over till next week.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums

We have just been told of a street newsvendor, with a good pitch, who started selling the *Freethinker* with six copies weekly, and now sells thirty-six—even under the disadvantage of having, for prudential reasons, to keep the paper in the background. We don't mention the news-vendor's name or the name of the town. The pitch might be lost if we did. We refer to the matter just to show that there is a sale for the *Freethinker* wherever it has a chance. The great difficulty is to bring it and its potential readers together.

We were glad to see a spirited letter in the *Daily Herald* from the pen of Miss Ethel Wedgwood on the Ilkeston prosecution for "profanity."

A Branch of the National Secular Society is being formed at Leeds. Applications for membership are being filled in freely. More of this in our next issue.

Mr. J. W. Gott sends us a copy of his *Trial and Imprisonment for Blasphemy*, written apparently throughout by Mr. Ernest Pack. The portion relating to Mr. Gott himself is interesting and worth preservation; and the statement of the history and operation of the Blasphemy Laws, in spite of some inaccuracies owing to want of familiarity with the subject, is not without a certain value. But the rest of the book consists mainly of some curious biographies, with portraits of great modern Freethinkers from Holyoake to Pack. Some of these portraits are not bad, but Ingersoll's is distinctly libellous and "G. W. Foote's" is even worse,—nor was his consent obtained to the publication of any portrait of him at all. On the whole, we hope the book will have a good sale, for the sake of the matter which fits the title, especially Mr. Gott's prosecution, trial, speech in defence, and prison experiences; the rest of the volume has to go with that, and it can't be helped now.

We have before us a rather belated report of the annual conference of the clergy and laity of the Deanery of Norham held in the Mission House, Berwick, on May 30. The report itself, a long one, appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser*. The chief speaker was the Rev. W. E. S. Holland, who seems to have been operating in the Allahabad department of the Lord's vineyard. This gentleman admitted that "the question for India was Agnosticism or Christianity." He added this:—

"In North Africa two religions are making great efforts for the sixty millions of outside tribes, Christianity and Islam, and Islam is winning hands down. Within the next ten years North Africa was going to be Mohammedan. Islam in the twentieth century was going to make its greatest victory with the Church looking on. India was going to be agnostic, China was going to be materialistic."

Mr. Holland's audience probably groaned over this well-informed prophecy, but it will be good news to Freethinkers, so we place it in "Sugar Plums."

Mr. Morrison Davidson's article on Thomas Paine in last week's *Reynold's* was a good one from his point of view. Too much stress, perhaps, was laid on Paine's Deism, but allowance must be made for the fact that Mr. Davidson is a Deist himself. For the rest, it is pleasant to see something like justice done to Thomas Paine in an English newspaper.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner delivers two lectures to-day (June 16) at the Fallsworth Sunday School. We beg to call the local "saints'" attention to her visit.

The *Truthseeker* (New York), referring to the Jackson prosecution for "profanity" at Leeds, quotes the "language" alleged against the defendant by the police, as reported in our columns, and then proceeds on its own account in the following manner:—

"'Blasphemous' such language may be called, but it does not constitute what is known as profanity, which consists of the use of oaths. The complainant was a policeman, who found Mr. Jackson's speech 'not very congenial,' as he told the court. Thus, 'as the matter stands,' remarks Mr. Foote, 'he is suffering a fortnight's imprisonment for speaking disrespectfully of a policeman's God. This is what free speech has come to in England. Yet there are Freethinkers in Parliament who are afraid to open their mouths in protest against such a state of things; and even the Labor party doesn't seem any better than the Liberals or Conservatives in this connection.' The Labor party is having its own troubles in vindicating freedom of speech. The Freethinkers in Parliament have to bear the burden of the records themselves have made in opposing religion. Each class or division must defend its own members, and expect little help from sources whence they might reasonably look for aid. Few have stood by the principle of free speech in whosoever person it might be violated. One such was Bradlaugh, and another is Foote, who seems to be his only worthy successor among men with ability enough to fit them to succeed him."

We bow to the compliment, while regretting that it has any sort of justification. Even at a distance of three thousand miles Mr. George Macdonald cannot help seeing the defecation of some English Freethinkers who are great friends of freedom whenever it is in no danger.

A Link with God.

IMAGINATION is a good thing. According to some people, who ought to know better, it is the fountain-head of all the arts. According to the Christian, it is the fruit of the "soul," which is the only reality, the great and grand link that connects him to God. The Christian dignifies the imagination with the name, or phrase, "manifestation of the indwelling spirit." For him the workings of the mind constitute the activity of God's presence upon the "soul," stirring it into vibrancy.

The "soul" is—something. To seek for fuller information is futile. No man or woman, who dogmatically asserts the possession of one, can satisfy your curiosity. God alone knows what it is; man does not know; and as man knows as much about God as God knows about man, the quest for verifiable knowledge is a vain circling in a vast desert. If God is unknowable—most Christians admit that, in their few rational moments—then I suppose it is logical to assume that the parts of him are also unknowable. If the "soul" is that part of God inhabiting man, then it is unknowable. Yet it is wonderful how much can be said of something of which we know nothing. Imagination plays a great part in our mental lives.

The Atheist loses nothing in making a present of the "soul" to Christians. Rather does he gain; for he disburdens himself of an egregious unintelligibility that hampers and darkens what should be free and light. Freedom is the mind's natural workshop. There should be no walls, no roof, no doors, no windows to this workshop. The first transmitted thought that must not be questioned plants the first prop of an unnatural building around the mind. It is the first restriction to the freedom the mind can claim as its inalienable birthright. Soon, if the process is continued, the walls and roof become realities, and the sunshine is kept outside. There is darkness in the house of the mind. In its prison there is gloom.

The architects and builders take pride in the uprising of this prison. They imagine it protects the prisoner and safeguards him against contamination. There is room to move about; there are upstairs and downstairs; and a few windows are graciously provided, so that a little sunshine and fresh air may occasionally make the rooms fragrant and bright. But these are not sufficient to guarantee that the occupant will continue to suffer imprisonment, nor are they deemed strong enough, in themselves, to develop a desire to remain. There always lurks in the breasts of the warders a feeling of insecurity over the permanence of their power. The possibility of an uncontrollable wish to escape arising in the hearts of the prisoners never disappears into the distance. And so the inhabitants of these thought-enwoven prisons are instructed that there exists within their beings a something which can only be felt and enjoyed in confinement, a something so sweet that all the joys of the outside world are tasteless to it; a something they alone can possess, and possessing, draw near to God.

Through the young plastic mind the mystical idea moves. It first fascinates, and then enthralls. Its growth is as invisible as a plant's. It receives all the nourishment it needs to make it strong. Constant care bestowed upon it helps to force its roots deep into the under mental life, into the subconsciousness. Gradually it becomes essential; it receives recognition as the instinct above all others.

A change has taken place. The imparted information that the young religionist possessed a distinguishing "something" may have been spoken in holy tones of awe. It may have been whispered as a secret too sacred to be spoken except in the low voice of humid humility. It may have been given all the assistance of the arts and crafts of mystery-mongery to make it ponderously awful to the young mind. But these were just as whiffs of wind-tossed spray are to the ocean compared to the joyful tidings

that the something was innate, an essential, ever-present part of the being; an instinct, something God had given with the giving of life. From a simple piece of transmitted thought it has grown into an inward feeling, vague, it is true, but strong, unsubduable, inestimable, eternal, a feeling of close kinship to that which exists at the back of beyond. It has become a priceless possession against which all the keenest antagonistic arguments or criticism are impotent as faith is to remove anything but honest thought and reasonableness. It is the sublime "soul."

When you have said "soul" you have uttered the first and last and only word as to what "soul" means from the Christian point of view. A meaningless word is like a child's monstrous lucky bag: it is all print; and it doesn't require packing: the pleasure is all on the outside, the pain is all in the inside.

There was once a glorious time in the annals of the history of Christianity when souls were lost and saved, the inference being, of course, that they belonged to the persons presumed to own them. God's much-vaunted omnipotency was then limited to the extent of man's will, regardless of determining circumstances, over which the giver and guider of everything was not supposed to exercise any sway. But to-day the soul is recognised as a part of God cleaving to the whole of God; and, therefore, it cannot be lost or saved. Nowadays, religious liars regard the soul as something totally and irreconcilably distinct from man's material form. Although it finds lodgment therein, the body, being a mere ephemeral substance doomed to be degraded to dust, has no influence over it. The body is man; the soul is God, or a part of him; hence, as it is impossible that man can influence God, the body becomes a negligible quantity. The soul is like a hermit living in a great city, the latter giving the former a dwelling-place. In one respect, however, there is a difference. The city supplies the hermit with food and clothing; but the soul requires neither; it is self-supporting and eternal, being a portion of the indestructible elixir of all life, which is God.

In the evolution of the idea of "soul" man's mind has worked through a lengthy period of time. The modern conception of the word is no more than a vaporisation of the primitive habit of filling up the blank spaces of knowledge with the mysterious. When the savage, in his sleep, revisited the scenes of his day's incidents, or journeyed to peculiar places, and saw, and thought he experienced, ultra-natural things, his "spirit" had temporarily left his body; his ghost, his inward self, had gone a-roaming. When the Christian says he feels within him a surety of his relationship to the Eternal God, and feels there exists, somewhere over the borderlands of space, a world in which another life is yet to be enjoyed, he is simply saying, in different words, that his ghost, his spirit, his inward self, or his soul, is wandering on the witless ways of wonderland. The Christian with one breath pochpoohs the primitive idea of a dual personality; with the rest he will tell you about this feeling that has God in it, saying it is in the body but not of it.

The mind's reaction from natural and ununderstood phenomena, and the first-hand knowledge, or personal experience, that he had to fight nature to satisfy his craving to live, gave the savage the imaginative power to picture himself as nature's master. Controlling a portion, he thought he could control all. Discovering he could not, his spirit came to his assistance. His spirit could be at the top of a tree up which his body could not climb. He could imagine himself there because he could reach a certain height on other trees. The imagination, prompted by his innate, warfare-developed egoism, saw in the spirits of material things some resemblance to himself. If the individual spirit could not control all, then some great spirit, similar to his own, could; but spirit of some sort was essential; and the imagination provided it.

With the modern mental savage the same is true. He does not come into direct conflict with nature. His egoism has become mental in character, while that of the primitive savage was material. His imagination is not stimulated, by personal experience with natural phenomena, to picture a personality, greater but similar to his own, behind a thunder-storm. Nor does he need to *experience* the discovery that although he can produce the line that divides this page into two, to the edge, and mentally continue it beyond into the air, the extension from the edge does not exist. But call the line life, and the edge death, and you will discover that he "feels" the continuation of the line of life to be a reality, not an impossibility. This feeling is the voice of his soul, the link with God.

Similarly the primitive savage "felt" the reality of the spirit peering at him from the holy hut wherein his great-grandfather's skull rested. Here the feeling, or the idea, grew from the soil of ignorance; but the feeling of the modern mental savage grows from the soil of transmitted thought. Both weeds are of the same family; the earth is of the same quality; but the manure is different. In the one case personal experience of incomprehensible phenomena directly supplied the nourishment; in the other instruction provides the food. The old weed has withered and perished, but the new, by long and careful manuring, has expanded and grown stronger, so that it is becoming claimed as a flower. The rain of the material fell upon the former; but the mists of the mental have closed in upon the latter. In time these mists will rot the roots, and when the sun of reason pours his bright, warm rays into them the roots will stiffen and die.

Religion, Christianity, has drawn the word "soul" down into its dirt. Association has covered the word with impurity. Contamination has so overcome it that no honest thinker can use the term except he expressly appends a natural meaning to it. A beautiful word with a beautiful meaning, when it represents all man's natural aspirations, when it gathers together all his human longings and strivings, when it embodies all the beauty of reasonable wishes and desires, it nowhere shines so marvellously as in Swinburne's "Hymn to Proserpine." For that alone I would have it retained and cleansed of its ugly stains.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Old Testament History.—XIV.

(Continued from p. 362.)

THE concluding portion of the table of succession of the kings of Judah is given below, but without any kings of Israel. There can be no doubt, however, that the kings of the latter kingdom were reigning during the whole period, though no mention is made of them after the capture of Samaria (722 B.C.). Were it not for the inscriptions of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal, we should have had no knowledge of any kings reigning in Samaria after the latter date; but this source of information is now lacking, for no cuneiform records have been discovered relating to Palestine subsequent to that of Assurbanipal (668 B.C.). This is much to be regretted, as we have for this period nothing but the compilation in 2 Kings to rely on. Still, there can be little doubt, I think, that the kings of Judah and the main events of their reigns are historical.

640 B.C.	Josiah	Reigned 31 years
609 "	Jehoahaz	" 3 months
609 "	Jehoiakim	" 11 years
598 "	Jehoiachin	" 3 months
597 "	Zedekiah	" 11 years
586 "	Judah	carried into captivity

Amon, the son of Manasseh, as we have seen, "walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served." Hence,

Amon's son Josiah, being only eight years of age at his father's death, could have had neither the power nor the inclination to make any alteration: but in the 18th year of Josiah's reign something happened that produced a complete change. In that year king Josiah sent "Shaphan the scribe" to the temple with a message for Hilkiyah the chief priest. Upon entering that building Hilkiyah said to the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of Yahveh. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it" (2 Kings xxi. 8). Upon his return to the palace the scribe showed the book to the king, and read certain passages to him. "And when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes."

Nearly all advanced critics are agreed that "the book of the law" which Hilkiyah "found" in the temple was the book of Deuteronomy, which book originally commenced with chapter v. and ended with verse 1 of chapter xxix.—the beginning and ending of the book as we now have it, as well as chapter xxvii., being later additions. From the passages read to him from this book king Josiah learnt that the religious practices carried on during the past sixty-five years were an abomination in the sight of Yahveh. According to the commands in that book, he learnt that all sacrifices were to be offered upon the temple altar at Jerusalem only, all other "high places" being forbidden (Deut. xii. 13, 14, etc.); that no pillars, or Asherim, or graven images of gods were to be set up (Deut. xvi. 21); that no *kedeshah* (or religious harlot) should be found among the daughters of Israel, and no *kadesh* (or sodomite) among the sons of Israel, and that no money derived from these practices should be received in the temple treasury (Deut. xxiii. 17, 18); that there should not be found in Israel "any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or one that useth divination.....or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard (Deut. xviii. 10—12); that "three times in a year" all males were to go up to the temple at Jerusalem—"in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of Tabernacles"—and every man was to take a money offering with him (Deut. xvi. 16—17); etc., etc.

None of these commands had been obeyed; all the abominations named were openly practised. But what struck king Josiah's heart with terror was the long string of terrible curses which Yahveh threatened to send upon the nation if his commands and statutes had been disregarded (Deut. xxviii. 15—68). Never were such awful curses heard of before—or afterwards. These 53 verses of curses must be read to get some idea of Josiah's terror. The following are a few detached sentences:—

"If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of Yahveh thy god, to observe to do all his commands and his statutes.....all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.....Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, the increase of thy kine, and the young of thy flock..... Yahveh shall smite thee with consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with fiery heat, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.Yahveh shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies.....and thy carcase shall be meat unto all the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth.....and thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples whither Yahveh shall lead thee"; etc., etc.

When the whole 53 verses had been read, small wonder it is, then, that king Josiah was seized with a temporary madness, and "rent his clothes." When somewhat recovered, this superstitious king deputed Hilkiyah the priest, Shaphan the scribe, and two other of his advisers to "inquire of Yahveh" concerning the terrible penalties threatened for disobedience. Now, among the subjects upon which no precise information is vouchsafed in the Old Testament is the method to be employed to "inquire of Yahveh." How was this most important matter

effected? The following passages may, perhaps, throw some light upon the subject:—

1 Sam. xxx. 7, 8.—“And David said to Abiathar the priest.....I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David inquired of Yahveh, saying, If I pursue after this troop, shall I overtake them. And he answered, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them.”

1 Sam. xxviii. 6, 7.—“And when Saul inquired of Yahveh, Yahveh answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her.”

Exod. xxviii. 30.—“And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before Yahveh.” (Also Lev. viii. 8.)

These passages do not enlighten us much. The ephod was a garment worn by priests when officiating or “inquiring” of Yahveh; but David, being a favored individual, donned it himself, instead of allowing the priest to do so. Another way of “inquiring” was to submit the question to a so-called prophet, and take his reply as that of Yahveh. That the answer to an inquiry could be given by “Urim,” as implied in the case of king Saul, brings us to the Pentateuch, and to the “Urim and Thummin” kept in a pocket near the breastplate of the Aaronic high priest—after the Exile. But what these are supposed to have been nobody knows; perhaps two balls, one denoting an answer in the affirmative, the other in the negative. In any case, the right way to “inquire of Yahveh” appears to have been through a priest. When, therefore, Hilkiah the priest and Shaphan the scribe, and their two coadjutors, received orders to “inquire of Yahveh” respecting the curses threatened in Deuteronomy, it would appear that these four ministers had never heard of the ephod or the Urim and Thummin as methods of making inquiry; for they all four went straight to an old witch who called herself “Huldah the prophetess,” and laid the case before her. When they had made the old dame understand the matter they came about, she replied that Yahveh would certainly bring all the evils named in the book upon the people of Judah; but as Josiah had sent to “inquire,” and was loyal and tender of heart, the threatened judgments would be postponed until after that king's death. After receiving this reassuring answer Josiah summoned all the elders of Judah to Jerusalem, and, having read to them out of the new “book of the law,” he induced them to join him in making a covenant with Yahveh, pledging themselves to obey all the commands and regulations therein prescribed.

This matter settled, Josiah proceeded to purge Jerusalem and the cities of Judah of everything stated to be “an abomination to Yahveh.” With the assistance of the priests and other loyal servants, the king brought out of the temple “all the vessels that were made for Baal, for [the goddess] Asherah, and for the host of heaven: and he burned them outside Jerusalem”; he put down the priests “that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to all the host of heaven”; he “brake down the tents of the sodomities” in the temple “where the women wove hangings for the Asherah,” and, no doubt, turned out the women too; he pulled down “the altars which Manasseh had made” in the courts of the temple, and the “high places” near Jerusalem “which Solomon had builded for Ash-toreth.....and for Chemosh.....and for Milcom”; he also “brake in pieces the pillars, and cut down the Asherim in all the cities of Judah,” and “put away” the wizards, the idols, and “all the abominations that were in the land” (2 Kings xxiii.).

Never before was such a reformation made in Israel or Judah. The altars and “high places” built for Caananitish deities had been in use, and were tolerated, in all the preceding reigns, including those erected by Solomon to please his many wives. And here, incidentally, we find another proof of the fictitious nature of the story of Manasseh's repentance in 2 Chronicles. In that book it is stated that

Manasseh, after his conversion, had pulled down the idolatrous altars he had built in Jerusalem, and had “cast them out of the city” (2 Chron. xxxiii. 15). Yet, twenty years after his death, we find them standing there intact, and known among the residents of Jerusalem as the altars built by Manasseh.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence

S. A. RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—For some time past at our weekly meetings I have drawn the attention of the audience, generally about 500, and sometimes 600, as last night, to the *Freethinker*. When lecturing or as chairman, I have read extracts therefrom. The result has been a steady increase in the sales, and now, for many weeks past, the demand has exceeded the supply, so that I have received a number of complaints from those who have had to go without. The intensity of the disappointment expressed in their letters to me show the high value they placed on the *Freethinker*.

Our Association held its annual meeting on Thursday last, and on my election as President for this year, I thought I could not begin my term of office better than by opening a fund for a direct supply of *Freethinkers*. Which I did; and in a few minutes collected £5, instructing the Secretary to write you this mail and order 36 copies for a start, which we hope to sell at our meetings and so give the *Freethinker* a wide circle of acquaintances.

I have been round to the principal newsagents and they tell me that they have already increased their orders. Will you kindly inform me if this is correct? I want to make the *Freethinker* go hero.

Our audiences, generally, know nothing about the *Freethinker*. Some few took it, some few others had heard of it, but the bulk had no knowledge of it. By using it as aforesaid on the platform, and then buying sample copies from the newsagents and collecting back copies from readers, I have been able, at a single meeting, to give away as many as 250. But as the audiences average 500 (last night there must have been over 600) I have never had enough to go round.

Last Sunday week I had collected about 200 copies and there was an eagerness amongst the audience and the audible mention of “Footo” and the “*Freethinker*” that was extremely gratifying to me.

Any time you can spare a few back numbers they will be put to the best possible use if you send them here.

I intend to call the executive together at an early date and propose to them that we should obtain some of the pamphlets you advertise. If I could get one of the newsagents to hold stocks and push the sale, not merely wait for buyers to come and ask, it might be an advantage to hand the sales over to him. What do you think?

Ours is the S. A. Rationalist Association, and thereby hangs a tale that may interest you.

The S. A. Rationalist Association was respectable and Agnostic. Their meetings consisted of about four, five, or, when large, about twelve persons; membership, £1 per ann. They asked me to join. I said it was useless to me as they were already dead. They asked me to meet the members at the house of one. I did so. Laid out a propaganda; suggested 1s. per ann. for membership, to the great surprise of many, who objected; finally persuaded them to try it and the hiring of a theatre. I opened with a lecture, “Did Jesus of the Four Gospels Ever Live?” The place was packed long before starting time. It revolutionised the movement, and since then we have held regular meetings, received many press notices, made many converts.

I may say that a few parsons turned up at the above meeting, thinking and believing that they could, and would, nip the “blasphemy” at the start. But I nipped them, to the intense delight of the audience. Since then they leave us alone, with the exception of an occasional splutter in the press that the law should be invoked to do that which they failed to do.

The members of the S. A. Rationalist Association were Agnostics. The lectures that some gave, though able, were too indefinite for public audiences. Too many “I don't know's.” So I set to work and preached Atheism to them, gradually succeeded, and to-day one mode of thought and speech runs right along with the *Freethinker*; which to me is a positive delight.

I am surprised at the length of my letter. The work and the *Freethinker* have inspired me, and I hope that in some

odd moments this letter will afford you some pleasure, or, at any rate, interest.

Thomas Paine and yourself are my "Fathers-in-God," and some day I hope to give a lecture on each of you, showing how greatly both have influenced my life.

I may add that the Honorarium Fund last year originated with me here, and that in September or October—the two best months for us—I hope to begin collecting again.

Wishing you the very best, and plenty of it, to push the battle of Freethought and Free Speech.

Johannesburg, April 29.

E. P. BEER.

THE FREETHINKER AND THE "BOYCOTT."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Although I have been a regular reader of your journal for many years, and would not miss it for most of the other papers put together, I am reluctant to trouble you with a letter, as your time must be fully occupied, your correspondence voluminous, and your other duties multifarious, if they comprise editorial, sub-editorial, secretarial, and other departmental work as you state. But I could not resist the temptation to write and compliment you on the article "Our 'Boycott'" in the *Freethinker* for June 2. I have been a regular contributor to the newspaper press and to periodical literature for about forty years, and am the author of many papers on various political, historical, social, and economic subjects, and a few dealing with philosophical and scientific topics. I do not give these autobiographical details in a pedantic spirit, but rather to convey an idea of my competency to express an opinion on this matter.

I fully realise that you will not want to be told what you already know, or have truisms repeated; but it is sometimes gratifying to have one's experiences confirmed, and one's opinions backed by competent witnesses. I know you sufficiently to be convinced that if you believed yourself to be in the right, being singular would make not the slightest difference. In a general sense, without reference to the *Freethinker* particularly, I can confirm every word of your article in relation to the Press. I doubt if there are a half-dozen newspapers in England that dare speak the truth, or admit into their columns unpopular opinions. They will talk all round subjects and labor to tediousness conventional views—ideas that are fashionable—but nothing that is contrary to current theological belief gains admission to their columns.

As you will be aware, a discussion on the decay of Methodism has been going on in the columns of the *Daily Chronicle*, and I sent a contribution, but the Editor durst not publish our side of the question, although he admitted a number of contributions that did not illuminate, but merely befogged the reader as the writers themselves were befogged. You must forgive this infliction. I did not purpose writing at such length when I commenced.

I am convinced that no one except yourself can realise the extent of the burden you have to carry in the conduct of your journal. I can understand in a measure your giant task.

GEORGE E. QUIRK.

The Rousseau Bi-Centenary.

A COMMITTEE has been formed in Paris in order to celebrate the second centenary of the birth of Jean Jacques Rousseau. The celebrations will take place on June 28, 29, and 30, at Paris, Ermonville, Montmorency, Eaubonne, Chambéry, Lyons, Montpellier, and other towns in France where Rousseau lived.

The Committee includes such distinguished names as MM. Raymond Poincaré, President of the Council; Briand, Minister of Justice; Steeg, Minister of the Interior; Ferdinand Buisson, M. Léon Bourgeois, and a large number of eminent politicians, littérateurs, university professors, men of science, and other leaders, both in thought and action.

The Committee, which has its headquarters at the Panthéon at Paris, appeals to all the friends and admirers of Jean Jacques, and invites them to take part in the commemorative demonstrations which are now being organised with a view of glorifying the memory of the great French writer—the man whose genius, perhaps, has more profoundly moved the conscience of the world than that of any other modern man.

In addition to a series of fêtes at the above-mentioned towns, the Committee announce that the program of the Rousseau celebrations will comprise the following manifestations:—

1. The official inauguration, at the Panthéon, of Rousseau's tomb, executed by virtue of a vote of the Chamber of

Deputies by the celebrated statuary, Bartholomé. This ceremony will be graced by the President of the French Republic.

2. A literary festival at the Sorbonne.

3. A gala representation at the Trocadero, Paris.

The Committee will issue a *bulletin* of their proceedings and publish a special edition of some of the choicest productions of Rousseau's pen.

The Committee announce that they are now prepared to receive adhesions. Each application should be accompanied by a minimum subscription of 5 francs. This subscription will confer certain advantages, including receipt of the Committee's *bulletin* and invitations to most of the ceremonies, including the gathering at the Sorbonne, connected with the commemorations. In addition, those who take part as adherents will receive gratuitously the volume above referred to.

Applications are to be addressed to the General Secretary, M. Jules Princet, at the Panthéon, Paris.

Perhaps the N. S. S. and its Branches and kindred bodies will like to take note of this announcement, and send their adhesion, if not to Rousseau's doctrines, at any rate to the proposal to commemorate a notable figure in the modern march of ideas.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Facts and Reason.

THE advice we receive from Dr. Jules Goldschmidt of Paris to devote more space in the *Truthseeker* to the facts of science that undermine religious superstition is recognised as springing from a good intent. The *Truthseeker* would like to be able to give some first-class man of science a commission to review all the demonstrations of science and, by contrasting them with Christian beliefs, show how the dogmas are traversed by them. The human mind, were it capable of logical conclusions, it would then have to discard either the facts or the beliefs. But we call attention to the situation pointed out by Dr. William Hirsch in the excerpt we print from his book *Religion and Civilisation*. Dr. Hirsch's associates, as a man of science, are men who are presumably conversant with facts, but their knowledge appears not to interfere with their belief; and Dr. Hirsch gives as good an exposition of the reason therefor as we have ever seen. They are controlled by emotion, by feeling, like the man enamored of a woman he knows to be false and unworthy of his faith. For ourselves, we are an "eclectic," and have not felt like fulminating our thunders against any form of frontal attack on superstition short of physical violence. Fact, argument, denunciation, invective, ridicule, persuasion, are legitimate means. Our first choice is fact, but we have just as much confidence in argument, although we have seen convincing evidence that the Christian mind is usually invulnerable to either. The versatile Ingersoll was a master in the use of all the methods named, and to these he added powerful appeals to feeling and emotion, which is where so many of us are "short." Our first and last resort, if we may ignore some attempts to invoke the sense of humor, is to the reason. We would as soon make people think as instruct them, for knowledge is on every hand, while thinking is not so common. A fact is worth little unless one learns to work out its bearings. Without this a fact lodged in the brain is like a book shut up in the library and unread. The world has a hundred believers to one infidel, and the infidels have all the facts, while the believers can adduce none at all. "We pass our hat," said Ingersoll, "for one little fact—just one," and it was not forthcoming. Can we point to a scientific fact that has shaken the foundations of faith? Up to a few hundred years ago heaven was just overhead and gods and angels occasionally "came down" to earth for sundry purposes—the gods to visit the daughters of men and the angels to reassure the women so visited. Astronomy turned the earth over, but faith still looks in the same direction for heaven and its inhabitants, day or night. Were fact fatal to belief, astronomy would kill Christianity; but it does not, except in the minds of persons who reason. An observer can see facts enough in a day—a blind man can feel them with his stick—to dispose of supernaturalism if they were reasoned upon. Freethought owes an incalculable debt to science, which, however, has not proved so damaging to faith as believers feared or unbelievers hoped. Science has given us the truth as it is in nature, and the truths of science have attained general acceptance. There remains to us who are Freethinkers the duty of showing what they imply as contrasted with religious beliefs. The facts of science may be learned, if one wishes, in a Jesuit college; but what are scientific facts to people who believe in miracles?—GEORGE MACDONALD, *Truthseeker* (New York).

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, F. A. Davies, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): A. B. Moss, 3.15, "Next Religion"; 6, "Crumbling Creeds of Christendom."

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, Miss K. B. Kough, a Lecture.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): Mrs. Boyce, 11.30, "How They Cheat Us"; 7, "The World Without Religion."

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

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

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Mr. Rosetti, "Christian Sects, or United We Stand."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

FAIRSWORTH (Secular School, Pole-lane): Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, 2.45, "Prosecution for Blasphemy"; 6.30, "Charles Bradlaugh: His Life and Times."

OUTDOOR.

GAINSBOROUGH, Lincs (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Thursday, June 13, at 8, "Sun Myth and Starfire"; Friday, 14, at 8, "Dualism and Monism"; Sunday, 16, at 7.30, "The Vampires."

HUDDERSFIELD (Market Cross): Joseph A. E. Bates—Monday, June 17, "Deity and Demos"; Tuesday, 18, "In the Valley of the Shadow"; Wednesday, 19, at 8, "The Uselessness of Monarchy"; Thursday, 20, at 8, "Philosophy of Materialism."

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