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Good nature is the cheapest commodity in the world; and love is the only thing that will pay ten per cent. to borrower and lender both.—INGERSOLL.

A Blood Bath.

THOMAS PAINE has left it on record, in his immortal *Age of Reason*, that he was shocked at the early age of eight by a sermon on the Atonement. God was depicted as an angry being, who would only be propitiated by the death of his only son. This made him appear more of a devil than a deity, the little boy Paine thought as he reflected on the sermon outside the church. Such was the first movement of rationalism in the mind of that illustrious personage; and many years afterwards, when he was penning the pages that made him famous with the liberal-minded and infamous with the bigots, he passed the simple but striking observation that no system could be true which shocked the mind of a child.

I well remember how this Christian doctrine affected me in my childhood. I had infinite pity and affection for poor Jesus, who suffered so much for me and others, but I could not think of his "heavenly father" without a shudder of fear—which, in later years, passed into a shudder of contempt and disgust. I used to imagine God the Father with a huge face as broad as the heavens, and great, level, frowning brows, over eyes that were full of the cold steely light of implacable "justice," as I was taught to believe, though I subsequently saw it to be implacable vengeance. Now I can only smile at the notion of God Almighty keeping an audit of the virtues and vices of a lot of insignificant little insects crawling over this infinitesimal Dutch cheese of a planet. Nothing but their own vanity—of which religion is always the supreme expression—could have suggested such an idea.

When I went to church and Sunday-school, and particularly when I went to the Wesleyan chapel, I often used to hear, and sometimes joined in singing, that famous and delectable hymn—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged within that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

I understand that this sweet hymn is still sung with fervor in the more primitive places of worship, but is usually eschewed by the more refined congregations. It is crude enough, in all conscience: nevertheless, it is an honest statement of the orthodox doctrine. I cannot call it poetry, though it is undoubtedly verse. The rhymes are accurate, which is not always the case in Christian hymns; but the similes are extremely mixed. A fountain is not a thing that is *filled*, it is a thing that *flows*. Properly speaking, the fountain would be the blood itself flowing from Immanuel's side; but how on earth, whichever way you view it, could this fountain become a *flood*? No doubt the hymn-writer wanted a rhyme to "blood," and hence the "flood," with the "plunge" into it, which would have been impossible in a fountain. The only consistent idea throughout

is that of a blood bath. Sinners are "washed in the blood of the Lamb"—to use the express language of Revelation. By this process they lose all their guilty stains. One would think, however, that they would be stained all over, like the spot ball on a billiard table. It is only Immanuel's blood that has the power of *bleaching*.

Personally, I have no desire for a blood bath. I leave other people to their own taste, but I stand by my own. I prefer clean water. If it must be thicker, let it be soapsuds. Cleanliness, they say, is next to godliness. Some people put godliness first, and never take the second step. For my part, I would rather start with cleanliness. Give me water, give me soap, before any sanguinary fluid from the veins of animals, men, or gods. No doubt a sinner is "off color." He is bad enough as he is. But if he took a dive into a blood bath, pray what color would he come out? Would he not require another good washing to render him even as decent as he was before his "header"?

The truth is that this doctrine, which is expressed in the language of the slaughter-house, comes down to us from the old barbaric ages. There is any quantity of "blood" in the Bible, because the Bible was written by semi-savages. Nowadays, we shrink from the very word except in medical reports. In ancient times the thing and the word were common. Shedding blood was a vital part of antique religious ceremony. First the blood of men—captives of war or dedicated victims; then the blood of animals, as a substitute for that of human beings. Jehovah's altars, like those of Baal and Moloch, were always red with blood and black with burnt flesh. The idea was that the blood was the life, and was therefore the most precious thing known; and that it would naturally be esteemed as a valuable offering by the gods. Moreover, earthly rulers were fond of bloodshed, and it was thought that the heavenly rulers would have the same preference. Thus, to use the words of Othello, it was "blood, blood, blood!" Even when actual sacrifice was lost in Christianity, the idea was preserved; indeed, it was sublimated and perpetuated. The blood of Christ served once and for ever. He became the universal sacrifice. "Without shedding of blood," as the writer of Hebrews says, "there is no remission." This is a fundamental idea of all the world's religions. Christianity is not unique, even in this respect; it falls into a line with other faiths. And just as blood was partaken of as a sacrament in ancient sacrifices, as it still is in the darkest parts of present-day savagery, so the Christian still drinks his "blood of Christ" in the holy communion—the Protestant symbolically, but the Catholic priest literally, for he believes, or professes to believe, in the constant miracle of transubstantiation.

There are a number of moral maxims in the New Testament, though none of them are original. Some of them are practicable; others are exaggerations and impossibilities. But the best of them are nullified by the religious doctrines of Christianity. This idea, for instance, of a blood bath being necessary to salvation, quite overwhelms the pretty text about loving one's enemies; and it is not surprising that the worshippers of the Christian God are the greatest bloodshedders on earth.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Politics.—II.

(Concluded from p. 403.)

THERE is a very pregnant passage in Sir J. R. Seeley's *Lectures and Essays* which deserves quoting in connection with what has been said. In the essay on "Roman Imperialism" he says:—

"Liberty is force of character roused by the sense of wrong.....Such had been liberty in the old Republic, the rebellion of strong spirits against laws strained too far, self-assertion, sturdiness, combativeness. Such was not the Christian spirit. In this when it was genuine there was no rebellion, there was no assertion of right. Those who practised it were not less obedient, but more obedient than others. They had no turn for liberty; they had no quarrel with the despotism of the Cæsars; this they met, not in the spirit of Brutus or Virginus, but with religious resignation.....Therefore, saving the law of Christ, the Christians were the most loyal of the Emperor's subjects, and Christianity confirmed as much as it controlled despotism. It produced a complete change in the attitude of the people to the Emperor. It made their loyalty more intense, but confined it within definite limits. It strengthened in them the feeling of submissive reverence for government as such; it encouraged the disposition of the time in its political passiveness.....Constantine.....may be said to have purchased an indefeasible title by a charter. He gave certain liberties, and he received in turn passive obedience. He gained a sanction for the Oriental theory of government. In return he accepted the law of Christ. He became irresponsible with respect to his subjects on condition of becoming responsible to Christ."

The encouragement of this attitude by Christian teaching is well exemplified in its relation to slavery. The opposition of slavery as an institution to the "law of nature" was strongly dwelt upon by a number of the Roman writers. But there is no trace whatever in the New Testament of an opposition to slavery as an institution. And as a mere matter of history the movement in favor of the abolition of slavery, which had grown up in the later Roman Empire received a signal check under Christian auspices, while the number of slaves actually increased. On this point Lord Hugh Cecil points out, with a candor much to be commended, the unfairness of the translations of our English New Testament. "The timidity of the English translators of the Bible," he says, "has concealed from the ordinary reader in a manner which, if it had been done by Roman Catholics, we should have probably censured as Jesuitical, the fact that St. Paul tolerated slavery." Bearing in mind that the proper rendering of the word translated "servant" is "slave," and that St. Paul commands the most unquestioning obedience of slaves to their masters, whether the masters be good or bad, and actually returned a runaway slave to his owner, one would think that "dishonesty" would be a better word than "timidity," and that in his choice of that word Lord Hugh Cecil himself is not quite free from suspicion of the same quality.

But against those Socialists who profess to make Christianity the basis of their Socialism, Lord Hugh Cecil occupies an impregnable position. Whether we agree with the Socialistic theory or not, Socialism does involve a certain conception of the State and is an exaltation of the power of the State. Everything centres in the State, and everything, or nearly everything, is to be accomplished by the State. And how can this possibly be based upon a series of writings which substantially ignores the State altogether, and makes its appeal directly to the individual? Moreover, whatever scientific value there is the Socialistic theory centres around the deeper truth that the products of human industry, whether of brains or of hands, are in reality social products. The products of individual activity are as surely the outcome of social heredity as individual structure is the expression of individual heredity. This, and the accompanying truth that all character is the expression of a social relationship, are among the really vital aspects of the Socialistic theory. But

neither of these receive solid support from the New Testament. They lie quite outside its purpose and scope.

Lord Hugh Cecil thinks that the impression that the New Testament is Socialistic is too wide-spread to be founded on nothing. He thinks it is based on the "emphatic warnings addressed to the rich and blessings pronounced upon the poor which are one of the most striking features of the New Testament." When Lord Hugh Cecil speaks of the "wide-spread" impression that Christianity is Socialistic, he has only certain English Socialists in mind. An enlargement of view would serve to correct the error. Outside of Great Britain no such opinion is "wide-spread." It is not the opinion of Socialists in France and Germany and other parts of the Continent. There is no marked tendency there to rest Socialism on the New Testament. In Germany, particularly, the *Christian World* has over and over again informed its readers that Socialism is aggressively Atheistic in its propaganda. And none of the creators of Socialism rested upon the New Testament for support. Their theory may have been wrong, but they were neither fools nor timeservers. They would never have been guilty of so stupid a declaration as Mr. Ramsay Macdonald fathered when he said that the Socialist found in the Gospels "a marvellous support for his economic and political proposals."

The phenomenon is really social in character. In this country we pride ourselves on being free from the power of the priest. Granting this to be true—although, as a matter of fact, it is not by any means so true as most people imagine—it remains the fact that we are as much under the tyranny of religion as any people in Europe. Every movement in England that desires a rapid success must be respectable; and to be respectable it must be religious. The consequence of this is, that sooner or later, every movement in this country discovers a basis in Christianity. We see this in the agitation for the enfranchisement of women, which, beginning with avowed non-Christians, and forced into prominence by non-Christians, is now being provided with a New Testament basis, even by Wesleyan Methodists, who, for many years, would not allow even a female delegate to attend their annual conferences. It has been precisely the same with Socialism. Stated and taught for many years by non-Christians, its bid for a wider popularity has taken the shape of discovering its teachings in the pages of the New Testament. Some may honestly think it to be there. Others, unthinkingly, use common religious expressions; while others deliberately adopt these tactics as a means of securing votes. Five minutes serious thinking ought to be enough to show the fallacy and futility of the method.

Lord Hugh Cecil says that, though social reform, in any modern shape, can make no direct appeal to the New Testament, Christianity has been, and is, the principal source of the vitalising energy of social improvement. General statements are naturally hard to disprove, even to understand, and understanding as to what was meant here would have been easier had the statement been more precise. If it is meant that many social reformers have professed to find inspiration in the New Testament, the statement does not admit of contradiction. What is disputable is the accuracy of their diagnosis. If we were told *what* schemes of social improvement owed their origin to Christianity we should be on firm ground for either proof or disproof. For here one might safely deny that any scheme of social improvement has ever been indebted to Christianity for vitalising energy. In the historic case of slavery, while it may be freely admitted that many Abolitionists were professed Christians, Christian Anti-abolitionists were none the less numerous; while one so ostentatious in the profession of Christianity as the late W. E. Gladstone, confessed that he found nothing in the Bible opposed to slavery. And a book which provides inspiration and sanction for those who oppose and those who support

a social improvement, cannot be ranked very high as a factor for betterment. As to the influence of the New Testament in aiding the solutions of such problems as are connected with land, housing, or the relations of capital and labor, the best reply is that furnished by Lord Hugh Cecil himself, that the standpoint of the Gospels is remote "not only from that of the Socialist, but even of any modern social reformer."

The truth is, that those who claim for Christianity the vitalising energy of social improvement make no allowance whatever for the very real vitalising energy of social life. Lord Hugh Cecil writes as though humanity were consequent on Christianity. Of course, he does not say so, because to say it would be to expose its absurdity. But it is implied, as it is implied in all arguments of a kind similar to the one noticed above. But given humanity as the fundamental fact, and social feelings and facts as the fundamental forces, and some allowance must be made for this operation. And Christianity then becomes at most one of the facts of life, and never in any sense a fundamental one. Moreover, the essential relation between men is not that of a religious but of a social character. Men are united by common needs, common sympathies, and a common life. This not only ultimately shapes their character, it even determines the form and duration of their religious belief. In the whole course of European history, we never once find Christian conviction declaring an institution evil so long as social conditions were favorable to its maintenance. Christian conviction accepted slavery, serfdom, and the worst features of the factory system. It is consonant with the most diverse forms of social life, and the most barbarous, as well as with the most refined, doctrines. The Christian conscience that in one generation gloats over the torments of damned unbelievers, in another generation rejects such teaching as a barbarous caricature of religion. It is not the vitalising energy of Christianity that is apparent in the desire for social improvement, but the vitalising energy of human sympathy springing from a social relation. Christianity is only a mere form in which this fundamental quality sometimes finds expression.

C. COHEN.

"Malignant Unbelief."

THIS is the title of the International Sunday School Lesson for to-day; and we can imagine the sweet delight with which thousands of teachers will emphasise the polite adjective. The adjective is typical as well as elegant. Like the Pythagoreans, Christians are distinguished for their profession of devoted attachment towards each other and their ferocious contempt for all others. They who do not believe in Jesus as the Savior of the world are inspired by malignity, and malignity means an evil nature or malicious disposition. This is indirectly taught in the Lesson itself (Mark iii. 20-35), but the Golden Text brings it to the forefront: "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 19). The light was Jesus, and to reject the latter was equivalent to rejecting the former, and the rejection was caused by the evil lives of the rejecters. The curious thing is that the malignity is all on the non-Christian side. Because the Scribes and Pharisees denounced Jesus as an impostor, or refused to take him at his own valuation, they were charged with blasphemy; but when Jesus retaliated with compound interest by calling the Scribes and Pharisees "blind guides," "serpents," "offspring of vipers," "hypocrites," and other handsome names of that order, he was only doing the will of God. It has ever been the same. At present there is a growing number of scholars in England, America, Holland, France, and Germany, who maintain that there is no convincing evidence that the Gospel Jesus ever lived; but

"ingenious as are their attempts to justify this position, the Dean of St. Paul's says that to the intellectual observer they are highly amusing and not in the least convincing," while Professor David Smith characterises them as "ridiculous." Professor Case, of Chicago, has just published a book entitled *The Historicity of Jesus*, in which, "in biting sentences," he treats such scholars as idiots, and quotes Weiss to the effect that such foolish attempts are being made simply because "it is the most difficult thing in the world to prove to nonsense that it is nonsense." Reviewing this work, a religious journal comments on that quotation thus: "Nonsense! There is really no other word for it, and in this volume Professor Case abundantly shows the contention to be such." But on the part of Christian writers and speakers such abusive, insulting language is justifiable, because they, and they alone, possess the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Even milder terms employed by unbelievers in attacking the Christian position are said to be charged with malice, spite, and malevolence. The Rev. Dr. Anderson, Mr. John M. Robertson, Professor Drews, and scores of others, who reject the historicity of the Gospel Jesus are all dubbed "malignant antagonists," whose reasoning "is enough of itself to make one doubt their sanity."

To-day millions of Sunday-school children will be told, in scathing phrases and "biting sentences," how dreadfully wicked unbelief is, and how its advocates are governed by all that is dark and evil. As one expositor says:—

"Malignant unbelief still sways men. Christ is blasphemed in the poems of Atheism. He is maligned in the expositions of teachers who have never divined his character. His moral teaching is impugned by men who speak evil of his unworldliness and mock at his teaching of the Father, and the Father's will, and the Father's House."

Of course, there is no truth whatever in that extract. Honest unbelief is never malignant, and avowed Atheism is not blasphemy. We claim that believers are malignant when they recklessly accuse unbelievers of being under the sway of unworthy and evil motives. How often is it asserted that people profess Atheism in order to silence a guilty conscience, or in order to wallow in vilest vices without being troubled by the dread of punishment! Is it not self-evident that Atheism cannot silence a guilty conscience, and that vice punishes itself whether God exists or not? What the Atheist gets rid of is not conscience, but superstitious fear; not the dread of punishment, but a false conception of its nature. He is not an Atheist who imagines that Atheism blunts the edge of the moral sense, or blots out the distinction between good and evil in conduct. Atheism but helps a man to shed vain delusions and to cling all the more firmly to realities. An Atheist has no use for the theological Christ; but to say that he maligns Christ because he has "never divined his character" is to totally misrepresent him. It should be remembered that the great majority of living unbelievers were once zealous believers, and that they lost their faith because they learned to listen to and heed the voice of reason. They found out that the character which theologians attribute to the Gospel Jesus never rightfully belonged to him, even on the assumption that he actually lived. All the expositions of to-day's Lesson published in the religious press introduce to us a supernatural Christ, whom evil spirits recognised as the Son of God, and fearfully obeyed when he issued his commands. It is a mighty miracle-worker with whom they are concerned, and not to accept their picture of him as true is to be guilty of malignant antagonism.

Now, it is well known that, in the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus was a dangerous schismatic, to whom the Law of God was not sacred. He deliberately desecrated the Sabbath day, and encouraged his followers to do the same. He spoke disrespectfully of the ordinances of Moses, and claimed to be himself a superior Lawgiver. By such

teaching and conduct he showed himself to be an enemy of God, and, consequently, the Pharisees did not hesitate to pronounce him a charlatan. Being orthodox Jews they had no alternative but to regard the miracles he was alleged to perform as the direct outcome of a league with evil spirits. Now, the difference between the Pharisees and modern unbelievers is that the overwhelming majority of the latter believe neither in God nor in the Devil and his angels, and are driven to the conclusion, not that the Gospel Jesus was a charlatan or impostor, but that he never lived. Believing this to be the simple truth about him, they certainly do not malign or slander him by giving expression to it. They do not blaspheme, or speak evil of, him; they simply give him what they honestly believe to be his due.

Let us return to the expositors. One of them says of the Gospel Jesus: "By his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, he has broken the power of evil." That is a lie. The power of evil is almost as great now as it ever was, and for this fact the religion of Christ is chiefly responsible. Another speaks of "the centuries of splendid moral achievement," whereas, as a matter of fact, such centuries never existed except in the brains of credulous disciples. "Splendid moral achievement" is still to be realised, and judging by the past, it will not be realised until Christianity is dead. We are familiar with many long and dark centuries of ecclesiastical corruption and tyranny, of cruel persecution and slaughter, of innumerable bloody wars waged under the banner of the Cross, but not of "splendid moral achievement." Another expositor tells us "that there are two kinds of unbelief—that which is due to intellectual perplexities of which Thomas is the type, and that which arises from moral perversities, of which these Scribes are an example." We venture to affirm that there is no evidence that the Scribes were subject to "moral perversities," and that these accounted for their disbelief in Jesus. Nothing is easier than to traduce the dead of long ago. In all ages Christian fanatics have found great delight in calumniating heretics and sceptics. No term was too vile to use to their discredit. The Pharisees may have been religious bigots and narrow-minded nationalists, in consequence of which they contributed largely to the downfall of their nation and religion; but morally they had a good record, and the people held them in highest esteem. When this expositor says that "their prejudice was so deep that it would father any absurdity rather than yield to any evidence," he only betrays the depth of his own prejudice, and his inability to be just to opponents. He professes sympathy with "honest doubters"; but we know that by "honest doubters" Christians understand those who fight their doubts, gather strength for faith, and eventually blossom into enthusiastic believers. All others are victims of "moral perversities," and are to be looked upon and treated as "malignant foes."

Such is the mental pabulum that will be crammed down the throats of little children to-day throughout the English-speaking world. We are convinced that it is rank poison, and that its administration can only result in the chronic poisoning of the childish mind. Before the little ones are capable of thinking, they are compelled to swallow beliefs from the hands of those set in authority over them. And to-day's Lesson is exceptionally false and misleading. It condemns, in the entire absence of evidence, a class of people that is daily growing, simply because its views are different from those held by the Church. This only shows what need there is for the spread of correct information concerning unbelief and for renewed activity in the endeavor to uproot the dominant superstition, the champions of which seem incapable of telling the truth about outsiders.

J. T. LLOYD.

The name of God has fenced about all crime with holiness.—Shelley.

Dr. Gore on the Evidence for Christianity.—II.

(Continued from p. 342.)

DR. GORE lays very great stress on what he calls "the remarkable vindication" of St. Luke. He says: "At point after point where St. Luke touches the ground of secular history he has been vindicated—vindicated after a long period during which he was contemptuously set aside, as was the case generally fifty years ago." As to this I have already expressed my view. But it may be worth while to add that, since the Bishop "vindicated" St. Paul as above, Sir William Ramsay has addressed the Free Church Conference; and, as reported in the *Daily News*, he read a paper on "Some Aspects of Sacred Archaeology," in which he expressed himself as follows:—

"So recently as twenty years ago there was no book in the New Testament whose credibility was regarded with so much suspicion as the Acts of the Apostles. Even scholars most eager to follow the long-accepted views and beliefs of the fathers regarding the New Testament books had very little to say about the book of Acts. It made them feel unhappy; for, being unable to defend it, they were unwilling to sacrifice it. To-day, however, it might be said with truth that it was the Gospel of St. Luke which stands most in need of defence."

The Lord Bishop of Oxford is, of course, too high and mighty a personage to notice an individual so obscure as myself. But, coming so soon after Dr. Gore's "vindication" of St. Luke, Sir William Ramsay's pronouncement reads like a distinct challenge; and it will be interesting to see whether Dr. Gore will have the courage to accept it as such. Probably he will realise that discretion is the better part of valor. Up to the time of writing, at any rate, he has, so far as I know, declined a combat.

As becomes a Bishop, Dr. Gore is a "whole hogger" so far as the Gospel miracles are concerned; and I agree with him that it is impossible to tear them from the context. As he truly observes, they are bound up with the teaching as web and woof. But, when he adds "certainly there is here no structure built up of human inventiveness. There is something here which utterly transcends what man could have invented," I am left wondering whether he has any reputation for sincerity to lose.

According to the *Guardian*, the Bishop's lectures were delivered before the University of Oxford. Surely, then, there must have been more than one person in his audience who knew what fudge Dr. Gore was talking. It is impossible, one would suppose, that Dr. Gore himself is not aware of the fact that the Gospel narratives contain nothing new. He must know that the stories therein told of Jesus had, previously, been associated with the names of any number of other mythical heroes and divinities; and that, having the old, old story before them, "the Apostles" had no need to "invent" anything.

To serious students it is quite obvious that the one thing "the Apostles," i.e., the Church, could not do, was to make Christ a lesser god than his predecessors; so they just invested him with all the attributes of the Pagan deities. In this connection it is worthy of note that it was not until the sixth century that the job of fixing Christ on the pedestal previously occupied by Mithras, Osiris, and the rest of them, was finished. Previous popular gods were born at the winter solstice. So, in the time of Dionysius Exiguus, it was decided that Christ was born on December 25!

Dr. Gore mistakes preaching for argument. He speaks of Christ thus:—

"I cannot conceive being with a Person who claimed, as that Person did, to teach and to work; who was, as He was, utterly aloof from human weaknesses and human sins, supreme in solitary sinlessness, asking no sympathy or co-operation, but always asking that those about Him should put their faith in Him and find in Him that in which human lives, human souls can repose, as capable of satisfying all their needs, and

defending them in all their difficulties—I cannot, I say, conceive being with a Person Who led me to put faith in Him of this kind without believing Him to be Divine. I cannot conceive a person being in that attitude towards his fellow men—for they were His fellow men—because it would be blasphemy, the supreme blasphemy, if He were Himself only a creature like them."

It is impossible to notice such babble without a feeling of self-stultification; but this is the sort of thing Dr. Gore offers his hearers after—so, at any rate, he tells them—"reading some recent books of destructive criticism in preparation for these lectures"! For myself, I "hae ma doots" as to whether the Bishop is quite so simple as one might suppose from some of his utterances. He, while pretending to meet "the critics," is never so foolish as to face the real attack, nor to let his hearers know what this attack is. He would, I suspect, as soon think of circulating copies of the *Freethinker* among his hearers as of telling them what writers like, say, Professor Arthur Drews or Mr. J. M. Robertson have said about the Gospels, and then proceeding to try and answer such critics. Dr. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, may call for a "first-rate scholar" to give a "crushing" reply to these critics. But Dr. Gore would, I have no doubt, agree with the editor of the *Freethinker*—though, of course, the Bishop would never think of saying so—that the call is easier made than answered.

Regarding the Resurrection, Dr. Gore lays stress on the spurious "For I delivered unto you that which I received" passages in 1 Cor. xv. He says:—

"He [Paul] there records what had been delivered to him, what he had delivered in all the churches since he began his missionary life, and which he had received and which he specially specifies was common to him with all the other Apostles—'Whether then it be I or they, so we preached and so ye believed.'"

But, once more it may be worth while to point out, Paul never mentions a "Jesus of Nazareth," born of a virgin. In the so-called genuine Epistles there is no allusion to:—

1. The parents of Jesus, or to his birthplace.
2. John the Baptist.
3. Jesuine teachings.
4. Jesuine miracles.
5. Judas Iscariot, or to a betrayal, or to a trial of Jesus before a Roman official.
6. The Passion.
7. Peter's denial of Jesus.

Moreover, in verse 6 of this famous chap. xv., Paul is made to say, "After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once," etc.—a statement found in neither the Gospels nor the Acts. If Dr. Gore cannot see the significance of all this, I can assure him that "the critics" do. In the current number of the *Hibbert Journal* the author of "The Jesus of 'Q.'" makes this remark: "The document 'Q'—and substantially the same may be said of all the well-accredited words of Jesus—is in sharp contradiction with the teaching of Paul and of the Christian Church." This, be it noted, is the criticism of one who believes in the actuality of a teaching Jesus and reverences the teaching. If he had been a little more critical he might have asked, What security is there that, even in this most primitive form of the saga, any one of the utterances put in the mouth of the isolated Jesus was the original utterance of any preacher?

For pathetic simplicity, or something worse, what Dr. Gore says about the Virgin Birth would be hard to beat. Not only Paul, but Mark and John also, are silent as to this incident. This does not trouble the Bishop in the least. Noticing, in the *Freethinker*, February 8, 1903, what he said at the Church Congress in 1902, I wrote:—

"If anyone knew the facts as regards Christ's birth it was Mary, who, in Luke ii. 48, distinctly refers to Joseph as Christ's father. 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing,' she is represented as saying. How does Dr. Gore explain this? Was Mary lying, with the view of deceiving the doctors in the midst of whom he

was sitting? If not, the silence of Mark, of John, and of Paul regarding the Virgin Birth requires no explanation."

Needless to say, Dr. Gore did not allude to this in his recent lectures at Oxford University. Instead, this is how he unctuously declaimed:—

"When we look at those extraordinarily distinct narratives [Matthew and Luke] it is almost electrifying the first time we look at them to see that they have all the appearance of coming respectively from Joseph and Mary."

This sort of thing, the Bishop seems to imagine, is "free historical criticism of sacred documents." With a great pretence of liberality he says, "All this time I have been asking you to make an act of free personal judgment and criticism on the events." Faugh! "An ounce of civet, good apothecary!" The Council of Nicea wound up its proceedings with a declaration of death to heretics. From that time till now adverse criticism of Christianity has been a crime. True, the bishops cannot, nowadays, murder their opponents, in this country, at any rate. But honest men are still sent to prison for daring, in open air meetings, to criticise Christianity in a way Christians dislike. For myself, I shall begin to believe in Dr. Gore's liberality when I find him advocating the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

ANDREW LIDDLE.

Prometheus and Christ.

A STUDY of Greek literature verifies the truth of that saying about comparisons being odious. The heroes of Homeric mythology take deeper root in the imagination than do the unwholesome creatures of theology as portrayed in the Old Testament, and, if we mourn with Priam and admire Hector and Achilles, the respective stories of Abraham, Jacob, and David excite no sympathy nor elicit any keen human interest. Theology has the stature of a pigmy compared with the towering height of mythology, and the creations of the early Greek writers are assured of immortality for no other reason but the possession of human virtues and vices. For the use of the latter word I must claim a little personal explanation. It is an ugly ill-sounding term, and I feel somewhat of a robber in stealing the enemy's thunder; as far as I can ascertain, it is almost exclusively a Christian weapon of denunciation, rarely found in a *Freethinker's* armory, and I must ask Mr. Printer to exercise care in the arrangement of the magic word. It is just possible that he may not be well acquainted with its setting-up for the pages of this journal.

Having received pardon for this digression, we will now consider the merits of the two figures at the head of this article. The keystone of Christianity is Christ; in him his followers find ideal virtues, ideal conduct, and the true type of a world-savior. The birth of the central figure of the four Gospels is overshadowed by gloom and slaughter, his youth is marred by filial disrespect, and his manhood by law-breaking which culminates on Calvary. From that time onward, the grey breath of his creed has been blown o'er the earth, blighting and withering the tenderest and dearest affections of mankind, turning brother against brother, and setting nations at each other's throats. Now let us turn to *Æschylus*, the father of Greek drama, who claims no divine inspiration in the construction of his sublimest drama, *Prometheus Bound*. Who can read it and not be moved to admiration of the poet's conception of the Fire Carrier? Bound to a precipice, he withstands the icy glaciers of winter cutting his flesh, and the burning beams of summer scorching his body. There, behold Prometheus! No words for mercy pass his defiant lips, no piteous entreaties to be released; but, with god-like fortitude, he endures agony, conscious that his sacrifice will be universal in its beneficence. What magnificent Pagan sim-

plicity! No thoughts of immortality cheer him in his sufferings. Zeus, by threats and tortures tries to break him, but Prometheus will not capitulate, nor forsake the cause of humanity.

There was a wondrous depth of human sympathy in the creation of *Æschylus*, which appeals more powerfully to mankind than do the teachings of one who was "not of this world." Comparatively, there can be no question but that Prometheus was the nobler figure of the two. This should cause no surprise to any impartial thinker who reads history without theological spectacles. The age that gave us *Æschylus*, *Euripides*, and *Sophocles* was far in advance of the thinking powers of that of the illiterate fishermen of Galilee. The Gospels, if written by their supposed authors, lack the touch of genius which we find in *Æschylus*, and his depiction of a suffering Titan who is to benefit the whole of mankind is superior in every respect to a creed which is only for those chosen people who believe. Freethinkers, who view dispassionately the lives and teachings of *Odin*, *Mahomet*, *Buddha*, and *Christ* as simply geographical manifestations, are not usually afflicted with the arrogance displayed by Christians, yet they can, in their mental freedom, form an opinion of the true saviors.

"All arts among the human race are from Prometheus." With such imagination so wide and comprehensive, and with benevolence so universal, the illusive and ductile teachings of Christian love are Lilliputian in comparison. As Freethinkers we shall all welcome the dawn of the day when the Bible will take its place side by side with all other historical literature, and not as a sacrosanct work of divine revelation. When children may read the life of *David* along with that of *Hercules*, it will be left to their ingenuous minds to decide who is worthier of respect. And then will the bewildering and terrifying tales of murder, plunder, and rapine of the chosen race melt and disappear with the reading of the immortal stories of *Orpheus* and *Eurydice*, of *Niobe*, of *Pan*, and the *Nymphs*, which render Greek mythology fascinating and delightful alike to young and old.

The polytheism of the Greeks and its cheerful and interesting variety has given to posterity an everflowing source of inspiration; but if it had only given us *Prometheus Bound*, through *Æschylus*, the story of the chained Titan, in its noble dignity, would eclipse in splendor any Biblical tale of selfishness. For that, as Freethinkers, we must be grateful; it is one of the many eternal truths forever confronting the doctrines of a creed which boasts of possessing every virtue under the sun.

J. W. REPTON.

To a Spouting Convert.

You, who stole the goods of other men
And, thief and vagrant, served your king in gaol;
You, who robbed your children, wife and home,
And thieved to buy the foaming pot of ale.

You, who illustrated every phrase
With filthy expletives and foul-mouthed oaths;
You, who starved the children you had raised,
And even sold the rags they used for clothes.

You, who knocked and bruised a woman's flesh,
And made your children tremble at your name;
You, to stand up there and brag like this—
You ought to hide that grinning face for shame!

Yet there you stand and impudently yell:
"Get right with God, you sinners, while you can";
But cheap orations such as this are trash
Since you can never right yourself with man.

A profligate and hypocrite combined
To talk to us about a God on high!
If God takes such as you among his flock
Then let the myth of God and Jesus die!

JAMES L. RAYMOND.

Acid Drops.

Mrs. Pankhurst and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence have been liberated from prison. Mr. Pethick Lawrence—having nothing to gain by woman suffrage, and being therefore the more chivalrous in his action—remained behind to complete his sentence. He was liberated subsequently as a sort of afterthought. He is only a man. There is no presuming on his sex. It is only the female sex that can be presumed upon; and the whole policy of the "militant" Suffragists is based upon that fact. A hunger-strike of men (say prisoners for "blasphemy") would never frighten the House of Commons or worry the Home Secretary. The two Suffragette leaders who have been liberated while their followers are left in prison (which opens up another question) have communicated through the press to all whom it may concern the information that woman is to decide in future on what terms she will consent to remain in prison. Such information from a man would only provoke laughter. Coming from a woman, it is taken quite seriously. It is obvious that the whole matter is in a state of complete chaos, and that the question of Woman v. Man will have to be reconsidered.

The worst of it is that there is ground for taking that information from a woman seriously. For it means that a lot of women mean to enter political life, if they can; that they mean to play the game for all it is worth, and to pocket their winnings—but to refuse to pay when they lose. They are willing even to suffer martyrdom, but it must be a highly diluted martyrdom. If the unpleasant side of public life is attempted to be made the same for both sexes the ladies claim the right to cry out to any man who is responsible for it, "You're no gentleman." Mrs. Pethick Lawrence and Mrs. Pankhurst actually started a hunger-strike for no reason connected with their own treatment in prison. They had all the privileges of first-class misdemeanants. All they suffered was detention. They couldn't go to the theatre or take a boat trip to Margate. But they could write and read anything they liked, and receive their friends, and enjoy rest and ease, with free and constant medical attendance. They could also eat their own food, and wash it down with their own drink. Yet they resorted to a hunger-strike as a calculated move in their general policy as Suffragette leaders.

The special point we want to make on the case of the Suffragette prisoners is this. The country is drifting into acquiescent familiarity with discriminating "justice." Now this will always press heaviest on the most unpopular—one might say the most friendless—causes; and Freethought is likely to remain one of them. All the consideration shown by the Home Secretary, and practically endorsed by the House of Commons, to the representatives of movements commanding plenty of votes and plenty of money, will be compensated for by greater rigor towards the representatives of the poorest and least powerful movements. What this means time will show. But we confess that, for our part, we regard it with the gravest misgivings.

Poor Mr. Stead! The "spiritualists" and "occultists" have taken possession of him. They tell us that he turns up at "Julia" séances, and cranks (some of whom, by the way, are really as clever as they seem to be simple) talk of interviews and conversations with him in all sorts of places. But why on earth does he visit these people? Why doesn't he drop in on Mr. Foote? He regarded the editor of the *Freethinker* as a true friend, whether praising or censuring. There was nothing on that side, therefore, to prevent his paying Mr. Foote a visit; and we very respectfully suggest that such a visit would be rather more convincing than his appearance to the converted—and expectant. Somehow or other ghosts don't like calling on sceptics; a fact which, if not creditable, is at least intelligible.

Some of the speakers at the so-called Stead Memorial Meeting at Queen's Hall might have incurred his rebuke; at any rate, they did no particular honor to his memory. Most of them were Christians. Mr. Harry Snell was the only Freethinker we noticed in the list. Rev. Dr. Horton, in the chair, was—well, the Rev. Dr. Horton. It is not necessary to say more. Mr. Herbert Stead was both religious and fantastic, using wild and whirling words that had to be explained away. Mr. Lansbury, fresh from his extraordinary attack on Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons, was vociferously cheered, as if he had performed some marvellously heroic action. We don't believe the dead man would have joined in the applause if he had been present. He always kept some common sense about him even in his most fervid moments. Miss Estelle Stead herself did not

do her father justice. She might have recited something else than Lowell's "Parable." It only emphasised the fact that Lowell always seemed the limit of Mr. Stead's knowledge of English poetry.

On the Second Reading of the Places of Worship (Sites) Bill, Viscount Wolmer has given notice of his intention to move: "That this House refuses to redress the grievances of any other denomination so long as the present attack upon the liberty and property of the Church of England continues." As one of these grievances is the establishment of the Church of England, the problem seems a little difficult of solution. It sounds like the Church of England will not agree to the removal of a grievance until the grievance is allowed to remain where it is. Quite Gilbertian.

Discussing the decline of membership among the Nonconformists, a "Nonconformist Layman," writing in the *Guardian*, protests that the shrinkage is not due to religious indifference. He says that "in many cases they have made money, and with money the position in society which money brings—means that they carry with them in their secession." Now, that is a pretty confession to make regarding any community. Their religious convictions are so strong that the moment they make money they move into another Church. And in a Christian society it is the possession of money that gives one a position. And it is these people who are lecturing on the degrading influence of Materialism!

Ten personal relics of the late Queen Victoria will be offered for sale at a leading London sale room this week. The clergy are better business men than bric-a-brac dealers, for they make money out of faked relics of persons who never existed.

The impudence of these clerical impostors is unending. Judging by the existing relics, the "true cross" must have been larger than the *Titanic* and the "crown of thorns" could have covered Kennington Oval.

Dr. Len Broughton, the Yankee minister, who now occupies the Rev. Newman Hall's pulpit at Westminster, has been puffed in the press. The *Daily News* says that the adjacent tube station is crowded on Sunday mornings. Is this not a proof that the congregation is drawn from a distance and that Westminster resists the blandishments of this U.S.A. soul-saver.

District nurses and dispensaries will shortly be an essential part of the work at Dr. Broughton's church. These are some of the customary baits in the mission field.

Dr. Len G. Broughton admits that there may be honest sceptics who disbelieve in a future life. The graciousness and charity of the man is perfectly appalling. And the charity is conferred with such a royal air of careless and unwarranted benevolence that no one is likely to misunderstand the speaker. At some future time, Dr. Broughton says, he hopes to conduct an argument with such sceptics. When he is ready we have no doubt that the sceptic will be forthcoming. Meanwhile, Dr. Broughton is dead certain there is recognition of each other in the next world—first, because Abraham recognised Lazarus; and, secondly, because of the fact of memory. And memory, he says, is, from a strictly scientific standpoint, "absolutely indestructible." We beg to assure Dr. Broughton that his statement is, from a strictly scientific standpoint, absolute nonsense. Our memory of certain things and events is being constantly destroyed. Life would be simply unbearable if we all had to drag round with us the ghosts of all our past actions and thoughts. The quality of forgetfulness is as great a good as the capacity for remembering; but to talk of the latter being indestructible is simply nonsense. Dr. Broughton says he would ask the sceptics, "Do you think in heaven we shall be any bigger fools than on earth?" If that is the way he intends arguing when he gets a real sceptic before him, we advise him to be careful. It would probably lead to the sceptic replying that some people were well secured against such a possibility.

In addition to the "Right of Parents" cry, in connection with religious instruction in elementary schools, the Archdeacon of Chesterfield makes a special appeal on behalf of teachers. He asks whether it is fair "that a teacher should be thought to have no definite religious convictions? Was it right that a teacher who had been specially trained in religion as well as in other subjects should have that one form of training ignored, slighted, and taken no notice of by

the State?" The Archdeacon might spare his tears. They are unwarranted and unnecessary. No one is desirous it should be taken that a teacher has no definite religious convictions. They may be as definite as possible, but their quality or intensity is their own business. And if a teacher likes to make a special study of religion, this no more warrants him in demanding that the State should take special notice of his proficiency as a theologian than as a butterfly catcher. If he studies religion because he is interested in religion, that is enough. If his only reason for studying is promotion or payment, then he will confine himself to such subjects as are required by the State. What he does beyond that is entirely his own business. And we fancy teachers would bear up against a policy of Secular Education with quite unexpected fortitude.

Sir William Willcocks has been addressing the members of the Royal Geographical Society on the suppositious site of the legendary "garden of Eden." He said the naphtha springs seemed to the early settlers "like the flaming swords in the hands of offended seraphim." This is an oily explanation, but it won't set the Thames alight.

Sky pilots have their fingers in every pie. At the Chicago Convention many representatives of religion obtruded themselves, including a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi. The latter was a venerable specimen, and by the kindly forethought of the musical director, he was introduced to the tune of "Darling, I am growing old."

After all there is a wonderful amount of human nature even in politicians; and after the heartfelt invocations to the celestial powers by the clergy, boys sang with heart and voice a song with the devotional refrain, "What the hell do we care!"

Erasmus said that the Bible, under the interpretation of the Protestants, was like a nose of wax; everybody twisted it into the shape that pleased him. The process did not end with the Reformation. Protestants have been twisting the old Wax Nose ever since. And they are still at it. The Archbishop of Canterbury is one of the best hands at the game. His Grace sent a letter to the Queen's Hall meeting to consider "The Religious Aspect of the Women's Movement." In this clever document he put the New Testament texts on the Woman question altogether aside as completely antiquated. No matter if they were uttered by Jesus or any of the Apostles, including St. Paul; they were out of date, and that was enough. Listen to this:—

"Beyond question, the changes which have, by common consent, come about respecting the place of woman and of womanhood in our country's life call for a far-reaching reconsideration or restatement of certain old-world phrases and formulae which have become, perforce, inapplicable to the facts of to-day.....If certain phrases, and even modes of thought, belong distinctively to the past, the religious truths which underlie the whole question are unchanged."

Note how airily the Archbishop manipulates the holy wax proboscis. The express language of the Old and New Testaments is pooh-poohed as mere "old-world phrases." These have to be reconsidered and restated, as if they had no definite meaning of their own. In this way, without altering the text, the Bible will always mean what the Church wishes at the finish.

The Bishop of Oxford, who delivered a speech at the aforesaid gathering, followed the Archbishop of Canterbury's lead. "He confessed," the *Times* report said, "that St. Paul's specific attitude towards this question had been to him a stumbling-block" and that the attitude of the Church of England towards the modern women's movement "was something in the nature of a scandal." But he thought the Church was going to fall into line with the leaders of the women's movement. Not that he used those words, but they express the substance of what he said. And the Bishop of Oxford is right. Churches don't lead, but only follow when they must, the march of human progress.

That same number of the *Times* (June 20) contained a letter from Lady Wimborne as a friend and champion of the cause of woman suffrage. Her ladyship instanced the case of Queensland, where religious education was brought back to the public schools some time ago. This is how it happened. The men voters were busy about other issues, not expecting that the clergy would organise a quiet revolt against Secular Education amongst the women voters. It was well managed, and it succeeded. The votes of the ladies, guided and animated by priestcraft, throw out Secular Education and established Religious Teaching in its place. No doubt the men will try to undo this mischief.

Meanwhile it holds the field. Lady Selborne, indeed, boasts of it. This is "what happens," she says, "in countries where women have the vote." The conclusion is that priests and such "cattle"—as Burns calls them—will have a high old time when woman suffrage obtains in England. For a time, at least, we are afraid that this will happen. The average man is conservative enough; when backed by the average woman he is dangerously conservative. Perhaps the simplest way to answer Lady Selborne is to say "forewarned is forearmed." But that in itself is not enough. The whole matter calls for the serious attention of Free-thinkers, and we may return to it presently.

The clergy are making a fuss about the excessive number of buttons and bad coins found in the collections. Evidently, many Christians hope to get to heaven on easy terms.

Some Christian ministers in the dock strike area are appealing for money for women and children of the men out of employment. What on earth has happened to those venerable ravens who fed Elijah with sandwiches? Is the species extinct?

"J. B." of the *Christian World*, says that he once, in conversation with a Frenchman, maintained that England was a country of the ideal, and the Frenchman roared at the suggestion. Not to be done, "J. B." advanced proof. He pointed to the Englishman's "intense interest in religion." And then the Frenchman was silent. We suggest that his silence may have been due to politeness, or he may not have known English religion, or perhaps he mentally gave up the speaker as hopeless. One could have made a much better defence by appealing to the Englishman's love of adventure, or of sport, or of travel, than appealing to an Englishman's interest in religion. For he is not so much interested in religion as he is interested in pretending to care about religion. He may support his church or chapel because it is part of the established code of respectable society. That done, the less he has to do with religion or the less talk he has about religion the better. And parsons only maintain a supposed interest in religion with most people by talking about anything *but* religion—Socialism, Temperance, Labor, etc. No wonder the Frenchman laughed.

Readers of these columns will hardly need assurance that we have every sympathy with the anti-vivisection movement. But we should like to see the name of God left out of the controversy. In a letter to the *Star* the other day, the Hon. Stephen Coleridge said: "It is better for mankind to look up to God who dwells in the firmament than down into the bleeding wounds of vivisected animals." Now, we do not see what "God" has to do with it, or how Mr. Coleridge knows he lives in the firmament, or how anyone is going to get vivisection abolished by looking up to him. If there is a God, he has been looking "down into the bleeding wounds of vivisected animals," and has done precious little to stop the practice. Man might have looked up to God from now to doomsday without getting any help from that pastime. Human sense and human sympathy are all that is needed. We can assure Mr. Coleridge that it is not strengthening his case by religious appeals of this description.

The Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University, Professor Michael Sadler, took part in the open-air speaking in the Victoria-square. He was requested to do so, and, of course, consented. He said that he had been listening to the Atheist speakers, and deliberately sided with those on the other side. From what we know of Professor Sadler, we are not at all surprised. No one would expect him on the side of a poor movement that suffered every kind of social boycott and misrepresentation. One can always count on some people being on the side of the big battalions. It is the way of the world. And Professor Sadler is a man of the world.

Nor can we congratulate the Professor on the character of his reply to questions. The only one reported in the *Guardian*, from which we take our report, is the following: Someone asked Professor Sadler whether the fact of children so often losing their religious belief when they reached maturity did not imply that with intellectual maturity religious belief decayed. The reply was: "Oh, no. Have you never observed that the men of genius are those who carry with them the heart of a child through their lives." Now, this is a stupid or evasive answer to a really pertinent inquiry. The Professor was not asked whether men of genius did or did not retain the simplicity and directness of a child's feelings, but whether intellectual maturity weakened religious belief. It was the brain of the

child *versus* the brain of the man that was the subject of the inquiry. And Professor Sadler should either have answered the inquiry, or confessed his inability to do so. But that is the worst of being with the big battalions. You retain the odor of "respectability," but one must sacrifice one's mental thoroughness as a consequence.

"Providence" again. A cloudburst washed away thirty-one miles of track on the Vladikavkas railway, between Besslau and Syepzowsk, in Russia, and forty persons were drowned.

Rev. W. H. Hunt, vicar of St. Mark's, Old Ford, stood for the Board of Guardians at the recent Poplar elections. His election address, the *Daily Chronicle* (June 26) says, brought him "very nearly, if not quite, within the Corrupt Practices Act." He reminded the electors of the hundreds of pounds a year (of other people's money) he dispensed in charity in the borough, and informed them that he hoped to spend hundreds more. But, of course, he was not doing all that for their votes; which, however, he asked them to "register" for him "without fail." What a lot of sweet innocents these men of God are!

Pity the poor busy Bishop! The Bishop of Worcester complains that his post averages forty letters a day. Yes, and his salary is big enough to cover the job of answering them. The cost of a first-class secretary makes no great inroad on his lordship's income.

We cut the following news paragraph from the *Truth-seeker* (New York):—

"Miss Aimee Hutchinson has been dismissed as teacher and secretary in the parochial school connected with the Catholic church of the Blessed Sacrament, Broadway and Seventy-first-street, this city, because she marched in the suffrage parade of May 4. Miss Hutchinson said that the Rev. Matthew A. Taylor, priest of the church, summoned her to his office a day or two after the parade and told her that, although he was pleased with her work, he could not conscientiously retain any one on his teaching staff who had taken part in a militant suffrage demonstration."

The impudence of the Black Army! They say that they are soldiers of God, but any decent God would be thoroughly ashamed of them.

A column article on "Ministering Angels" in a late issue of *Lloyd's Weekly News* deals with nurses in peace and war. The Bishop of London seems to be the only man left who believes in the old-fashioned variety of celestial ministrants.

The newspapers have been making a great fuss over a Wood Green centenarian who has reached the age of 106. What a pity that Noah and Methuselah are not alive to-day for the gentlemen of the press to gush over.

An unfortunate woman has been sentenced to a month's hard labor for sleeping in the open at Southend-on-Sea. Jesus Christ would fare badly at the hands of Christian magistrates if he came to England.

The Archbishop of Canterbury and four bishops and a dean are paying a visit to Southend-on-Sea. £2,000 is still required for completing a church, and those distinguished ecclesiastics hope to fan the flames of piety so that the cash is forthcoming.

Mr. William Watson has written a sonnet on "Teddy" Roosevelt, in which he refers to him as "dauntless Theodore." "Teddy's" most dauntless action was in never apologising for calling Thomas Paine "a filthy little Atheist."

We cut the following from the *Daily Chronicle* (June 24):—

"Australia's religious census returns have just been published by the Federal Statisticians. 1,700,443 citizens of the Commonwealth write themselves down as members of the Church of England. Roman Catholics come next with 921,425, plus 75,379 Catholics without prefix. Presbyterians are third with 559,336, and Methodists a good fourth with 547,806. The Unitarians and Lutherans are on the down grade. There are 17,287 Jews and 13,818 Mohammedans in Australia. 9,251 confessed 'no religion,' and 83,000 objected to state. 516 men and 63 women frankly avowed themselves Atheists."

The presumption is that most, if not all, of those who refused to state their religion, were non-religious in some form or other. It would not be far wrong, therefore, to say that there are at least some 92,829 "irreligionists" in Australia.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended until September.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £163 4s. 2d. Received since:—W. P. Adamson, £1 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. James Neate, £1; A. W. Hey (S. Africa), 10s.; John Foot, £1; J. W. Hicks, 2s. 6d.; David Wild, 5s.; J. C. Goodfellow, 2s. 6d.; Robert Wilson, 2s. 6d.; J. McCartney, 1s.; George Hill, 1s.; George Cribbes, 1s.; Hannah Walsh, £1.

E. T. JARVIS (S. Africa).—Glad you have made up your mind to join the N. S. S. as your answer to such orthodox impudence.

T. Young, referring to Roosevelt's motto for his new party, the eighth commandment, says the ninth would have been a better selection.

A. A.—Pleased to hear from you and shall be glad to see you when you are in London again. One enclosure shall appear.

A. GROVER.—Mr. McKenna refused to receive a deputation while the Leeds "blasphemers" were in prison. What is the use of approaching him now? You don't appear to have followed the course of events as set forth from time to time in our pages. For the present, at any rate, the matter of the Blasphemy Laws is in the hands of the representative Committee just organising to secure their repeal.

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

C. H. HOUSTON (S. Africa).—Your order is passed over to our shop manager.

J. MACKENZIE.—It is not of much importance whether it was "Mary's" only begotten son or "Jehovah's" that was given to the world for "love." It was dear even as a gift.

J. L. RAYMOND.—Verse shall appear. Thanks for suggestion, but the editorial work of this journal could hardly be divided up in that way. We note your hope that we shall long edit "the most outspoken and honest paper in Great Britain."

ATHEIST BLACKSMITH.—We cannot attend personally to such matters. Have handed your letter over to the N. S. S. secretary. Accept our word of sympathy.

W. P. ADAMSON.—Thanks for all your good wishes.

JAMES NEATE.—We thank you and Mrs. Neate for your pleasant and encouraging letter.

JOHN FOOT.—Your kind letter is appreciated—including the humor.

E. B.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. J. RAMSEY.—Sorry we cannot join the Bradlaugh Fellowship's visit to Brookwood. We hope you will have a successful gathering.

R. H. GRANT.—We have "obliged," but it is a poor announcement, after all. If you take the trouble to send further details, in good time, we will publish same.

DAVID WILD.—Pleased to have the warm good wishes of yourself and the "two other working men" who join you in the subscription.

W. GRAYSON.—Dixon is still an unrepentant libeller. We have not dropped him. We can strike harder, and do him more damage, when he is better known in London. His letter to you is Dixon all over.

E. BURKE.—Your sympathetic and interesting letter to hand. We will deal with it next week.

J. GRIFFITHS.—Your letter in the local paper is a good one and will do good. We fancy you will be able to deal successfully with your critics. We fear we have too much on hand just now to write as you wish on the Sunday question. Dr. Hardwick's book might help you meanwhile.

J. C. GOODFELLOW.—Our compliments to the Hawick "saints" who send through you.

C. BREWER.—Art doesn't belong to religion of any kind. Religion makes use of it, when able to pay the price; not before, and not after.

G. F. DUPLAX.—All you mean by "fate" is causation. A man was drowned this morning; you say he was fated to be drowned this morning; but you add absolutely nothing to our information.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

In response to some inquiries we beg to state that Mr. Foote was asked to attend the so-called Stead Memorial Meeting at Queen's Hall on Wednesday evening, June 26, but he was unable to see his way to doing so. It seemed to him less a meeting in honor of Mr. Stead than a meeting of persons bent on exploiting him. After all, Mr. Stead's activities covered a wider field than the promoters of that meeting represented, and Mr. Foote would have been very glad to co-operate in a more catholic tribute to the great and famous publicist and agitator. Mr. Foote has paid his own tribute to Mr. Stead's memory in these columns, and there the matter must rest for the present. Certainly he does not intend to join in any tribute which makes use of Mr. Stead's memory to promote sectional interests and debateable objects.

Mr. Cohen visits Leeds to-day (July 7) on behalf of the N. S. S. to deliver the first lectures for the new Leeds and Bradford Branch, of which we shall have more to say next week. Mr. Cohen's lectures are to be delivered in the Town Hall Square at 11.15 and 7, the morning subject being "Christianity and Secularism" and the evening subject being "The Challenge to Religion." Should the weather be wet the evening meeting will be held in the Tailors' Institute, Cross-Stamford-street, Skinner-lane, North-street. We hope the district "saints" will help to make these meetings a Freethought demonstration.

The Birmingham Branch's trip to Bewdley takes place to-day (July 7). Train leaves Snow-hill Station at 8.20.

The Edmonton Branch's annual outing takes place on July 14 to Loughton, Essex. Tea at the "Vale Retreat," where local or other "saints" may find the party.

Messrs. Chasty and Muirhead, who were prosecuted and fined for "profane language" at that Ilkeston lecture, report that Freethought meetings are still being held on the spot where the "offence" was committed, and that the size and good order of the crowd astonishes both "the natives" and the police. The cost of the good advertisement—including fines, costs, and legal expenses—amounted to £12 1s. 4d. The sum of £5 contributed by the R. P. A. left a balance of £7 1s. 4d., which has been paid by the N. S. S. Executive.

We are happy to state that the newly formed National Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws is making steady progress with its preliminary work, and will start business before long with a well-considered program and a practical policy. The bodies represented on the Committee are the British and Foreign Unitarian Society, the Union of Ethical Societies, the Rationalist Press Association, and the National Secular Society.

Amongst the publishing projects of the Secular Society, Ltd., in the immediate future, is one which Mr. Foote has long had in contemplation, but which he recently passed over to the incorporated Society. It is a series of "Pioneer Pamphlets" which will mostly be specially written for the series, and which will run to any number of pages from sixteen to sixty-four. While the get-up will be creditable the price will be extremely low. The general run of the pamphlets is to be one penny; occasionally an extra thick one will be treated as a double number and published at twopence; beyond that price it is not intended to go. Some numbers of this Series are already in the press, and we hope to make a more definite announcement next week.

It is announced that a collection of George Meredith's letters, edited by his son, will be published in the early autumn. The collection might have been published long ago if reliance had not been placed upon the editorial services of John Morley. In reference to this matter, we noticed a remark in a Liberal newspaper that Morley's writing the *Life of Gladstone* was a rare act of self-sacrifice. Strange act of self-sacrifice for which he was paid £10,000 down and connected his name with that of the greatest and most interesting statesman of the age.

A letter of Thomas Paine's, lately sold from a catalogue of historical documents at Philadelphia, fetched 160 dollars, about £32. It was dated October 30, 1777, and written from General Greene's headquarters to Timothy Matlock about the surrender of Burgoyne and other Army matters. Is there any one of Paine's enemies and calumniators a letter of whom will be worth £32 a hundred years after his death?

The Inquisition Unveiled.

1, *El Almanaque de la Inquisición*; 2, *El Santo Oficio*; 3, *Los Autos de Fé*; 4, *Quema de Brujas en Logrono*; 5, *Carne ultrajada y quemada*; 6, *Despojo, infamia, y hoguera*. (Madrid: *El Motín* (José Nakens), 1912; each volume 1 peseta; 200 pp. each.)

ALL students of the history of religion, and especially those who, like ourselves, see in the Holy Inquisition the logical fruits of Christianity, will be grateful to Senor José Nakens and to his learned coadjutor and right-hand man, Senor Pey y Ordeix, for their almost miraculous activity, as here displayed, in the field of research and publication concerning the glorious exploits of the Holy Office. My table fairly groans at this moment under the literary load with which, during this present year of grace, they have enriched and enlarged our knowledge of the incredible atrocities committed by the Holy Office in the name of God and his Christ. The six volumes, whose titles adorn this article, enable the student to feel the very breath of the holy men of God as they gloated over the tortures inflicted upon the heretic. The publication of these books is a hard blow to the Church, whose faithful sons ministering at her altars will doubtless denounce the accusing volumes but palliate the crimes which they record. With the aid of these terrible records, we are better able than before to reconstruct the horrifying experiences through which Spain was trailed in blood and tears and soul-killing terrorism during four or five centuries. With all their stately beauty and conscientious impartiality, the great and learned tomes written by Lea, the classic historian in our language of the Inquisition, fail to leave upon the mind quite that awful abiding impression of the quintessential cruelty of the Inquisition which these volumes make palpable. The horror of these scenes clings closer to us, and the shudder of repulsion sinks deeper within us, on perusing these revolting records, precisely because, in most cases, the story is here unfolded in contemporary documents, told in the crude language of the inquisitors or by their officers and hangers-on, with all the circumstances of palpitating realism which invest a record of crime not written apologetically and with a view of sparing the feelings of twentieth-century readers, but for the delectation of the full-blooded fanatics of the pious Middle Ages. In some cases, it is true, the documents here presented to us are removed by a few decades, sometimes even by centuries, of time from the events recorded, but their philosophical and psychological importance to us remains of inestimable value, as showing how a savage nexus of sympathy and approval was kept up by the Church or its apologists through the ages for the villainies perpetrated in the blessed cause of religion. After reading these awful revelations, it becomes clear to my mind that no treatment of the Inquisition by the future historian, or any fresh edition of existing publications on this terrible theme, are possible without taking into account these remarkable contributions to our knowledge of the Holy Office.

Persecution and religion go hand in hand. It is as difficult to separate Christianity from the crimes by which it prospered and became established as it is to separate the murderer from his victim, or the thief from his ill-gotten gains. For ages the only organised form of Christianity was the Christianity that illumined the faith with wholesale burnings of heretics, and enriched its foundations, and paid its bishops and clergy (and, incidentally, their modern successors of to-day), out of the spoliation of the schismatic and unbeliever. As Nakens very truly says, in his preface to *El Santo Oficio*, if you suppress the death of Christ, you get rid of the pretext for the Inquisition. In his name they tortured and roasted the heretic. The Crucifix became the ubiquitous emblem of cruelty. For Christ's glory, and for the honor of his name, the Church solemnly delivered the bodies of its victims to the rack or the flame.

In these *auto de fé* the priest displayed no shame-faced reluctance to be seen playing the assassin's part. He did not hide the light of true religion under any apologetic bushel. He paraded all the pomp and circumstance, the ritual and solemnity of his creed, at the splendid ceremony of public burning, not with the Cross of Jesus left behind the door, but with every display of sumptuous and festive magnificence, as befitted a spectacle graced by the presence of king and courtiers, bishops, friars, and inquisitors, with the omnipresent vindictive Crucifix flaunting its nude God amidst this glorification of cruelty. Here was the humble Galilean grown insolent with excess of power. Through the centuries humanity saw the victim of Calvary presiding from his Cross over the infliction of nameless tortures in the darkness of the inquisitorial dungeons, or watching through the fierce flames the slow death at the stake of the heretic burning at the vestibule of hell. The last vision that caught the agonised gaze of the tortured victim was the pale, remorseless face of the Christ. The insistent obsession of this haunting presence looms large in every page of these books, wherein we can see mirrored the true spirit of religion in its palmy days of arrogant strength—a frightful picture, which, whilst it inspires us with horror of the past, should warn us against underestimating the possibilities of the renewal of these abominations in the future.

Before burning the heretic on these solemn public displays of what was literally the ardor of faith, it was customary to appoint some special preacher to edify the occasion and impress and terrify the minds of the victims by the delivery of an inflammatory sermon. On a great spectacular occasion of this sort, at Madrid, on June 30, 1680, in the presence of the king, Carlos II., and a large assembly of dukes and grandees of Spain, the preacher was the Very Rev. Father Tomas Navarro, one of the court preachers. In the volume, entitled *Autos de Fé* (pp. 48-53), a good summary is given of his preaching. The sermon contains seventy-four quotations from the Latin, and is enriched by a gem like this: "Similar in every respect to the divine tribunal of heaven is the holy tribunal of the faith on earth!" In one passage he quotes a cardinal who apostrophised the Deity, saying: "Arise thou to thy vengeance, for thou wouldst appear to be in slumber whilst pardon is continued!" Addressing himself to the Jews included amongst the number brought out to be burned alive, the preacher exclaimed:—

"What might I not say of the stupidities and blasphemies of your Talmud, which is your Gospel? I will only point out (*because the time runs short*) that the prize which it promises you for following your false religion is a banquet of pitch, which God has prepared for you many years ago, and a little wine which he has reserved for you in his cellar since the foundation of the world, so you may be sure it will be very old."

Addressing the whole assembly of the victims, he exclaimed:—

"Ye fools and infamous! With the pale lamp of your feeble knowledge you pretend to abominate the light of the sun. You are like asses who, with the outburst of their disconcerting cries, would attempt to frighten and put to flight the giants of the Church and the whole earth."

After reading this mild admonition, it seems strange to find that the spiritual descendants to-day of the Father Navarros of old are the men who, in every land, invoke the aid of the law to curb the biting tongue of the Freethinker!

A large number of Jews were burnt in person at this *auto de fé*, and amongst them occurs the name of a martyr who may have been one of the ascendants of a great man recently martyred in these modern times. We read (*ibid.*, p. 65), that a Francisco Ferrer, 84 years of age, was burnt alive "as an apostate, a rebaptised person, a relapsed judaiser, a man of changeable views, *diminutivo* [a sort of half-baked Christian], and a denier." As an aid to stirpicultural speculation as to Ferrer's possibly heretical forbears, I may add that in another of these

volumes (*Carne ultrajada y quemada*, [Flesh outraged and burnt] p. 120), the name of an earlier martyr named Ferrer is preserved for us in the annals of the Inquisition. In the work just cited, Nakens publishes from the Biblioteca Nacional a "Relación" of the public *auto de fé* at Madrid on Sunday, January 21, 1624. On this occasion there was burnt to death a certain Benito Ferrer Catalán, described as "living near the Campo Redondo at Toledo, on his mother's side a Hebrew." Like his predecessor of 1624, Francisco Ferrer, the Martyr of October, 1909, was also a Catalonian, and if outward physical indications mean anything, the Ferrer of our day and generation had Arabian, which means Semitic, blood in his veins. The glowing contemporary account of Benito Ferrer's martyrdom states that more than seventy thousand people witnessed the roasting to death of this seventeenth-century Ferrer, to whose lower extremities the flames were applied in order, we are told, to give him time "to find salvation"; but the record says that he died in his obstinacy, the zeal and charity of his religious attendants, touting for his conversion, being of no avail.

The volume, *Carne ultrajada y quemada*, although it contains not a line of comment beyond two pages of preface by José Nakens, is perhaps the most terrible indictment of Christianity ever published. It reproduces the highly colored eulogistic contemporary accounts published by the Inquisition, or its creatures and sycophants, of certain *autos de fé* that took place in Madrid, Seville, Granada, and Cordova. No modern historian seated comfortably in his study besides his books and papers can put such vividness into his portraiture of the events as the pedantic and fanatical Alonso Ginete, who, inspired with enthusiasm for the faith, "after having"—as he said—

"taken part in the enactment of the public *auto de fé* which the Holy Office of the Inquisition celebrated on Saint Andrew's Day last passed [*i.e.*, in 1624], and also in the procession of the Holy Cross which took place on the preceding day, at which I officiated as an unworthy minister of that Holy Tribunal,"

sets forth to describe in three spacious, eulogistic discourses the glorious achievements of the Holy Office.

In the *autos* published in this volume the victims are principally Jews and Portuguese—two races which suffered the special severity of the Church's ire. There is biting sarcasm in the inclusion amongst other revealing documents of certain curious poems in praise of the Inquisition, coupled with violent abuse of the Jews and Moslems. There is the "Poema heroico," for instance, preserved amongst rare collections in the Biblioteca Nacional (No. 8,560), in honor of the *auto de fé* in Granada on January 31, 1723. If anyone were to write such a poem to-day it would assuredly be in the spirit of satire, and the "heroics" would be in mockery and scorn. Here we are transported to another ethical and intellectual atmosphere—an atmosphere laden with the smoke of sacrifice and charged with the malodorous exhalations of burning flesh. A later poem descriptive of the general *auto* that took place on May 30, 1672, written by the Licentiate Don Juan Puerta Castellanos, betrays at once remarkable poetic gifts and deep fanatical feeling. This poem, too, has been dragged into the light of day from the dust of the national archives. Addressing the "Holy Tribunal," the poet declares that

"the nations will constantly bless thee and praise thee with song. Thou shalt be the divine argus who, with lynx-like eyes, but with more than a hundred of them blessed, shalt guard with constant care and with subtle understanding our sacred religion, ever defending her with sword in hand. And although hell may seek to close thine eyes, like another Mercury, in vain will be her efforts; for thou shalt be eternal, in order that thy strong hand may always chastise heretical depravity and apostacy."

Such precious documents, which speak the current thought of the times, lay bare the true inwardness of religion, and enable us to see its essentially persecuting spirit by the true and only infallible method

of discovering its real nature and essence as betrayed in the days of its omnipotence, when its irresistible power to persecute was allied with an insatiable will to execute its fell intent.

Readers of the *Freethinker* will be glad to learn that fresh volumes ransacking the records of the Inquisition are yet in store for us from the labors of Nakens and Pey y Ordeix.

In addition to all this, time and space fail me here and now to speak about the postcards (40 in number) and the 36 or more large cartoons and reproductions of beautiful art pictures and engravings relating to the Inquisition, just issued by José Nakens. This unique collection would embellish a chamber of religious horrors, and would be invaluable as an aid to Freethought propaganda. Our sturdy colleague is determined that the world shall know what is in store for it if the Church regains its fateful power of yore.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Beauty and Ugliness.

IT came from the West, where a red sun was sinking through mist. It seemed to linger in the valley like a cloud of gaseous putridity over a garden of beautiful flowers. Death was in the wail, and the climax of suffering. Life's last took voice to itself, breaking the air into throbs, and thrilling the heart into white heat and cold terror.

Just a moment before, we had breathed deeply of the rich, rare perfumes of evening. Just a moment before, we had spoken together of the inspiring power of nature; how it took man from the pit of his baseness and brought him to the clear, wind-refreshed heights of life; how it purified his thoughts, bathing them in a soft beauty; how it opened up wide ways, resplendent with nobility, and majesty, and fearlessness; and how it took one, when the mind was tossing on a sea of sorrow, when the ultimate seemed, more than usual, worthless, when the facts were few and unsubstantial, and there were more stones than grass on the path, to its bosom in peace. And, but a moment before, we had marvelled at man's might, and the perfection of his subjectivity to the elevating influences of his mother, Nature.

We had speculated, too, on the possibilities of man's development under the genial rays of the sun of beauty and the planets of peace and happiness. And with the quietness of the evening around us, with its fragrance, its beauty, its mellowing influence, it seemed as if man were ready for the realisation of our dreams. It seemed as if only a step were required to pass from the threshold of suffering to the gateway of prosperity; as if a wooden mallet could break, at a blow, the last few links of the slave-chain of superstition and the unreason that is its guilt, and so give emancipation the food she needs and the work in which she delights. Yes; it seemed at that moment, in the quietness, when the red sun sunk in the mist, and the hills stood black and beautiful around the horizon, and the curlews poured their haunting, tremulous music into the quivering air, as if all the obstacles were things that belonged properly to the realms inhabited by the faint of heart, and had no reality to us.

But the shattered walls of our dreams fell down about our ears before the last note in that piercing yell of pain had sickened into silence, ere it had died away. It was the shriek of an animal, an animal suddenly assailed by the death-throes. My friend thought it was a cat; for the sound came from a quarter where a neighbor of ours lived, a man whose great joy it was to murder or to torture cats. It may have been a cat: God knows! But that yell of anguish, of indescribable pain, of unbearable distress, of hopeless agony, was full of a stricken pathos that went as deep as any human sorrow can go. It shot through the perfume-laden air like a poisoned shaft, and sunk into our hearts to do its deadly task.

For us, the beauty of the evening went, suddenly, completely. He is a strong man, or a fool, who can

see beauty through keenest pain. The warmth, in which we had luxuriated, had cooled to coldness, and we shivered. There was a chill within us. We no longer marvelled at the lights and shades on the hills, nor did the color changes on the clouds awaken our wonderment, nor did the curlew's call ripple through us with its ineffable sense of purity and sweetness. We had become, again, hard and reasoning, yea, with the touch of cynicism deep down in our minds. There was no room, now, for nature's loveliness. We were, once more, soldiers—alert, keen, decisive—in the war of ideas. That awful yell of agony had hurried us back to the cruel facts of life, and we were angry. Hot words, wrathful and bitter, rose to our lips and were interchanged.

The ferociousness of man is no myth: it is a fact, an unrelenting fact that gives the smug falsehoods of the pulpit a plainly printed label. Religion's interpretative and refining influence is a condemned lie that cannot too strongly be assailed. To preach a lie is a social crime.

Behind that agonised death yell was a torturer or a murderer; and behind the torturer or murderer was half a lifetime of Christian influence. To point out to me the many examples, or so-called examples, of the good results of Christian training is on a parallel with the proof of the human beneficence of an industry by telling me the number of men whom it does not kill. How many men has it killed? is the real question; and does it justify its continuance thereby? Similarly, I want to know the failures of religion, and if it can justify its existence by them.

Our neighbor was a devout Christian; and he loved to kill and torture cats. We found it as absurd as impossible to love our neighbor as ourselves. We hated him and his Christianity. We loathed the one and despised the other. Its boasted power and its gruesome failure, for its failure is of the magnitude of its power, gave us no grounds for the considering of determining circumstance.

We spoke bitterly of these things, contrasting the facts with the fancies, the pictures pietism continually paints and the revolting happenings that daily make one sick and angry. The man or woman, we told each other, who derived enjoyment from the sufferings of animals was a contemptible cur, whose company would be an insult to corruption, could it be personified. And, mentally, we figured our many Christian acquaintances, and recollected their callousness at the ill-treatment of animals, and their disinterestedness in the cause that would give animals the moral rights we would enjoy ourselves. Contrasting these unpleasant memories with the vaunted influence of their futile religion, we went homewards, in the gloaming, with heavy reflections on the battles our pioneers have yet to fight against degrading superstition and its allies, apathy and ignorance and cruelty; for cruelty to man is bad, but cruelty to children and animals merits a condemnation for which there are no words suitable.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Literary Gossip.

MR. WILLIAM ARCHER never knew James Thomson ("B.V.") the poet personally. Why, on earth, then, does he describe the Japanese as "highly 'scripturient'" (*Daily News*, June 20) and add "as James Thomson used to say"? We did know James Thomson personally and we never heard him use the word at all, and we believe it does not occur once in the whole of his published writings. We venture to refresh Mr. Archer's memory. We introduced "scripturient" to him ourselves some thirty years ago, when, we believe, he was still at the old *Figaro* office, serving as sub-editor under the once rather famous, but now quite forgotten, James Mortimer. We lighted upon "scripturient" in a book belonging to a class of literature which Mr. Archer had not, and probably has not now, the least acquaintance with. (You see, Mr. Archer, we have a good memory, and our reading is unusually Catholic.) The book in question (we have just taken it down from a shelf in the folio depart-

ment of our library) is *An Explanation of the Mystery of Godliness* by one of the leaders—perhaps the leader—of the Cambridge school of Platonists in the seventeenth century, the extraordinarily learned and powerfully eloquent Dr. Henry More. The expression occurs at the end of the second paragraph of More's address "To the Reader," to whom the great divine—for there were great divines in those days—explains that he does not write for writing's sake, but that, on the contrary, he finds the penning of his conceptions an unsupportable toil and burden, and that he is perfectly free from "the common disease of this scripturient age." Thirty years ago we were still looking out for apt and striking expressions and we were immensely tickled with that "scripturient age." We passed it on to Mr. Archer and it tickled him too. We suggested laughingly that he wasn't to use it. But he did use it, and he uses it still, so it tickled him to some effect. Its authorship, however—if we may put it in that way—ought not to be assigned to James Thomson; and our object in this paragraph is simply to set the matter right. Mr. Archer's confusion of memory is easily intelligible. He has got the happy word, he does not recollect that he got it from us and that we got it from More. Well, it may be asked, how does James Thomson come in? In this way. We not only knew Thomson, but we wrote reviews in the *Figaro* of Thomson's first two volumes of verse. They were unsigned and gratuitous,—being written for the sake of the books, and to give them, if possible, a useful advertisement. Thus the "Thomson" and the "scripturient" have stuck together in Mr. Archer's mind. Which is, on the whole, a very pretty study in the curiosities of psychology.

* * *

Pope's dictum that "A little learning is a dangerous thing" is exemplified in the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, which is falling into the hands of many people who have picked up a mere smattering of the points involved in this strange dispute. Even this smattering is almost entirely second-hand. There is an instance of this in a copy of the *Brighton Herald* (June 29) forwarded to us, containing half a page of correspondence on the "Baconian" theory of Shakespeare's plays. The first letter quotes Shelley's remark that "Bacon was a poet," as if this had any bearing whatever on the question at issue. If the writer had read Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* himself, instead of merely quoting after others, he would know that Shelley's praise of Bacon as "a poet" was pointed with a footnote reference to "the *Filum Labrynthi* and the Essay on Death particularly"—both prose compositions. Shakespeare is praised magnificently in that same essay of Shelley's. No one who has read it could for a moment imagine that the idea of Bacon and Shakespeare being the same person and the same mind, could possibly have entered Shelley's head.

* * *

Nor is the *Herald* correspondent's citation of Ben Jonson at all happier. He quotes—or rather misquotes in a way that shows he is writing at second-hand again—from Ben Jonson's *Discoveries* a passage about Bacon in which the word "numbers" occurs—"he who hath filled up all numbers." Now the context shows that the word "numbers" has no connection there with verse. We doubt if the word was ever used at all in that sense before Milton. Jonson was simply saying that Bacon was complete as a lawyer and an orator,—outtopping all his predecessors for eloquence. The rest of Jonson's panegyric is nobly written, but there is no suggestion of Bacon's poetry. And it must be remembered that he knew Bacon well. So much for the ridiculous use made of the misquotation from Jonson. And now for a point which the second-hand correspondent has naturally overlooked—for nothing is noticeable to sheer ignorance. In that very same *Discoveries*, which is only a little treatise, Jonson writes as one who knew Shakespeare well. His praise of Bacon is so utterly different from his praise of Shakespeare, especially from a personal point of view, that it is nothing but an outrage to suggest that "rare Ben Jonson"—he with the "mountain belly" and the "rocky face"—wrote all that to deceive the world. He was the last man to do anything of the kind. And was it the sort of service that a man like Bacon could have asked of a man like Jonson? Besides, the words are full of sincerity. "I loved the man," Ben says of Shakespeare, "and do honor his memory on this side of idolatry as much as any." If that is not the language of sincerity what is?

* * *

The *Discoveries* was found among Jonson's papers at his death, in 1637, and published in 1640 in a second folio volume of his collected writings. Why should he write "a lie, an odious damned lie," to oblige Bacon, and leave it unpublished? Or did he write it for his own personal delectation? Really, if you pursue these Baconians, you find yourself in mud as well as nonsense.

We cannot tell exactly when Jonson wrote the *Discoveries*. But he wrote of Shakespeare as dead, so it was after 1616. He alludes to Bacon's fall and public disgrace, so it was after 1621. It was probably after Bacon's death in 1626. These dates, therefore, compel us to believe (on the Baconian theory) that, even after the death of Bacon, Jonson and others still kept up their share in a conspiracy to prevent their friend from being charged with the authorship of writings which Jonson himself in his commendatory verses prefixed to the 1623 folio had declared to be "not for an age, but for all time." Could imbecility go further than this?

* * *

Cheap series of books are the order of the day in the publishing world. Smith, Elder, & Co.'s shilling series includes a neat reprint (with certain omissions) of Captain Frederick William Von Herbert's *Defence of Plevna*. The author was one of the defenders in that historic siege, and he writes vividly. His book is well worth reading, even by those who do not usually care for this class of literature. We may add that the author is no friend of war. He has seen too much of it. "I have witnessed," he writes, "much that was heroic, much that was grand, soul-stirring, sublime; but infinitely more of what was hideous and terrible. I have seen unspeakable sights and inconceivable horrors..... If this volume should serve to dispel any illusions, if it should contribute a little towards the maintenance of peace, its purpose is fulfilled."

* * *

Captain Herbert evidently regards the Turks as, morally speaking, immensely superior to the Eastern Christians. When the great Osman decided on leading the fourth and last sortie from Plevna, having at least reached the stage of little ammunition and no food, the Turkish residents would not stay there to fall into the hands of the Bulgarians, who would probably be allowed by the Czar to take all the pleasures and profits of sacking the town. Osman summoned the priests and elders of the Bulgarian community, and made them swear on the Bible and the crucifix that no outrage should be committed by the Christians on the helpless inmates of the hospitals. "The oath," it appears, "was solemnly taken, and violated after the collapse of the sortie, in a manner for which no words of indignation could be sufficiently severe; almost all the sick and wounded were butchered." Osman had done no injury to the Christians in Plevna. He had governed them with justice. When he left they showed their gratitude. "The departure of the Turkish army," Captain Herbert says, "handed the town over to the Christians—that is, to murder, outrage, rape, robbery, plunder, sacrilege." Scenes were enacted passing comprehension. "The Bulgarians acted like savages, and it is awful to reflect that they committed massacres, pillage, and nameless crimes to celebrate the victory of Christianity over Islam."

G. W. F.

Personalities in Discussion.

TESTIMONY that in newspaper discussions the palm for courtesy is borne away by the Freethinkers is a healing balm for those of us who are undergoing a scolding at the present time for being possibly too candid in our opinions. Circumstances largely govern in the choice of language, which must be adapted to place and purpose. Rather more freedom in the characterising of religious abuses may be indulged in when writing for the *Truthseeker* than when seeking space in more conservative journals. Personalities are out of place, but when a general remark is liberated concerning a class or a system no one is obliged to take it as personal unless it fits. We meet occasionally an estimable old gentleman named Rockwell who has been for a half century or so with the Butchers and Drovers National Bank in this city. He is no more pious than the average man on the street, but he went once to hear Ingersoll lecture and has never forgiven the orator for what he calls "insulting" him, and yet Colonel Ingersoll did not know him. Ingersoll gave a lecture that reduced to foolishness Mr. Rockwell's religious faith and professions, and the listener made a personal matter of it. So that courtesy does not always win. But again it does. An old soldier named Clymer, also a railway train acquaintance, tells us that years ago he saw Ingersoll surrounded by a crowd of distinguished persons who were working their way toward him to exchange a word and a handshake. Our old soldier came as near as he could and stood at attention until Ingersoll's eye met his; then he saluted, and with some hesitancy advanced his hand. Ingersoll's hand described about a quarter of a circle and fell upon the old man's palm with a hearty impact and a grip that he has never ceased to feel. For the moment it seemed to the veteran as though he and Ingersoll were the

only persons present. Here courtesy and personality were combined. Personalities are accepted as legitimate when they assign to us virtues that maybe we haven't got, but become out of place when they name faults we are conscious of displaying. But the personal defects of a religious opponent have nothing to do with the case and do not strengthen our argument or weaken his. For that reason it is irrelevant to mention them, and also charitable, for we are all vertebrate animals and have the common frailties of the flesh. A point is to be made by reference to conduct when it is asserted that a particular belief or teaching is necessary to good morals. On this ground we publish the "Crimes of Preachers," not that it is our business how a preacher, more than another man, comports himself, but because he poses as an exponent of a religion which claims and enjoys exemption, over our protest, on the ground of its perfect moral system. Returning to Ingersoll, he could be personal when the occasion justified. Judge Black belittled his services as a soldier, and he replied that he was content to place his record beside that of Black. As Judge Black had been a "copperhead," the thrust was a deep one. Once the Widow Van Cott, a woman evangelist, likened Ingersoll to a dog barking at a train; he asked how she would like to have him compare her with the same animal, only changing the sex. In the late '70s, when Ingersoll lectured in San Francisco, a minister named Kalloch assailed his reputation. Colonel Ingersoll said: "The Rev. Mr. Kalloch has attacked my moral character. To show how forbearing I can be I will say nothing about his." As Kalloch had recently been tried in Massachusetts on a charge of adultery, the remark had a personal application. Herbert Spencer, in his discussion with Frederic Harrison, spoke of the perfect courtesy with which the duelist addresses his opponent before proceeding to "run him through the body." The silken glove of the Jesuit is proverbial. We would rather a man addressed us with a rough word and honest intent than in polite terms and some ulterior design. The Freethought structure is building. Undressed material, some with the bark on, will enter into its foundations, which are good and solid. Roughing goes before the fixtures. We can do the finishing work after the edifice is constructed.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

GEORGE MACDONALD.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JUNE 27.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, occupied the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Barry, Bowman, Brandes, Cohen, Cowell, Davidson, Davies, Dawson, Hearford, Lazarnick, Leat, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Schindel, Silverstein, Wood, and Miss Kough.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly balance-sheet was presented and adopted.

This being the first meeting of the new Executive, the following officers were elected:—General Secretary: Miss E. M. Vance. Monthly Auditors: Messrs. Leat and Samuels. Benevolent Fund Committee: Messrs. Davey, Leat, Samuels, and Wood.

New members were admitted for the following Branches: Bethnal Green, Huddersfield, Islington, Kingsland, Liverpool, Leeds and Bradford, Manchester, Sheffield, and the Parent Society. Application was made, and permission granted, for the formation of a Branch to be called the Leeds and Bradford Branch, and also for the formation of a Branch at Sheffield.

The Sub-Committee elected to consider and report upon the South Shields Scholarship Scheme—viz., Messrs. Dawson, Lloyd, and Quinton—were reappointed, with the addition of Mr. W. Davidson.

Some questions were asked concerning the list of books recommended for Courses of Study in Freethought, which had not yet been printed, and a resolution asking that it now take the form of a pamphlet was proposed. After some discussion, the mover withdrew, and Mr. Moss moved, and Mr. Quinton seconded, the following resolution, which was carried:—

"That a prepared list of books for students of Freethought be inserted in the *Freethinker* at an early date, such a list being preliminary to the publication in pamphlet form of a more complete list to be issued by the National Secular Society later on."

The President gave an account of the recent prosecutions at Nottingham of Messrs. Chasty and Muirhead under the Police Act of 1847; and, after some discussion, it was resolved that the N. S. S. pay the balance of the bill of costs, amounting to £7 odd.

The meeting then adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.**OUTDOOR.**

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

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

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

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, Mrs. Boyce, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, a Lecture; 7.30, J. Bellamy, "Religion and a Good Life."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, E. Burke, "The Fruits of Christian Civilisation."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Howell Smith, M.A., "The Christ Myth."

COUNTRY.**OUTDOOR.**

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Friday, July 12, at 8, "Birth and Death of Gods."

HYDE (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Sunday, July 7, at 7.30, "Royal Parasites"; Monday, 8, at 8, "Deity and Demos"; Tuesday, 9, at 8, "The Supernatural in History"; Wednesday, 10, at 8, "Paradoxes"; Thursday, 11, at 8, "An Old Story and a New Interpretation."

LONDON, ESSEX (opposite Luff's Hairdressing Saloon): Saturday, July 6, at 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Religion: A Product of the Human Mind."

LEEDS AND BRADFORD BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall Square, Leeds): C. Cohen, 11.15, "Christianity and Secularism"; 7, "The Challenge to Religion. (Evening meeting, if wet, in the Tailors' Institute, Cross-Stamford-street, Skinner-lane, North-street.)"

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Secretary—Miss E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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