

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*O sorrowing hearts of slaves,
We heard you beat from far.
We bring the light that saves,
We bring the morning star;
Freedom's good things we bring you, whence
all good things are.*

—SWINBURNE.

God and Morals.

It is a peculiarity of religious arguments that when placed in juxtaposition one will frequently cancel the other. Thus it is not unusual to find Christians taking the present condition of Christian nations, when compared with more ancient times, as proof of the purifying character of their creed; and, at the same time, they will lament the unquestioned and unquestionable spread of unbelief. But if disbelief has resulted in a visible deterioration of social life, the superiority of present over past society is nonexistent. If there is no such decline, but, on the contrary, a continued improvement, disbelief is, on the face of it, not inimical to progress, and the force of the argument for Christianity disappears. In the same way, when it is a question of the validity of a belief in a future life, the Christian dwells upon the imperfections of the present life as affording a strong presumption in favor of another. When it is a question of the existence of God, and the Atheist uses the imperfections of the world as making against the belief in God, these imperfections are declared to be but disguised blessings, and the "plan of creation" beyond criticism. The fact that he has destroyed one of his arguments for a future life in so defending his belief in Deity, never seems to dawn upon him for a moment.

Of course, strictly speaking, what is called the moral argument for Theism has no logical value so far as the mere existence of God is concerned. Those who say that if there be a God he must act in such and such a manner, confuse a mere question of fact with their own moral ideals. If there is a God, what he is like and how he acts ought to be questions of simple observation. There is nothing in the nature of the idea of God to prevent one conceiving him as wholly good, wholly bad, or a mixture of good and bad qualities. Although moral ideals play their part in determining the development of deities, they have nothing whatever to do with their origin. With very early religions there is no indication whatever that men are led to worship them out of admiration for their moral qualities. The keynote of primitive worship is not love, but fear. Indeed, the less malevolent the primitive gods are conceived to be, the greater the probability of service to them being minimised. Some deities will naturally be looked at with more kindly feelings than others, but, in the main, the gods are taken as troublesome but undeniable facts, they act as they will, and man must make the best of the situation as he finds it. Primitive gods are magnified men, but they are not perfected men. The moralisation of the gods belongs to a later stage of human evolution, and is consequent on social growth, not precedent to it. Dr. Jastrow has put the point very

fairly, in his *Study of Religion*, in the following passage:—

"The various rites practised by primitive society to ward off evils, or to secure the protection of dreaded powers or spirits, are based primarily upon logical considerations. If a certain stone is regarded as sacred it is probably because it is associated with some misfortune or some unusual piece of good luck. Someone, after sitting on the stone, may have died; or, on sleeping on it, may have had a remarkable vision. Taking, again, so common a belief among all people as the influence for good or evil exerted by the dead upon the living, and the numerous practices to which it gives rise.....it will be difficult to discover in these beliefs and ceremonies the faintest suggestion of any ethical influence. It is not the good, but the powerful spirits that are invoked; an appeal to them is not made by showing them examples of kindness, justice, or noble deeds, but by bribes, flatteries, and threats."

Yet while moral ideas have nothing to do with the origin of the belief in God, they have a very decided influence on its subsequent development. The process which results in the reaction of social and moral ideas on the belief in God is plainly marked and easily traced. I do not think, for instance, that anyone to-day would repeat St. Paul's teaching that as we are but as clay in the hands of the potter, the potter is justified in breaking or making us as he feels inclined. The belief that the relations between conscious beings should be governed by moral considerations, and not by a mere sense of power, is now so strong that men spontaneously apply this standard to any assumed relations between man and God, and pass judgment accordingly. This is seen strongest and clearest of all in the common expression that a God who was not morally good ought not to be worshiped; and in the anxiety to prove that the actions of Deity are in accordance with our most developed notions of moral conduct. No small part of the energies of religious people has, for some generations, been devoted to the work of so manipulating the current conception of God that it shall not offend the moral sentiments of the age.

With many, indeed, the moral aspect is decisive. Purely intellectual arguments may leave them unmoved. They may formally acknowledge their strength, but they do not appear to affect them very deeply. But a sudden catastrophe, a shipwreck, an earthquake, an epidemic, an unmerited disaster that afflicts one's relatives, or friends, or neighbors, strikes them with peculiar force and pungency. Then, for the first time, they seem to properly realise that the world is not as it should be if God is what they are told he is. Almost unconsciously they apply the same standard of moral measurement that they use to their fellow human beings, with disastrous consequences to their faith. In the very nature of the case exact statements cannot be made, but it is extremely probable that more people have lost their faith in God as a consequence of shock to their moral sense than by any purely reasoned appeal to their intellect.

It is the clash of observed facts with primitive belief that gives birth to the hosts of apologies that strive to justify the ways of God to man. The pity is that preachers and hearers so seldom realise that these apologies are in themselves condemnations. A God whose methods need so much explaining must needs become the subject of suspicion. A God whose claim to worship rested upon the moral order

of the universe should at least have made that order plain enough for one of average intelligence to understand. Justice is not so difficult to comprehend, and a sense of fair play is tolerably strong even with children. That there should be so widespread a doubt as to whether the arrangement of the universe satisfies moral requirements is in itself strong presumption in favor of disbelief.

Christian preachers are never tired of asserting that the universe has a moral governor, although always shrinking from this government being tested by any accepted moral standard. But moral government must mean a replica of rules that we believe ought to govern human relations. How does the government of God stand the test? Let anyone put to himself the question, "Would I act as God is presumed to act if I possessed the power and wisdom he is believed to possess?" and there will be but one answer. Hardly anyone would; and the proof of this is that hardly anyone does. So far as we have the power, we strive to correct God's rule in a thousand and one directions. Of course, such a test is repudiated by believers as blasphemy, but blasphemy is only a religious description of things the religious man does not care for. Otherwise, there is nothing unfair or unreasonable in what has been said. The test is really suggested by the Theist himself. It is not the Atheist who desires to apply moral standards to the universe. Such tests are to him ridiculously out of place. It is the Theist who insists that the workings of the universe disclose a "moral plan," the Atheist simply takes him at his word and judges the world by the test suggested, and then exhibits the result.

If the world really has a "moral governor," we are fully warranted in asking for proof to be furnished in the world itself. It is useless replying that we cannot see far enough, and that what appears to our limited view to be evil may, to a larger and more comprehensive gaze, turn out to be unalloyed good. Our judgment of the world, whatever its form, must be based upon this same limited survey; and, if its condemnation is to be dismissed as untrustworthy, its approval may be equally lacking in validity. If a larger view be taken, it might turn apparent evil into real good; it might, also, turn apparent good into ultimate evil. The chances on both sides are equal, and we must make up our mind either to trust or distrust our human judgment, such as it is. And to bring in the possibility of a future life where all things may be made clear is to surrender to the Atheist outright. For it is a tacit admission that this world does not provide the evidence it is supposed to furnish.

The test applied by the Atheist is not an unreasonable one; it is, indeed, the only one consistent with a due sense of intellectual rectitude. The Atheist is told that the world furnishes evidence of a plan, and that this plan indicates a moral rule. He examines the world, and while he finds much goodness, he also finds everywhere suffering, injustice, and misery. They are present in both the animal and the human worlds. Neither goodness nor badness are rewarded as we would have them rewarded. Diseases flourish, and the knowledge necessary to overcome them is of slow growth. Disasters by sea and land overwhelm the imagination with the intensity of their horror. People are born into the world preordained by the combined influence of heredity and environment to a drunkard's, a criminal's, or a suicide's grave. Would infinite power and wisdom, if possessed by a being of only average human goodness, tolerate such a state of things for an instant? The conduct of most people provides a ready answer to the question. The very people who argue that "Providence" has, with infinite wisdom, arranged things on the most beneficent plan are often found trying to bring about a different state of things. Those who attempt to justify the existence of natural laws whereby children suffer from inherited weaknesses, are found doing what they can to check their operation. All human culture and civilisation is, from

one point of view, an attempt to correct the order established by Deity. Man's inhumanity to man may make countless thousands mourn, but man's humanity towards his fellow-man should cause the "Father of All" to blush for his conduct towards his children.

(To be concluded.)

C. COHEN.

The Theologian's Dilemma.

IT is an incontrovertible fact that within the Churches Christianity is losing its hold upon the people in every part of Europe. This is not a mere opinion but an arithmetical certainty which cannot be doubted by any honest person. Even the divines are forced to admit so much; but their efforts to evade its only natural implications are highly entertaining. According to a report in the *Christian Commonwealth* for August 7, the Rev. Dr. Warschauer, the other Sunday evening, delivered a discourse on Christ or Buddha? and at its close, when discussion was allowed, an interested and somewhat puzzled hearer asked how it could be said that Christianity was growing, seeing that, according to their own statistics, there is taking place in the Churches a steady falling off in membership. The following is Dr. Warschauer's answer:—

"Christianity is not confined to chapels and churches. There is a great deal of it outside. The fact that a church suffers in its membership does not prove that Christianity is coming to an end. Churches, I know, chronicle year by year a slight decrease in membership. Why? Because the Churches are unduly conservative, because they cling to obsolete forms and dogmas, and don't accommodate themselves to the spirit of the age; because they will not see that the new knowledge is knowledge and truth from God."

Our contemporary entitles its report "A Heckler Answered," as if it believed that the reverend gentleman had scored a magnificent triumph over his misguided "heckler." From that conviction, if it really exists, we wish to express our most unqualified dissent. What does Dr. Warschauer mean by the Christianity of which, he maintains, there is "a great deal outside" the Churches? In the New Testament, Christian discipleship signifies an open confession of Jesus as Savior and Lord (Mat. x. 32, 33; Rom. x. 8-11). There belief in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and confession of him as Lord with the mouth, are represented as the two essential conditions of salvation. Now, how much of that belief and open confession can anybody find outside the Churches? Even inside there is often but very little of either. Surely, if in France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Great Britain, the Church, the Body, the Bride, of Christ, in which Jesus promised to dwell evermore, is visibly decaying; and if in all these countries social life is undergoing a continuous process of secularisation, how can anybody contend that Christianity is growing?

Dr. Warschauer accounts for the arrest of progress in the Churches by charging them with a serious lack of adaptability. According to him their excessive conservatism is the cause of their feebleness. Their dogmas are said to be obsolete and unworkable. What a curious position! Jesus confidently predicted that when he departed he would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples, and that he, when he came, would show them his things and guide them into all truth. How comes it, then, that now, at last, after being under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost in all ages, they are declared guilty of being "unduly conservative," and of clinging to "obsolete forms and dogmas"? Paul says that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. 1 iv.)—is that an "obsolete dogma" at the Horton Lane Chapel, Bradford? If not, why not? If the resurrection of Jesus is not an "obsolete dogma," but has been adapted to the spirit of the age in the New Theology workshop, what about his miraculous conception in

Mary's womb? Has the latter been adapted to the spirit of the age, or has it been dropped as unadaptable?

Again, what does Dr. Warschauer understand by accommodation to "the spirit of the age"? Does he for a moment imagine that "the spirit of the age" is in any sense Christian? In St. John's time "the spirit of the age" was a thing to condemn and shun, and the disciples were solemnly exhorted to keep themselves unspotted from it. Has it now become so vastly improved that a Christian's duty towards it is to enter into partnership with it on its own terms? Dr. Horton, however, still both hates and fears it. In his opinion "the spirit of the age" is almost wholly Atheistical, and should be vigorously resisted. Speaking at Liverpool, on the occasion of the centenary of the once famous Dr. Raffles, he was in the doldrums and sadly confessed that as Christian workers they were "confronted with enormous difficulties." He went so far as to affirm that "the whole current of things is against us." We believe that in that utterance Dr. Horton was entirely accurate. "The whole current of things" is away from every form of supernaturalism, and the chief attribute of "the spirit of the age" is secularity. The dogma of the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible is no less acceptable to it than the most liberal theological theory of the Atonement or of the person of Jesus Christ. The truth is that no theory whatsoever in which supernatural elements are embodied can be harmonised with the *Zeitgeist*. Its trend is altogether naturalistic. We are informed by the *Cosmopolitan*, an able American magazine, that the faculties of the great universities of the United States are almost definitely anti-Christian in their sympathies and teachings, and that the hundreds of thousands of students who attend them are being trained to look upon the Decalogue, the home, morality, and marriage as of exclusively human origin. Is Dr. Warschauer prepared to accommodate himself to the academic trend in America?

With these facts in mind, we venture to express the opinion that Dr. Warschauer returned a simply evasive answer to his "heckler's" question. In plain words, what he said was that Christianity, while shrinking and apparently decaying inside the Churches, is growing stronger and stronger outside, which is surely absurd; and we respectfully challenge the reverend gentleman to tell us in what portion of the "outside" he has discovered such "a great deal" of Christianity. Has he found it in the commercial world, where the cruel spirit of competition still holds sway, where every man tries hard to utilise other men as stepping-stones to wealth and power? Will he recommend the members of his congregation to accommodate themselves to that spirit? And yet it must be admitted that commercialism is a conspicuous spirit of the age, and that a vast multitude of people live under its dominion. Or does he find "a great deal" of Christianity in the social life of the "outside," where belief in God is quiescent, if even latent, and where the hope of a second life, if present at all, counts for naught? Can there possibly be "a great deal" of Christianity in the absence of that belief and that hope, as well as of all active faith in Christ? In such "outside" society there may be high-toned morality, but so there is in parts of the world into which Christianity has never penetrated.

Possibly Dr. Warschauer has chiefly in his mind the scientific spirit of the age, to which he thinks the theologians ought to accommodate themselves more completely than they have yet done. In this connection a great deal of accommodation has been accomplished in certain quarters, but exclusively on the theologians' part. It must not be forgotten that several of the most popular divines of to-day are distinctly anti-scientific. They do not hesitate to proclaim from pulpits and other platforms that the Bible is true, and that science is false; that God is right and Darwin wrong; that Paul *knew*, and Herbert Spencer merely *imagined*; that a Christian's first duty is to believe and keep his reasoning facul-

ties in subjection. To our mind, these people are the only consistent Christians. The supreme word of the Bible is *Faith*; and faith, to be honestly cherished, must be as blind as a bat. True believers are incapable of accommodating themselves to anything external to the objects of their faith. Another fact that must not be forgotten is that the faith of those who do accommodate themselves to scientific knowledge visibly shrinks. Their theology becomes vague, nebulous, ethereal, ghostly, intangible, and there is so much less of it. Fifty years ago faith covered a much larger area than it does to-day, except in the case of the strictly orthodox. The accommodation has consisted in dropping this dogma, in slightly modifying that, and in radically reconstructing the other. The Bible has become almost invisible, only the tiniest specks here and there being claimed as jewels straight from heaven.

What is "the new knowledge" which Dr. Warschauer accuses the Churches of failing to recognise as "knowledge and truth from God"? To speak of knowledge as coming from God is the veriest religious cant. All knowledge comes as the reward of observation and experiment. Nature's secrets are never disclosed in answer to prayer. She only yields them up to those who diligently search for them, and even to them only in a tantalisingly stingy fashion. Knowledge is the wages of hard and patient work; and in the exact measure in which it is acquired faith wanes. The connection between knowledge and God is purely imaginary. Faith implies the absence of knowledge, and knowledge is necessarily the negation of faith. Now, in the realm of science, how much Christianity obtains? How many scientists are there who believe in a loving Heavenly Father, who sent his only begotten Son into the world to be murdered for its redemption? How many biologists are there who cherish the notion that there inhabits the human body a spiritual substance which can never die? Speaking of the scientific world as a whole, we are compelled to aver that Christianity is conspicuous in it alone by its absence.

In these circumstances, no other conclusion is permissible than that Christianity is slowly dying out of the world. The number of those who cling to it in its primitive simplicity is exceedingly small. As held by the majority, it is nothing but a mongrel whose doom is destruction. Yes, Christianity is growing; but, like a very old man, it is growing smaller, shrinking into itself, which is symptomatic of its approaching end. Knowledge, too, is growing; but, like a child, it is growing larger, and becoming stronger, every day. And already it is beginning to take man by the hand, and to show him the path of life. Knowledge is the only genuine power, the only true providence, the only safe guide through life.

J. T. LLOYD.

The International Eugenic Congress.

THE representatives of all nations were lately occupied in the discussion of Eugenics. The object is praiseworthy, and a most significant sign of the times.

It is an admission that degeneration is at work, and that human effort must be directed towards its elimination and reduction to a minimum. To the student of sociology this discovery is not new, but rather a confirmation of what sound reformers have been urging on the consideration of the world for several generations.

The power of God is being transferred to man, who has become the real "almighty." We see science ousting superstition, and directing the blind efforts of past ages into rational channels. We learn that inspiration is the result of researches into the properties of matter and objective facts, and not the airy dreams of neurotic prophets and cunning priests. We glean that revelation emanates, not from prayers, but from the study of nature and

experiments in the laboratory. These are obvious facts, but ought to be made more obvious to be "understanded" by the people.

Mr. Balfour's speech at the banquet was ingenious and characteristic. Being a Christian and a worthy son of the Established Church, which believes and teaches that man was created after the image of God, he asserted boldly that "from the point of view of genetics man is a wild animal." What a compliment to God—the Creator! He further said that if the number of the unfit was increasing, his conclusion was that they were more adapted to the environment. This savors more of political sloppiness than of philosophic or scientific insight.

Left to nature, all the unfit will be unmercifully eliminated. Nature has no sentiment, no emotion; and we see nothing but "consequences."

But, as a matter of fact, we are breeding the unfit with deadly precision and in alarming numbers.

Increase and multiply are the pride and glory of Christianity.

Mr. Begbie informed us recently, in the columns of the *Daily Chronicle*, that one thousand illegitimate children are born every week in this country. Dr. Barnardo's homes are also full, and yet Dr. Ingram, the Bishop of London, has been lamenting over the decrease in the birth-rate. The reduction in subscriptions and the number to be hereafter damned will not suit the Church.

No student of history can deny that great improvement has been made since the revival of learning and the great discoveries in science in the last century.

The human race—the civilised part—is more, though not quite, free, and in many respects more happy. Life is more secure, and property claims and receives greater protection from governments. Slavery is not so common, and the production of food is easier and more plentiful. Except in India, plagues and famines are almost unknown. Wealth is produced beyond the dreams of avarice. The growth of exports from 1900 to 1911 shows the following increases:—

United Kingdom	...	...	163 millions
Germany	...	...	171 "
United States	...	...	143 "
France	...	...	83 "
Belgium	...	...	58 "
Austria-Hungary	...	...	18 "
Italy	...	...	84 "
Russia	...	...	84 "

Some American millionaires have more wealth than was at the command of the treasury of the Roman Empire. Mr. Rockefeller alone is credited with an income of £28 a minute. The renowned wealth of the Indies in the time of Clive and Hastings was a trifle compared with the gold and securities deposited in the cellars of the banks of Europe and America. The diamond mines in South Africa have yielded value to the tune of millions.

Much human labor has been shifted on to nature. Mechanical appliances are daily doing work that was done by men a few years ago. So much so, that one of the great conflicts of our time is between men and machines. Medical science and surgery have reached a high point of efficiency and are relieving much human agony and misery. Theatres, museums, picture galleries, libraries, botanical and zoological gardens, are the study and delight of millions. Travelling is safer, more comfortable, and more rapid. Mighty ships cross the ocean at flying speed; and with the aid of electricity, the telegraph, and the telephone, we have annihilated space.

Social intercourse is more general and manners are more refined. Commerce, and the interchange of ideas, have done more to bring humanity together than all the waste of soldiers and missionaries. All this has been effected in defiance of Christian Eugenics and by the effort and heroism of Secularists.

We are moving slowly, but the pace is neither uniform nor regular because supernatural religion is still dominant, although it is losing ground fast.

However, it is impossible to overlook or disregard other dangerous factors which are insidiously undermining civilisation and the future of the race.

There is not much hope of salvation when we spend thirty millions in propagating a barbarous religion and only fourteen millions on education.

Ignorance breeds selfishness, poverty, misery, disease, unemployment, and general discontent.

Production is ample and could be considerably increased, but distribution is not equitable.

Sympathy is evident in all the activities of legislation and administration. Our hearts are getting bigger, but unless our brains develop in the same or greater ratio our doom is sealed.

Apart from the waste of money there is a criminal waste of intellect. Churches and institutions are kept up to perpetuate barbarism and privilege. The general result is ignorance and slavery of the mind—more degrading than the slavery of the body. There can be no compromise between truth and falsehood, justice and tyranny, sanity and stupidity. The whole trend of legislation, in our time, is to palliate evils and to provide for them.

If we have more diseases we are advised to build more hospitals; if more lunatics, more asylums; if more unemployed, more State grants. The genius of present statesmanship openly declares that the fit, the successful, the healthy, the rich, the provident must be taxed to maintain those who are unfit, who are failures, who are insane, who are poor either through adverse circumstances or personal defects.

Alas! there are limits to taxation.

I have always contended that society will never cease breeding the unfit until he becomes too costly to maintain. To perpetuate the unfit is not only to make the struggle for existence harder, but, given time, their number would swamp society, and inevitably end the tragic drama of human existence.

There is a higher consideration than charity, namely, to inquire honestly and intelligently into the causes that make it urgent. To insure millions against poverty, unemployment, disease, and maternity benefit may be a smart way of muddling with large social problems, but it does not redound to the glory of our present civilisation, or remove the causes that give rise to such desperate provisions.

Indiscriminate State charity, at the expense of other citizens—mostly poor—instead of solving the social problem, will ultimately dissolve society.

Reform should begin with education, and not with legislation. Until we adopt Secular Education, and teach our children what is *true* and *useful*, and improve the conditions under which they live and work, and bring about a rational change in the whole social environment, nothing of a permanent character will result.

E. BURKE.

More About Blasphemy.—II.

THERE seems to be some misunderstanding of what we wrote in the final paragraph of last week's instalment of this article. A veteran Freethinker, in the course of a general letter to us, says: "I am glad to see that you have come round to my view that it is always best for a Freethinker to defend himself." It is pleasant, of course, to find our friends coming round to our own views; but, as a matter of fact, we have not come round to our friend's view at all. Whether a "blasphemer" defends himself or not makes very little difference to the result, as far as he is concerned. The Leeds "blasphemers" defended themselves and got three and four months' imprisonment respectively. The Sheffield "blasphemer" was defended, and he also got a three months' sentence. But the N. S. S. lost the money it spent on solicitor and counsel. What is clear is that in "such cases"—so we wrote—as Bullock's there is little, if anything, to be gained by employing solicitor and counsel who have no special interest in the matter;

or who, if they have, cannot very well afford to make more than a half-hearted, apologetic defence of the defendant's right to be judged by the same criterion of the "decencies of controversy" as is applied to other lecturers, debaters, or journalists in other (political or social) discussions.

If the veteran Freethinker already referred to were prosecuted for "blasphemy" we should advise him to defend himself, because he is capable of doing it, with the aid of a little coaching from ourselves, with whom this question has become a speciality. But if he were not capable of defending himself, we should advise him to do so or not according to the particular circumstances of the case. Every case, we assert, should be dealt with on its own "merits." One case might not be worth spending a penny on, another might be worth spending ten pounds on, and another might be worth spending hundreds of pounds on. Take the Boulter case. It cost the N. S. S. considerably over £200, but look at the other side of the account. The money enabled us to engage counsel of high standing, and to give the case generally an air of importance. The judge was obliged to make a careful statement of the Common Law of Blasphemy. In doing so, Mr. Justice Phillimore accepted the judgment of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in the *Freethinker* prosecution in 1883, and Mr. Justice Darling, Mr. Justice Horridge, and Mr. Justice Bankes, have since followed the lead of Mr. Justice Phillimore. We were right, therefore, in designing and establishing the Secular Society, Ltd., founding it on the Gibraltar-rock, as we conceived it, of Lord Coleridge's decision. And the demonstration that we were right, and that the Incorporated Society is perfectly safe, is worth vastly more than the money the demonstration cost. We assured the Freethought party that the Incorporated Society gave it financial security; yet we honestly assured it that Freethought advocates were still liable to prosecution and imprisonment. It sounded odd, but we were right—in both cases, as events have proved.

Another advantage arising from the expenditure of money in the Boulter case was this. Even after he gave an undertaking not to "blaspheme" again, and broke it, he was only imprisoned for a month, which is the shortest "blasphemy" sentence on record. And the shortening of the sentence is something more than a relief to the prisoner. It acts as a deterrent to the malignity of the prosecutors, and as their pleasure diminishes even in successful attacks on Freethinkers, they are less likely to incur the trouble and expense of putting the infamous old Blasphemy Laws into operation.

In itself, by the way, the Boulter case was on all fours with the "blasphemy" cases that have occurred since.

Money or no money, legal defence or no legal defence, the reason why "blasphemy" prosecutions never fail is very simple. A Freethinker is placed in the dock for writing or saying something "offensive" to Christian susceptibilities; twelve real or supposed Christians are placed in the jury-box, and practically asked no more and no less than this, "Gentlemen, do you like this? Is it fair criticism of our holy religion?" They don't like it. How should they? They don't consider it fair criticism of their holy religion. How could they? They answer the judge's questions in the negative. That means guilty. Then the real or supposed Christian judge passes sentence. And the real or supposed Christian officials, the governor and the chaplain of a Christian prison, see to all the rest. And when the victim of Christian justice gets into his cell in the Christian prison he finds the only thing he has to read in it is a Christian book called the Bible.

We think it will be fully understood now why we said we should advise the "blasphemer," in all such cases as the recent ones, to defend himself—unless a sympathetic barrister or counsel can be found to do justice to the defence. But obviously this general rule needs very careful application.

It is necessary to say, therefore, that young men like Bullock—or older men in a similar position

—who know quite well that they cannot really defend themselves, must not lightly rush in where wiser men might hesitate to tread, and fancy that the explanation that they were "moved by the spirit" to do it is a sufficient justification of crude and vulgar language, entitling them to the unlimited support of the N. S. S. and its President. Be as pointed, as trenchant, as witty, as scathing as you like; but crude and vulgar language only harm the cause you advocate; and if you cannot use any other language you had better be silent.

We admit that a good deal of discussion is possible as to what is and what is not crude and vulgar language. One's judgment in such cases should not be finical. The language of one class is not the language of another. The language of the plain man is not the language of the scholar. The language of the "warm" man is not the language of the man of cool temper. The language of the tyro is not the language of the practised debater. But there comes a point when all reasonable limits are overstepped, and most people are then of one opinion. Not that crude and vulgar language, unless it is very outrageous, should be treated as criminal. Still less that it should be made the cover of a "blasphemy" prosecution. We protest against that policy with all the energy we possess.

Mr. Justice Bankes followed the Coleridge doctrine of "blasphemy" which now holds the field. He is reported in the *Sheffield Independent* as follows:—

"Everybody realises that nowadays a man may entertain any opinion that he thinks right. No man is bound to profess any form of religion. No man is bound to entertain any religious opinion at all. A man is entitled to entertain any opinion he thinks fit with regard to religion or anything else, and he is entitled to advocate his own opinions. He is also entitled, within certain limits, to criticise the opinions of others. But it is here that the law does not allow him to overstep certain limits. One realises how many different forms of religious opinion there are, and how rightly and justly persons regard the particular form of religion they believe in as, to them at any rate, a very sacred thing. One would think that anybody who possesses a spark of decent feeling when he is discussing things and matters which, he must know, are regarded with great reverence by others, would be careful to use language which would not give offence. But this man is one of those who apparently pick out language which is calculated to give all the offence that is possible, and he selects it apparently for that purpose. He seems to revel in it, and comes here to assert that he has a right to use it, regardless of opinions or feelings of others."

We cannot say that Mr. Justice Bankes's statement of the law is any improvement on Lord Coleridge's. The old law of "blasphemy" was not intended for the protection of people's "religious feelings"—it was intended for the protection of the Christian religion—and for no other form of religion whatever. The very language of the form of indictment still in use is in itself a sufficient proof of this fact. But the Christian religion can no longer be protected. All that is now possible is the harrying of the more illiterate speakers who attack it before the man in the street. It is for the poor luxury of prosecuting such men that Christians still cling to their old Blasphemy Laws. It places them below contempt.

G. W. FOOTE.

ADMONITION.

The widower had just taken his fourth wife and was showing her around the village. Among the places visited was the churchyard, and the bride paused before a very elaborate tombstone that had been erected by the bridegroom. Being a little nearsighted, she asked him to read the inscriptions, and in reverent tones he read:

"Here lies Susan, beloved wife of John Smith, and Jane, beloved wife of John Smith, and Mary, beloved wife of John Smith."

He paused abruptly and the bride, leaning forward to see the bottom line, read to her horror:

"Be Ye Also Ready."

Madame Andrée d'Albert, who represented the women of France at the last Peace Congress at the Hague, is president of a new League for the propagation of politeness and courtesy. We are pleased to reproduce the following remarks of this lady in appealing for members for the League:—

"In default of real benevolence and self-abnegation, which are to-day the characteristics of only a privileged few, we want to induce people to be at least polite and courteous towards one another, instead of rudely manifesting unnecessary hostility on every possible occasion.

"For instance, when a little boy in a crowded carriage rises to offer his seat to a lady, we do not want his mother to say—as many mothers do at present—'Sit down, you have pail for your seat.' A little boy, however good his natural disposition, brought up with these ideas, would never grow up courteous and gallant, as Frenchmen were formerly; and if his natural instincts are bad such a method of education will develop them. It is to the failure of parents to teach their children consideration for others that we must largely ascribe the rise of the 'apache,' and the exploits of such scoundrels as the motor bandits who recently terrorised the whole country. Small causes have great effects.

"Politeness costs nothing, and yet it will do much to remove the sharp angles of life."

A League of that kind is sadly needed in Christian England. The English are not an ill-natured people; on the whole, they are good-natured and good-tempered; but they are insufferably rude, not so much to strangers, as to each other. Their manners are more vulgar, it seems to us, than they used to be in our younger days. And this is largely due to women. They allow men to do and say all sorts of things in their presence that wouldn't have been tolerated forty years ago. They also bring up their children more selfishly. They love them as much as ever, but they do not love them wisely. A well-behaved, soft-spoken child is a beautiful object. An undisciplined child is a nuisance to others, and ends by being a nuisance to itself.

The August number of the *Humanitarian*, the organ of the Humanitarian League, contains a number of items of interest—that is to say, mostly, of sinister interest—to Freethinkers. After nearly two thousand years of Christianity it is extraordinary what reeking masses of cruelty lie about, even in this England which boasts of being the most Christian country in the world. The Humanitarian League has long been engaged in the work of shifting these moral muck-heaps, and it has achieved a considerable measure of success. But a curious drawback is that as soon as one evil is dealt with another—though perhaps a smaller one—springs up to take its place. We see that the League has had to address a letter to the Lord Chancellor, calling his attention to the increased flogging of children, under the very Children Act which has been described as the Children's Charter. Cruelty and malignity are always lying in wait for opportunities of gratification. There is no use in denying it. And we are always ready to give thanks to the Humanitarian League for its wise, and never vengeful, efforts to frustrate the forces of evil. We wish its monthly organ an ever increasing circulation.

WHAT SHE SAID IN HER HASTE.

The wife of a leading minister in a New Jersey town, says *Lippincott's*, was sitting on the porch of the manse when a man with a grip in his hand started to come up the steps.

Spotting him at once for a book agent or a peddler, she said firmly: "Nothing to-day."

"Have you one?" queried the stranger.

Fearing that an affirmative answer might lead to further conversation, in which the salesman would try to demonstrate the improvements made in the article since she had purchased hers, the minister's wife answered shortly, "No!"

Shaking his head, the man retreated down the steps, repeating this sentence several times: "Hasn't got one; doesn't want one."

The man's manner and tone of voice awakened the woman's curiosity; so very soon she went over to a neighbor's house, where she had seen the man stop, and asked:

"What was that man who was here a few minutes ago selling?"

To her astonishment and chagrin the neighbor replied, "Bibles."

KNEW HIS GROUND.

The story is told of a Congressman that he once declared in an address to the House, "As Daniel Webster says in his dictionary."

"It was Noah who wrote the dictionary," whispered a colleague who sat at the next desk.

"Noah nothing," replied the speaker. "Noah built the ark."

Acid Drops.

The Boy Scouts are dressed up and equipped to look the most ridiculous objects "in creation." We pity them every time we see one. No doubt the lads are all right in their way—but they are not the intellectual pick of the young population. Yet it has been possible for the newspapers, aided by the First Lord of the Admiralty, to work up another orgy of sentimentalism, following on the heels of the *Titanic* debauch. John Bull, indeed, can be made to weep so easily! Making him think is the difficult matter. Just look at this Boy Scout case. A few of them got drowned during the August bank-holiday, when the drowning of holiday makers is common, especially in rough weather. The newspapers, however,—the great corrupters of public taste and sentiment—worked up the accident for all it was worth. The Church—another corrupter—joined in. The boys' bodies were brought to London on a warship; as if they were young Nelsons who had died in battle. Gallons of tears were shed over them. Their funeral was turned into a great public event, and all the resources of ecclesiasticism were employed to give religion a splendid advertisement among the "sobbing crowd." This nation is becoming quite maudlin.

Amongst the floral tributes at the Boy Scouts' funeral was one from Sir Robert Baden-Powell, and the card attached bore this inscription:—

"Be prepared.
With loving sympathy of the
Chief Scout.
'It is I, be not afraid.'"

One is puzzled to know whether this is addressed to the dead or the living. If to the dead, the writer should have reflected that the departed lads, if there be a future life at all, know more about it than he can tell them. If to the living, the first line is rather cheeky, and the last line rather unintelligible in this connection. "It is I, be not afraid," is what Christ is reported to have said to his disciples when he came to them walking on the water. But there was no Christ walking on the water when the lads were drowned.

Poor Turkey! Her troubles began the moment she started a serious work of self-reformation. Christian bullies and thieves have been at her ever since. She has not been given a single chance. It may be that she is doomed to be broken to pieces very shortly by the rascally and hypocritical Christian Powers, whose only policy is to secure the largest possible share of the spoil. We hope, however, peaceful as our principles are, that she will make them pay dear for their prizes; that she will fight to the very last gasp, and go down, if she must, in blood and fire. If scoundrels are breaking into your house, with the declared intention of robbing and murdering you, there is only one thing for you to do, to sell your life as dearly as possible. Self-defence needs no certificate from Peace Societies; it is justified by the laws of nature.

Poor Turkey again! In the midst of all her other troubles "Providence" sends her a very fine and large earthquake, killing a thousand people, injuring many times as many, and committing frightful devastation. "Bless and praise his holy name!"

Turkey has always shown far more religious toleration than the Christian nations. She has always upheld the right of asylum. Men who were hunted out of other countries found shelter within her borders. It was to Turkey that Kossuth and his colleagues fled, and all the threats of Russia and Austria could not induce her to hand over one of them. And it was England that backed Turkey up in that attitude. England loved liberty then. She loves nothing but herself now.

According to the *Daily Herald*, free speech is being threatened in the domain of the Duke of Norfolk. Meetings of the British Socialist Party have been interrupted by the police, and speakers have been threatened with prosecution. We are, of course, strongly opposed to any infringement of the right of free speech, no matter what the opinion is that is expressed. But we feel bound to point out that Socialists have shown themselves generally apathetic during the prosecutions for blasphemy in the last two or three years, and are now, perhaps, only reaping the result of their indifference. Freethought has always been in front in the fight for free speech, and, when that is attacked, it is a mere question of time and opportunity for assaults on other opinions to follow. We wish the British Socialist Party

every success in its struggle for free speech, and also a lively solicitude for the same freedom wherever attacked.

The Archbishop of York delivered the inaugural address before the Sanitary Congress in York, and cheerfully remarked that, while the Mediæval Ages were picturesque, they were also pestilential and plague-stricken. His Grace might have added they were also Christian—very much so. And it would have been no exaggeration to have said that their pestilency and plague were partly due to their being Christian. It was a time when people trusted to religion instead of to sanitation; when the ideal character was a dirty monk, and the scientist worked with a halter round his neck. The old Roman world understood the need for sanitation and the benefits of cleanliness. The Christian world troubled about neither. And if the Archbishop of York desires to find out why the Mediæval period was so eminently the period of disease, he will find an explanation in the prevalence of the religion he represents. Happily, times have changed, and the Church now sees the wisdom of blessing what it has been powerless to destroy.

Parliament was rising and the silly season was beginning. The big gooseberry and the sea serpent being a good deal played out, it is necessary to find a newer sensation. Accordingly the newspapers announced that Mrs. Brown Potter was studying Esoteric Buddhism. We shan't be long now. The millennium will soon be here—thanks to the ex-actress with the copper-colored hair, whose former prophecies, however, in the name of the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, were not realised.

The original Buddhism was Atheistic. But we reckon that fact won't please Mrs. Brown Potter any more than it pleases Mrs. Annie Besant. We are not surprised, therefore, to read the *Christian Commonwealth's* grave announcement, "Mrs. Brown Potter has placed herself under the tuition of a Hindustani Guru, and is said to be devoting her energies to the soul communion as taught by the Yogis of the Himalayas." "Soul communion" is good. It is often played, we believe, by hysterical ladies and sentimental gentlemen, and is apt to pass from Platonism to something more substantial.

We have received a cutting from the August 7 issue of the *Indicator*, which we understand is a Paddington paper, containing a report of the proceedings relating to "Hell Fire" at the International Bible Students' Convention which appears to have been sitting for several days in the London Tabernacle, Lancaster Gate. The gentlemen thus assembled—we don't see any ladies' names in the report—passed a warm resolution against the orthodox idea of God's prison, where there is supposed to be unlimited brimstone without a spoonful of treacle:—

"We now unreservedly repudiate as thoroughly unscriptural the teaching of a place, state, or condition of a literal 'lake of fire and brimstone' for the torment of the wicked; and, further, we believe from many personal testimonies that the vast majority of ministers of all Protestant denominations have privately repudiated the 'Hell Fire' theory, but have, for supposedly good reasons, hesitated fully to inform their congregations; and, further, we believe on this account, thousands and perhaps tens of thousands, are being driven into scepticism and infidelity."

We quite understand this resolution, which is not as simple as it looks. Protestant ministers know that Hell is played out. Interest in it used to be hotter than the equator; it is now colder than the poles. The Revised Version of the Bible no longer spells it Hell, but Hades—which sounds rather inviting; anyhow, you might say it for an hour without frightening a cat off the garden wall. Yes, the Protestants—all but the Salvation Army—have dropped Hell, and we are not surprised that the most resolute of them are now declaring that the Bible never taught it at all. The texts that were thought to teach it certainly look as if they do teach it; but we must look deeper than the surface; that is, we must see first what they ought to mean, and then make them mean it. That is the only profitable method of interpretation. But the Roman Catholics still keep hold of Hell. The Papist priests realise that no hell means no devil, and that no hell or devil means in the long run no priest. Nor was it really the Protestants who disestablished Hell. Freethinkers did it—and suffered hell while they were doing it.

It seems that there are 2,500 ordained women preachers in the United States. We are pleased to know there are so many, but wish they were engaged in a more worthy cause. We wonder what St. Paul would have to say to this arrangement if he could be brought to life for a little while? He

ordered women to keep silence in the Church, and here are 2,500 of them officially ordered to do the very opposite. Poor Paul would probably behave as though he had a repetition of the sunstroke that led to his conversion.

The Bible is the work of man. Woman had no hand in writing it. When the day of her emancipation comes she will be proud of the fact. And when "tiffs" are on she will let the man know it. Asking him "Who wrote the Bible?" will keep him quiet for a bit. It is a question that doesn't leave him a chance.

Mr. Roosevelt is firmly persuaded that the United States will go to the dogs, or something very like it, if he is not elected President again. He is forming a political machine of his own to secure his election. We fancy, somehow or other, that "Teddy" won't win the prize. His piety, for one thing, seems too flagrant even for the citizens of that religion-ridden country. "Teddy" led the multitude at the first Roosevelt Convention in singing "Onward Christian Soldiers." Evidently he feels he has the bulk of Christians with him—or that he will have them before November. Fortunately, these Christian soldiers have no weapons except their tongues, and, when the time comes, their votes. Otherwise, one might smell a serious danger in letting the Roosevelters loose upon the community. He who kills characters might soon kill persons. The godly Roosevelt has called Thomas Paine "a filthy little Atheist"—which we described before as three lies in three words. His attention has been drawn to the matter. He has been shown that Thomas Paine was very clean and well-dressed while he was able to care for himself, that he was tall (being five feet ten) and handsome, and that he wrote eloquently to prove the existence of God. But what a man like Roosevelt says stands, whether true or false. He will never correct a blunder unless it pays him to do so. Why should he apologise for libelling a Freethinker? "Onward Christian Soldiers!"

Roosevelt repeated at that meeting what he said at Chicago. "We stand at Armageddon," he said, "and we battle for the Lord." Of course it couldn't be anything less than Armageddon with Roosevelt's fortunes hanging in the balance; and it is nothing short of blasphemy to doubt that "Teddy" is fighting for the Lord. But the important question, after all, is something different. Is the Lord fighting for "Teddy"? Ay, there's the rub. And the question can only be answered retrospectively, when the presidential elections are over. We must wait and see. So must "Teddy."

Threepenny pieces are getting more common, the *Daily Chronicle* says, though we haven't noticed it. Our contemporary attributes the alleged phenomenon to Mr. Lloyd George and the National Insurance Act. But may it not be due to another cause? The decline in church attendance means a diminished call for threepenny bits, which thus get into common circulation instead of being kept for Sunday.

Papa Sarto is said to live simply in the Vatican, but he has to dress up for his public performances, and it appears to be the official rule that he should wear different garments every day of the year. "Nearly all his robes," the *Chronicle* says, "are ornamented with rare jewels; his surplices are of the most valuable lace; his gloves are embroidered with pearls in the shape of a cross; his 'woollens' are prepared from the fleeces of a herd of sheep kept specially for this purpose; and his rings, set with gems of matchless quality, are priceless. It is by far the most costly wardrobe in the world." Fancy dressing up a decrepit old man in that fashion! All in the name of poor Jesus!

Some of the religious papers are expressing indignation at the "ridiculous impertinence of a handful of Roman Catholics assuming the right to dedicate England to the Pope." Of course, it is ridiculous; but it is a way that Christians have. And, really, there is nothing more ridiculous in Roman Catholics doing this than Protestants dedicating England and other countries to Jesus Christ. Protestants are always talking of dedicating India, and China, and the Soudan, and other parts of the world, to their particular form of Christianity. It is all supremely silly, and impertinent, and Christian. Impudent egotism lies at the base of much that passes for Christian zeal, and Christians have so cultivated the habit of speaking as though none but Christians need be considered, that they ought not to be surprised if some of their own body give this feeling a still more parochial expression. Protestants must not expect a monopoly of "ridiculous impertinence."

"Ours is an essentially religious race," says the *Christian World*. In that case it is quite remarkable that such elaborate precautions should have to be taken to prevent "our race" losing an "essential characteristic." Essential qualities can usually be trusted to take care of themselves. In this case fifty thousand professional preachers, to say nothing of other agencies, have more than they can do to keep this religious quality alive. The truth is, that "our race" is no more essentially religious than is any other race. All religion is an acquisition. Sometimes it is an inevitable acquisition, as among the lower races; sometimes, as amongst ourselves, it is due to deliberate culture. If all the children of the next generation were left severely alone, so far as religion is concerned, and were given a thorough mental and physical training, religion would be with them a thing of the past. Every Freethinker knows this to be true, and every Christian preacher acts so as to endorse the Freethinker's conviction.

It all hangs on the child. We do not mean by the child as connected with what is facetiously called the education question. That is only one aspect of a much larger subject. What we have in mind is the child as a member of the social group and as the material for the next generation. Without deliberate religious culture the normal social forces would to-day keep the growing generation non-religious. But religious organisations dominate life to such an extent that they are able to bring pressure upon each newcomer into the social group, and thus secure a religious expression of forces that are "essentially" secular. Thus the essentially non-religious character of man is shown by the fact that every child born has to be made religious, and not merely made religious, but kept so. It is an inoculation that wears itself out unless the virus is renewed from time to time. This inoculation religion secures by the pressure of the home, the school, and of social life generally. Religion is perpetuated because it succeeds in capturing the children of each generation. Give Freethought the same opportunity for a single generation and all the pulpits of Great Britain would be to let as rostrums for auctioneers.

"When Mrs. Kavanaugh of this city complained to the courts of the attempt of the Rev. Father John Bergen to deflower her daughter Katherine, aged twelve years, she forgot in her excitement that she was committing the sin of disobedience in accusing a priest, and withdrew the charge when ordered to do so by the Rev. Father Deneen, of the Holy Cross Church. That proceedings had gone too far to be stopped she will probably regret to the end of her days. That the case came before an upright judge, Magistrate Butts, is unfortunate for the accused. 'It was the purpose of the priest,' said the Magistrate, 'to strip Katherine Kavanaugh of all innocence and ruin her in body and in soul,' and he pronounced the Rev. Father Bergen guilty. The narrow margin by which justice escaped defeat in this case raises the question how many such assaults are attempted or accomplished by lusty priests on girls whose mothers are restrained by their spiritual advisers from lodging complaints with the civil authorities. In matters involving an ecclesiastic, and tending to create scandal, a Catholic or other layman is denied the right to speak except through another priest."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

According to a cutting from a South African paper, a native preacher has been committed for trial at Aliwal North on charges of housebreaking and indecent assault. While the parents of two European children, aged four and six, were attending divine service, the colored exhorter entered the house, ransacked the premises, and molested the children. He admitted the indecent assault and explained that he was drunk. It is a pity the Lord cannot keep his servants straighter.

Another South African cutting reports a discussion on the Potchefstroom Town Council as to whether electric light should be supplied to churches at half price. There was some very plain speaking on the question, but the Church party was strong enough to muster as many votes as the other side. The half-price proposal was lost, however, by the casting vote of the Mayor. An article on the debate in the local *Herald* refers to "the clever satire of Mr. John Latham"—a local Rationalist leader—and advises Councilors to avoid it by a stricter attention to good business and common sense.

We see by the Glasgow *Evening Times* (Aug. 8) that "Three pen nibs represented last week's gifts to the alms-box at All Saints' Church, Wellingborough." The vicar is not cheerful over this phenomenon. "Nothing makes me so despondent and sad," he says, "as when men deliberately go out of their way to mock the Almighty." How does he

know that, in this case, the donors went out of their way? Possibly the pen nibs were just handy.

The Rev. F. C. Spurr, writing from Melbourne, reports that the Chapman-Alexander mission is a great success. He says that "huge audiences" have been attracted, but admits that "the real man in the street" remains untouched, while the problem of "capturing the multitudes outside the Church remains unsolved." This is the old story. "Huge audiences" means members of churches and chapels who desire a few evenings' dissipation in singing revival hymns, while the number who lose interest in all religion becomes steadily greater. We fancy that a great many clergymen see the utter futility of these elaborately engineered missions, but for many reasons they are not inclined to say what they think.

Pastor Russell's *People's Pulpit* wails in the following manner:—

"The masses have less and less confidence in the clergy. The people do not know what the clergy believe even when they hear them speak, for their address may be from the standpoint of the creeds or from the standpoint of Higher Criticism, according to their moods. The result of this uncertain sounding of the trumpet is that the masses are coming to the conclusion that the whole matter of religion is a big guess and that some of the guesses are influenced by temporal considerations.

"The unbelief of the people grows and threatens to become Agnosticism, or worse, Atheism! Those who have brought about this condition of things during the past thirty years are the college professors and the best educated pulpiteers of Christendom. And now they stand astonished at the results, which they should have foreseen."

There is some truth in this. And the case goes on from bad to worse. Which is all we quote Pastor Russell for. He is no good from any other point of view.

It is fifty years ago since England had such wintry weather in August as was experienced in the Bank Holiday period of the present month. The temperature dropped as low as 38 degrees—only 6 above freezing point, and the weather menu included snow and ice. Thanks ought to be returned to "Providence" for these seasonable gifts.

A telegram from the Milan correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, dated August 8, ran as follows:—

"A very interesting custom has just been carried out by the Arab population of Tripoli. Several huge cranes for salvage work recently arrived there from Genoa, but before any of the 500 Arab workmen could be induced to start operations, the Moslem priests were summoned. They began the celebration of an elaborate rite, during which a large number of young lambs were immolated on an altar. The new salvage plant was smeared from top to bottom by the priests with the blood of the victims, and the ceremony concluded with a sacred dance around the cranes. After this the Arabs set themselves joyfully to work, in the assurance that the powers of evil had been effectively paralysed."

Those Arabs, of course, are very superstitious. But are they really worse than Englishmen? A religious service at the starting of a crane is quite on a level with the "christening" of a battleship. As for the blood, the Moslems use that of animals, while the Christians draw from "a fountain" of blood "drawn from Immanuel's veins." The blood of a Tripoli lamb is just as efficacious, we should say, as the blood of "the Lamb of God."

The Bishop of Southwell appears to have hit upon an unnoticed cause of the Labor unrest. It was not, he said, difficult to find out why there was so much discontent. When people saw the rich spending thousands on themselves, and giving only a shilling or two to the clergy, "was it a wonder that the working classes began to say, 'Why should we not share in these things?'" Evidently, then, the cure for the Labor unrest is simple. The rich simply have to give more to the clergy, and the dockers and all other laborers will be quite content. They are merely annoyed at the clergy not getting enough. This puts quite a new aspect on the Labor problem.

According to Sir Edward Hertslet's *Foreign Office Recollections*, when the first Protestant Bishop of Jerusalem was appointed it was thought that it would be a more impressive advent if he were conveyed to the Holy Land in a British ship of war. The ship proposed for the voyage was called the *Infernal*. Bishop Alexander was indignant at the offer. He refused to go in a ship bearing such a name. Another vessel was found for him. It was called the *Devastation*. The difference wasn't much, but it pacified the episcopal traveller, who had no objection whatever, apparently, to sailing on a battleship as an agent of the Prince of Peace.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended until September.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £178 11s. 11d. Received since:—A. A., 5s.; Five Edinburgh Saints, 10s.; Admirer, 10s. 6d.; T. Raff (S. Australia), £2 2s.; W. H., 5s.; T. C. Rigin, 2s. 6d.

T. A. JACKSON.—You must have had a diabolical time in that wet weather—you and Mr. Gott together. But there's some comfort in company. Besides, the Lord sendeth his rain alike upon the just and the unjust. So both sides get it. Which is which can stand over. But were you grateful enough to the pious old lady who told you you were going to hell? The information might have been welcome in such circumstances.

J. THACKRAY.—See paragraph. Thanks.

J. ROBERTSON.—We shall be glad to be kept informed of the progress of the struggle at Edinburgh. The police of the whole of Great Britain seem bent on de-roying free speech as far as possible, and the public authorities are hand in glove with them. They fight first to get rid of all open-air meetings, and then to set up a police censorship by means of a rule that meetings licensed by them shall be held—but no others. We are pleased to see that this police policy in being resisted at Edinburgh.

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

ISAAC NEWMAN.—No one is under any obligation to attempt impossibilities. If every Freethinker followed your example, and did what he could for the cause, it would be more flourishing.

P. WILKINSON.—Glad you consider the Burnley visit, under the Northern Tour, so successful; including Mr. Jackson's lectures and the sale of the *Freethinker*.

H. A. FOSTER.—Wolverhampton certainly ought to have a N. S. S. Branch, and Freethought propaganda should be carried on in the town. The whole question of Freethought organisation in the Midlands will be dealt with as soon as possible. It can hardly be taken up just at the moment.

F. HODDAY.—Pleased to know that your wife, as well as yourself, considers our last week's front article "splendid" and "eagerly awaits the concluding portion." Also that the *Freethinker* is the last journal you would drop, if you had to drop any.

W. H.—Several of the largest subscribers to the President's Fund have died during the last year or two. Still, we hope, with you, that "some well-to-do Freethinkers will come along and make up the leeway before the year is out" Your views on the other matters you refer to are much the same as our own. "Saints" sometimes forget that we cannot always give public reasons for public acts.

T. RAFF (W. Australia).—Business part of your letter passed over to shop manager. Glad to hear you have such admiration and respect for this journal. We endorse all your praise of Joseph Symes. We were delighted to see our old friend again when he came back to England, but his death here is one of our tragic memories. It is sad to learn that the loss of his personality has left Freethought propaganda and organisation "nowhere" on your continent.

T. C. RIGLIN.—Large type Shakespeares are naturally rather expensive. The Macmillan edition in three volumes—Comedies, Histories, Tragedies—is well-printed on good paper, and the type is very legible. The text is the same as the "Globe" edition in one volume—the text of the "Cambridge" Shakespeares. The price, after discount, would be near your mark.

J. SMITH.—Sorry, but we cannot insert long obituary notices arriving on Tuesday. Surely a report of a funeral on the previous Friday might have reached us earlier. Next week, now.

H. RAPMAN.—Thanks. But we don't mean to advertise the Highbury Corner gentleman you refer to. He will soon sink into his natural obscurity. The N. S. S. presumably has reasons for regarding him as an undesirable.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote starts his new season's lecture work by a visit to Manchester on the last Sunday in September. South Lancashire "saints" will please note. That will be Mr. Foote's only lecture in the provinces this year. He has engaged to lecture continuously on Sunday evenings at Queen's Hall, London, from October to December inclusive. The experiment is at the desire of, and will be financed by, the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Ltd. We shall have a good deal more to say about it presently. It is enough to say, meanwhile, that Mr. Foote intends to put his very best work (for what it is worth) into these lectures, and that the London "saints" will be asked to co-operate by doing their best to advertise the meetings and bring "heathen persons" to the hall.

Mr. Mangasarian is not coming to England after all. He has had to leave Paris for Chicago rather suddenly; certainly sooner than he expected. There are reasons for getting home. We very much regret our loss of the pleasure of meeting him again, but we hope the pleasure is only deferred until his next visit to Europe. Meanwhile, our best wishes are always with him, and we shall be glad to hear of ever greater and greater success in his Freethought work at Chicago.

We regret to state that Miss Vance has had no response yet to her appeal to London readers of this journal to send her a note of any halls to let in their neighborhood that might be suitable, and obtainable, for Sunday evening Freethought meetings. London in this connection means Greater London. In fact, the farther off the centre of London the better, for the lectures would then catch the resident population. Until other halls can be found, at least, the Secular Society is arranging to "run" a number of Sunday evening lectures at the Workman's Hall which is in the control of the West Ham N. S. S. Branch. Special lecturers will be engaged for those evenings and special advertising done throughout the district.

We doubt if any other paper in this country has such a body of readers as the *Freethinker*. Many of them do not like it—they love it. It is one of the last things that poverty or necessity would make them give up. Its arrival is a red-letter day of the week. This has been noticed lately by Mr. T. A. Jackson on his Northern Tour with Mr. J. W. Gott. "One thing has much impressed me during my tour," Mr. Jackson writes, "and that is the devotion with which readers of the *Freethinker* speak of the paper as a necessity of life. I managed to pick up, a few days back, a batch of old numbers which the widow of an old Freethinker allowed me to take. They had been preserved for years and read and re-read. One of the earliest contains the report of the dinner on the release of Mr. Foote from Holloway. Few indeed will the journals be that are hoarded up as the *Freethinker* is." The fact is there. And what is the reason of it? We think we can tell. Our appeal to our readers touches the best part of their natures. It is purely intellectual and disinterested. We promise them nothing—not even the millennium next week, nor a rise of wages, nor easier work, nor any material advantage whatever. We offer them mental liberation, a new dignity of life, a perception of truth and honesty never known before, a heightened self-respect, and an assurance that all this will turn to the world's profit in every way—when they are dead. It is because we promise *nothing* that we promise *everything*. This sounds like a paradox, but paradoxes to the senses become certitudes to the intelligence.

The London County Council has not replied to a perfectly civil letter from the N. S. S., of which it formally acknowledged the receipt some weeks ago, but it has at last issued summonses against Miss Vance for "gathering money"—that is, collecting at the North London Branch meetings—at Parliament Hill on Sundays, July 21 and 28. The summonses are returnable at the Marylebone Police Court on Monday, August 19, at 2 in the afternoon. The case is not a personal one. Miss Vance did not take up collections for herself, but for the Society, as has been done for the best part of three years with the County Council's knowledge and sanction. The case will be fought out. If the equal rights of citizens are to be overridden by the "permits" of the London County Council, the people go into slavery under the persons they have elected to do their business.

We have just space to note that a summons has also been issued against Mr. Cunningham on account of Finsbury Park. This is returnable at the Highbury Police Court on August 21 at 10 a.m.

The Evolution of Life.—II.

(Continued from p. 502.)

THESE four-footed animals varied greatly in size. Some were no more than two or three inches in length; others were a foot long. But the lords of creation were the labyrinthodonts, whose skulls alone attained the measurement of a foot or more. These creatures, with other members of the carboniferous amphibia, were all descended from fishes, to which they displayed the closest structural affinities.

The Carboniferous period passed away, and the Permian period dawned. The amphibia developed apace, and some commenced to evolve in the direction of crocodiles. Reptiles equipped with better skulls and brains than their amphibian ancestors now assumed the position of the leaders of life. These new arrivals were distinctly progressive, and as the Permian period neared its close many of them assumed a marked resemblance to mammals, not only in dentition, but in bodily structure. These theromorphs, or "beast-shaped" reptiles attained the art of walking with their stomachs clear of the ground. Many theromorphs were vegetarians, but others were ferociously carnivorous.

Among the more peculiar forms were reptiles provided with quaint crests, supported by spiny growths. Another reptilian departure was in the direction of tortoises. The fishes were going forward with some rapidity. Ganoid fishes had improved their internal structure, and their tails were assuming a more modern appearance. Numerous soft-boned forms of fish had multiplied exceedingly; genera, both old and new, were abundant. Certain fringe-finned ganoids had lost ground, but the more progressive members of this group had played an honorable part in the evolution of the amphibia. For some unknown reason, the sharks were not doing so well as formerly. The invertebrates, as a whole, were in a stationary condition. Certain forms, which recovered in later ages, were sadly depressed. These were reduced in numbers and decreased in size. The Permian period, as a whole, bears abundant evidence of glacial conditions, and the fallen temperature adversely affected marine life. Many of the older forms of land vegetation suffered greatly, but trees of the conifer type firmly established themselves as the Permian period approached its end.

The Palæozoic age had now departed, and the Mesozoic era dawned. The newer plant life spread in all directions. The antique vegetable growths were surpassed by firs, yews, spruces, and maiden-hair trees. Fern forms proved vigorous and resourceful. And now primitive star-like flowers varied the green mantle of nature.

The land population added beetles to its insect life. In the waters the sponges were abundant and varied. Many of the marine organisms were recovering from their Permian despondency, but others were passing away or only survived in modernised forms. The ammonites rose to their greatest heights, but there were ominous indications of their coming decline. The progenitors of crabs and lobsters made their entry into the world's strife. Sharks were once again forging ahead, and the less predaceous fishes were prospering. Pike-like pisces presented a progressive development in their spinal structure. Other ganoids had evolved well-ossified vertebral columns.

Among the amphibia the labyrinthodonts had immensely advanced. One of these—the mastodontosauras—carried a cranium more than a yard in length. But their rivals, the reptiles, were triumphing over them; and although the amphibia made a brave display through the greater part of this period, as it drew towards its close they dwindled away.

The reptilia displayed great powers of adaptation. Some evolved towards the lizard type; others developed in the direction of long-snouted crocodiles. Beast-shaped reptiles were abundant, but the out-

standing forms were the dinosaurs. These "terrible lizards" were seemingly carnivorous without exception. Their hind limbs were well developed, although their fore limbs were comparatively short. One of the most extraordinary forms was the anchisaurus, with a bird-like skull, which stood five or six feet in height. These dinosaurs were the first of the bipeds.

The Triassic age witnessed the advent of the plesiosaurians, who swam and ducked and dived in the waters in search of prey. These reptiles bear marked anatomical traces of descent from land-dwelling forms. The ichthyosaurs, or fish-lizards, were also descended from terrestrial ancestors, but had reverted further than the plesiosaurians towards a fish-like appearance. Tortoises of quite modern aspect vegetated apart from the madding crowd's ignoble strife. Further changes were in store, and as the Triassic neared its end prototheres, or primitive mammals, emerged into being. They appear to have been pouched like the kangaroo, and were certainly no bigger than rats. Their nimbleness, greater brain power, and increased care for their young enabled them to surmount the difficulties and dangers of life.

The Jurassic period had now arrived. Marine invertebrate life continued to hold its ground with various slight modifications of form and habit. Fish life was moving towards its contemporary representatives. The soft internal structure which characterised all the earlier fishes, had, in some instances, been transformed into an ossified skeleton. In other words, teleostean, or true bony fishes, now lived in the seas. The landscapes were the finest that had thus far appeared. Ferns, conifers, cycads, and other plants flourished with tropical magnificence. The old-fashioned "horse tails" were fewer, and the club mosses had shrunk to the size of shrubs. Insect life had added to its abundance. Ants, bees, mosquitoes, crickets, gnats, and termites were all in evidence.

A few diminutive amphibians held on with difficulty; but the reptiles rose to the height of their glory. They now ruled the land, the waters, and the air. In North America, the diplodocus, over eighty feet in length, browsed by the lakes and streams. The brontosaurus, another herbivorous reptile, measured sixty feet from head to tail, while the atlantosaurus was even larger than diplodocus. Stegosaurus was smaller but of most astonishing appearance. From head to tail his back was shielded with bony prominences. Still another vegetarian dinosaur was the bird-footed camptosaurus.

The flesh-devouring reptiles were huge and ferocious. Megalosaurus was a powerful and dangerous carnivore provided with strong jaws and sharp saw-like teeth. Ceratosaurus strolled about on his hind legs and proudly carried himself eight feet in the air. Smaller and more active reptiles probably made a meal upon the birds which had by this time arrived upon the scene. Crocodiles were moving in a modern direction, but had yet to evolve the power which living forms possess of breathing under water. The plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs, while sharing the general reptile prosperity, had evolved many formidable forms. The pliosaurus, a most repulsive looking monster with a body thirty feet in length, and with powerfully pointed teeth fixed in his jaws, must have been a dangerous enemy to encounter. Some of the lizards had taken to aerial navigation. These varied from the size of robins to that of ravens. As the Jurassic period neared its close true birds were on the wing. The archæopteryx, a European bird, was provided with teeth, a long reptilian tail in which the scales had been transformed into feathers, and carried other evidences of its reptilian origin. Mammals had become more numerous but remained insignificant in size. In the presence of such sanguinary reptilian contemporaries they did well in maintaining their as yet small place in nature.

At the dawn of the Cretaceous period, the reptiles were still the masters of the world. But signs were

not wanting of their impending decline, and towards the middle of this period their onward career was arrested. Owing presumably to pressure of population, extensive migrations took place. The iguanodont, a reptile some fifteen feet high, roamed Northern Europe, and other dinosaurs descended from Jurassic forms are well represented in the cretaceous rocks. North American triceratops—"the three horned"—was an extraordinary looking beast. It carried an enormous cranium, provided with the brain of a pigmy. This reptile was a vegetarian, and its neck was adorned with a fantastically frilled collar of modified bone. Other curious dinosaurs boasted an incredible number of teeth, and appeared well fitted to cope with the demands of the times in which they flourished. But for some unknown reason they all became extinct.

Crocodiles, however, were still marching forward. Their breathing apparatus had improved, and their backbone had become more flexible. They were now able to breathe under water, while drowning their prey without running any risk of drowning themselves. Other reptiles were moving in the direction of snakes. The chelonians were still somnolent, though some of the tortoises had taken to marine life, and turtles were now in being. Others, again, had adapted themselves to an existence in moist earth. The ichthyosaurs had now lost their teeth, and by the middle of the period had practically vanished from the scene. After a prolonged period of prosperity, during which many remarkable forms were evolved, the Plesiosaurians sustained a sad check, and towards the passing of the Cretaceous the plesiosaurus passed too.

Flying lizards had grown to vast proportions. All Jurassic forms were small, but during the Cretaceous huge creatures navigated the air. Pteranodon possessed an expanse of wing of eighteen feet, and even larger forms prevailed. But, like the fish-lizards, they had become toothless, and, like them, they became extinct.

The battle of life in the fish world had now deepened. Doubtless, their numerous bird and reptile enemies had helped to eliminate the poorly developed forms, but the fishes continued their steady advance. Sharks of a more specialised character appeared, and saw fishes were in the waters. Ganoid fishes, particularly the more primitive kinds, were now completely outdistanced by their more bony rivals and competitors. These hard skeletoned teleosteans now assumed the leadership in fish life, and have continued to hold it ever since. The crustacea were progressing, but the cephalopods were struggling with adversity. The ammonites were declining towards death, and the ranks of the belemnites were terribly thinned. Molluscan life, as a whole, was well maintained, and invertebrate life generally made very considerable progress.

Bird life in Cretaceous times presents many interesting features. Aquatic birds were very numerous. The teeth were still in evidence, but the old reptilian tail of the Jurassic archæopteryx had been replaced by an appendage of more modern design, and its reptilian wing-claws had also disappeared. Birds suggestive of geese, storks, flamingoes, divers, grebes, and cormorants haunted ocean, marsh, and stream.

The vegetation of the early Cretaceous period was similar to that of the period which preceded it. But a change came over the spirit of the scene as the centuries passed away. Angiosperms—the highest of all plants—began to compete with the more primitive gymnosperms for soil, water, and air. Early willows, oaks, planes, birches, poplars, and other angiosperms slowly extended their sway over Europe from some more northern region. In any case, similar trees and shrubs flourished in Canada before they reached more southern latitudes. As the Cretaceous period was drawing to an end, fig-trees, poplars, the eucalyptus, various grasses, and other angiosperms displaced the indigenous growths. Mammalian life still lingered on a low level. No fossil higher in the zoological scale than

that of pouched animals has so far been yielded by Cretaceous rocks. The reptiles still dominated the earth, but vast changes in land life were now about to occur.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

Dolet: The Freethought Martyr.—III.

(Continued from p. 508.)

DOLET now worked hard at his *Commentaries on the Latin Tongue*, and early in October, 1534, he went to Paris to obtain the royal licence for the publication of his work. Before the middle of 1535 he had returned and published a Dialogue against Erasmus, who had attacked the Ciceronians. Melancthon paid it the high compliment of saying that "it ought to be answered, if not by Erasmus, at least by someone." It had a wide circulation, and it decisively introduced his name to the world of letters.

The literary aspirations of Dolet and of all his brethren were at this time, however, in danger of being baffled. King Francis was dreadfully worried by the seraphic doctors of the Sorbonne, who urged him to make amends for his vicious life by persecuting heretics and suppressing literature. On June 7, 1533, the Sorbonne presented to the King at Lyons "a memorial against heretical books, in which it was formally urged that if the King wished to preserve the Catholic faith, which was already shaken at its base and attacked on all parts, he must abolish once and for ever by a severe edict the art of printing, which every day gave birth to dangerous books." For a time these black gentry were foiled by Budé and Jean du Bellay, but in 1535 they succeeded, and the King, on January 13, issued letters patent prohibiting and forbidding under pain of death any person from henceforth printing any book or books in France, and at the same time ordering all booksellers' shops to be closed under the same penalty. But the opposition to this infamous edict was so great that it had to be withdrawn, and on February 24 the King "directed the Parliament to choose twenty-four well qualified and prudent persons, out of whom the King should select twelve, to whom alone permission was to be given to print in Paris editions of needful and approved books, but forbidding even the twelve to print any new composition under pain of death." The Parliament, however, again remonstrated, and the new letters patent became a dead letter.

The circumstance which induced the King to yield to the solicitations of the Sorbonne was in itself trivial. In October, 1534, some placards were affixed to the walls of Paris, violently attacking the mass and the clergy. The Catholics were strongly incensed, and the result was a more severe persecution of heretics than Paris had ever before witnessed. From November 10, 1534, to May 5, 1535, twenty-two persons were burnt for heresy in the Place Maubert, and the King and the Court are said to have witnessed the most horrid of these spectacles, where six heretics were burnt together, and the *strappado* was first used. This delightful instrument was invented by the priests. Mr. Christie describes it as "a kind of see-saw, with a heretic at one end suspended above a fire. He was allowed to descend and burn for a short time, and was then drawn out again, and so on from time to time. By this means the burning lasted much longer, the torment was much more exquisite to the heretic, and the spectacle much more grateful to the pious spectators."

The doctor who invented the *guillotine* perished under its swift blade himself; and if these sweet priests who invented the *strappado* had themselves been slowly roasted to death, who could say that their doom was too severe?

Dolet soon had the first volume of his *Commentaries* ready for the press. In transcribing and correcting it he was assisted by Jean Bonaventure Des Periers,

whom Mr. Christie justly calls "one of the greatest names in the French literature of the sixteenth century." The *Cymbalum Mundi*, published in 1537-8, gave great offence to the Sorbonne. Its witty dialogues ostensibly satirised the Pagan deities, but it was easily to be seen that the myths of the Christian religion were also glanced at. The Sorbonne condemned the book as blasphemous, and the Parliament imprisoned Jean Morin, the printer, and burned all the copies that could be found. The *auto-da-fé* was so successful that only one copy is known to have survived. It is now in the Public Library of Versailles. The *Cymbalum Mundi* is included in the admirable edition of Des Periers, which we owe to the indefatigable bibliophile Jacob.

On March 21, 1536, Dolet obtained permission to publish his *Commentaries*. The first volume was issued in May. "It is," says Mr. Christie, "certainly one of the most important contributions to Latin scholarship which the sixteenth century produced." The second volume followed two years and a half later. In the dissertations Dolet "seems to show that he had a presentiment and foreshadowing of his terrible fate. In one place he prays that his life may never depend on the sentence of a judge; in another he confesses that he has no desire to die before his time, yet that he accompanies his devotion to letters with a constant meditation on and recollection of death."

While Dolet was laboring at these and other literary tasks, he appears to have spent his leisure not unjoyously. Mr. Christie writes:—

"He was by no means an anchorite or an ascetic. No man more thoroughly enjoyed the society of literary men, nor was he averse in moderation to the pleasures of the table. He was poor, not because he saw any merit in poverty, but because he loved learning better than wealth. He despised all the ascetic virtues even while to a certain extent he followed some of them. Poverty, chastity, humility, obedience, indolent solitude, self-inflicted pain, were in themselves no virtues to him, any more than they were to Aristotle, Plato, or Cicero, any more than they were to Luther or Erasmus, to Bembo or Rabelais. But there was one thing he more especially enjoyed, and which shows him to us in an unexpected light. He was devotedly fond of music. 'Music and harmony,' he tells us, 'are my sole enjoyments. What is there more suited either for exciting or soothing the mind, what more fitted for allaying or extinguishing, or even rousing indignation? What is there more efficacious for refreshing the jaded spirits of men of letters? I care nothing for the pleasures of the table, of wine, of gaming, of love—at least I use them all in great moderation. But not so as regards music, which alone of all pleasures takes me captive, retains me, and dissolves me in ecstasy.'"

He was also very fond of swimming in the river. Altogether his tastes were healthy, and bespoke a sound and even fine nature.

On the last day of December, 1536, a painter named Campaign tried to assassinate Dolet, who in defending himself killed his adversary. As he had already made himself obnoxious to some persons in authority, he dreaded being tried there, and by the assistance of his friends he escaped before daylight from the city. He fled to Paris, where, before his arrival, his friends had procured for him the royal pardon. But when he returned to Lyons the authorities disregarded it and threw him into prison. He remained there until April 21, when he was provisionally set at liberty on giving security to appear for judgment when called upon.

Early in 1538 Dolet married, and we see by his works that the union was one of affection and a source of great happiness. His wife's name has not come down to us, but Mr. Christie supposes her to have been related to Nicole Paris, a printer of Troyes. One son, Claude, was the fruit of this marriage. What became of him and the widow after Dolet's martyrdom is uncertain. M. Boulmier concludes that "his mother perhaps sought an asylum far from the city which gave him birth, where they could live together in retirement, unknown, and sheltered from the persecutions of the devotees and too zealous defenders of the

Catholic religion." But Mr. Christie thinks he has traced the unfortunate Claude back to Troyes, the supposed native town of his mother, where he became a flourishing citizen, and was elected as sheriff at the age of forty-seven.

Soon after his marriage Dolet, very wisely resolving not to trust to the slender and precarious income of a man of letters, decided to engage in business as a printer; and on March 6, 1538, he obtained a privilege or licence from the King. Before the end of the year his press was set up, and at least one book printed at it. Printers then could not be louts; they were obliged to be scholars, and their profession was held in high esteem. Even booksellers had to know something of the insides of the articles they sold, unlike the present tribe, who often, as George Eliot remarks, trade in books just as a provision dealer may trade in tinned stuffs without knowing or caring whether they contain rottenness or nutriment.

Dolet printed for Marot, Rabelais, and other writers, as well as works from his own pen. Yet he seems to have quarrelled with both these great men. The quarrels of authors are proverbial, and we need not at this remote period concern ourselves to allot their respective shares of blame. Dolet's editions of Marot and Rabelais are much sought after; they have for many years fetched enormous prices, and they will perhaps hereafter be still more highly valued.

Printers were then a suspected class. Their sympathies were naturally with the party of progress, and the Church regarded them with a jealous eye. By joining their ranks, Dolet, whose orthodoxy had long been doubted, soon laid himself open to the charge of irreligion and even of Atheism. Some of his published epigrams were full of bitter sneers at the monks, his *Commentaries* sharply attacked the Sorbonne for attempting to suppress the art of printing, and he had in his letters referred to the bosom friend and trusted counsellor of the first President of the Parliament of Paris as "*that beast Beda*." His character was beyond suspicion; he was a good husband, a good father, a good citizen; but he disregarded Mass, and it was whispered that he ate flesh during Lent. The natural result was that the first two books issued from his press, in 1538, were denounced as heretical, and he was cited to appear before the Vicar-General of the Archbishop of Lyons. Some trumpery charges were made against the *Cato Christianus*, and a more serious one against the *Carmina*, in which he was alleged to have used the word *fatum* in a Pagan and not a Christian sense. But it is probable that a poem in the work addressed to Melancthon gave still greater offence. Mr. Christie translates it thus from the Latin:—

"Many a tribe of fools and dolts supplies me with abundant matter for laughter, but there is absolutely nothing I more enjoy laughing at than the insanity of those who, as though they were the kindred of the gods and sharers with them of Jove's heaven, are always discoursing concerning the gods, and teach you how you may be able to arrive at heaven, or how you may be sunk down into the darkness of the black realm. Foolish and intolerable race of men! No doubt they have sat down at the table of Jove and the gods, in order that they may in such wise dispense to us the celestial decrees."

This thinly veiled satire reminds us of Matthew Arnold's saying that some theologians talk familiarly about God as though he were a man in the next street! Such insinuated scorn of the religious doctors was indeed perilous in an age like that.

Dolet was ordered to withdraw these books from sale, and to give a written undertaking not to reprint them without permission. He, of course, obeyed, and for three years he curbed his reckless spirit so as to steer clear of the law. Those three years were the most happy and prosperous period of his life. He had a wife and son whom he dearly loved, constant and profitable literary work, a high reputation as a scholar, and the society of all the men of letters at Lyons. This interval of repose was, how-

ever, terminated by his arrest in July, 1542, and the rest of his life, with the exception of a very few months, was spent in prison.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

Literary Gossip.

James Thomson ("B. V.") dedicated his second collected volume of poems, containing *Vane's Story* and *Weddah and Om-El-Bonain*—two of his masterpieces—to "the memory of the Poet of Poets and Purest of Men, PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, with the gratitude and love and reverence of the Author." It was a noble dedication by a great poet to a greater one. Spenser had been called "the poets' poet," but how much more admirable was "the poet of poets" as applied to Shelley! According to Mr. Robert Blatchford, however, James Thomson was entirely wrong. Shelley was a poet—of a sort; but he was not a great poet, and there is no great poetry in him—anywhere. He said this some months ago, and he repeated it recently. He defies anybody to find him "any really great poetry in the works of that vastly overrated poet." No lover of Shelley, who also understands Mr. Blatchford, would attempt that ridiculous enterprise. "Find me" great poetry in Shelley, is Mr. Blatchford's challenge. Well, it cannot be done. But the defect is not in Shelley; it is in Mr. Blatchford. Shelley is one of the most imaginative poets, and Mr. Blatchford has no imagination worth speaking of. Even his admiration for Shakespeare, sound as it is as far as it goes, bears out our statement. His quotations are from Shakespeare's philosophy or descriptions rather than his pure poetry—the higher flights of his extraordinary imagination. "Pinnacled dim in the intense inane" is not attractive to Mr. Blatchford; very likely it is unintelligible. He should therefore leave Shelley alone. There is no abstract quality in Mr. Blatchford's mind; that is why he made such a muddle of Determinism the moment he passed from the physical to the psychological region.

It is idle to challenge the production of great poetry from any poet. If you produce it the challenger has only to say "that isn't great poetry," and where are you then? When criticism is nothing but personal preference there is an end of literary judgment. Some good minds seem stone blind—or even worse, quite perverted—before certain forms of excellence. Mr. W. Carew Hazlitt, for instance, in *Shakespeare: The Man and His Work*, which is a very able and interesting book, shows great appreciation of the plays, but treats the Sonnets as skumble-scumble stuff. After quoting one sonnet in full, he summarily describes it as "these poor and rough lines." And that sonnet is the one beginning—

"Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming of things to come."

One who considers such writing "poor and rough" is hopelessly lost in this field of criticism. He doesn't know a rose from a cabbage. A greater passage is hardly to be found in the whole range of literature. The conception is so magnificent—the phrasing is so superb. Curiously, too, it displays one of Shakespeare's special characteristics. You can never tell when he is going to take one of his miraculous flights. Suddenly, without a note of warning, his feet spurn the ground, and he soars with more than lark-like swiftness, which only a quick vision can follow, up, up into the heavens, where his great song sounds from horizon to horizon; and then he drops down as suddenly to the solid earth again, and proceeds as though nothing particular had occurred.

The reputation of a great poet depends upon something deeper and wider, and more certain, than Mr. Blatchford's, or any man's, personal preference. What is a great poet? Shelley himself shall supply the answer. In that glorious *Defence of Poetry*, which, as James Thomson well said, combines "the enthusiasm and ornate beauty of an ode" with "the logical precision and directness of an elegant mathematical demonstration," Shelley says: "The jury which sits in judgment upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers: it must be impelled by Time from the selectest of the wise of many generations." Shelley can have but few "peers" in the strictest sense of the word. But the poets are entitled to sit on the jury, and they have pronounced their verdict. Tennyson, Browning, Meredith, Swinburne, Thomson—and the list might be vastly prolonged—have passed judgment. And in this case there is no court of appeal.

We suggest to Mr. Blatchford that where he sees nothing, and his admitted betters see much, he might be more

diffident about his own eyesight. He has lately taken to praising Swinburne a great deal. We don't quarrel with him for that. He could hardly praise Swinburne too much. But if he has really read Swinburne, instead of bits of him, he must know that Swinburne almost exhausted the vocabulary of laudation in writing on Shelley. His prose tributes run up into "one word, and the only proper word, divine." His tributes in verse run up into the splendid "Cor Cordium." Is it not odd, then, that one who admires Swinburne as a lyrical poet—for he was that and nothing else—can see next to nothing in Shelley, whom Swinburne recognised as his own Master in that very line of accomplishment? A wise modesty would save a man from parading his defects. Is it too late even now for Mr. Blatchford to "tak a thought an' men'?"

* * *

What silliness does get published in some of our high-and-mighty newspapers! The morning organ of the Nonconformist Conscience came out on Saturday (August 3) with a "Character Study" of the new German ambassador. It was written with a "fetching" mixture of greatness and condescension; as if the Deity had sent down the Archangel Gabriel with instructions to temper the wind of his wisdom to the shorn readers of a halfpenny journal; in short it was remarkably like "Tay Pay's" though it was signed with other initials. In the course of this article it is related that Baron Marschall von Bieberstein (we have got through it!) was once sitting on the terrace of the House of Commons, and drinking tea, and graduating (unknown to himself) for his appearance in this Character Study in the *Daily News*. Talk was going on concerning the Bacon-Shakespeare theory, and the lady who started it asked the Baron, "What is your opinion, Excellency?" "Madame," he replied, "it is quite immaterial to me who wrote those wonderful plays—Shakespeare or Bacon. What does it matter? It is enough to read them and to be grateful for them." The narrator evidently regards this as a wise utterance. But is it? Gratitude is a personal feeling. It cannot go out into the vague. It must have a specific destination. And to say that it doesn't matter to you who wrote the greatest and most uplifting works in the world is to say that you have no gratitude at all. If you had you would be anxious about the personality of the writer; you would wish to greet his memory with reverence and thanks; you would resent the idea of his being robbed by another of his primary place in the firmament of fame, and in the loving admiration of mankind. The statement that it doesn't matter who wrote *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, never came from the lips of any lover of the mighty but all-human genius that produced them.

* * *

A first selection from George Meredith's collected letters appears in the August number of *Scribner's Magazine*. A second selection is announced to appear in the September number. We are tempted to deal with this deeply interesting instalment, but as the whole collection is to be published in book form this autumn we think we had better wait and review it altogether. We propose to do this at considerable length, as the letters throw light upon Meredith's novels and poems—especially in regard to his personal convictions on religion as well as on political philosophy and literature.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Northern Tour.

On Sunday we tried a new centre for a series of three lectures, Oldham being the place selected. The morning lecture, in spite of unfavorable weather, was in every way a success. The afternoon meeting was a great success—thanks to the help of the notorious Mr. Hunnable, fresh from the North-West Manchester election. I believe he did his best, which amounted to much noise and very little argument. Mr. Jackson let him down rather lightly, which encouraged him to promise the audience the total extinction of Jackson in the evening. Needless to say, this brought a tremendous crowd to see the fun. Jackson no longer played with his opponent, but smote him hip and thigh, greatly to the amusement of the audience. Many were the inquiries as to when Jackson would speak in Oldham again. The opinion seemed general that Jackson defended Secularism with dignity and ability. Hunnable seriously warned everybody to avoid the *Freethinker*, and to give it a very wide berth, even at a penny. The result was a big sale, and, although I offered to buy every copy back at 6d. each, I did not get a single copy.

J. W. GOTT.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15 and 6.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

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

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

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, E. Burke, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 7, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Debate, C. E. Ratcliffe and Mr. Randall, "Is the Bible True?"

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

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Mr. Marshall, "Silent Gods."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE: Thos. A. Jackson—*Bolton* (Town Hall Square): August 18, at 11, "Who Made God?" at 3, "When I Was in Prison"; at 7, "The Faith of an Infidel." *Ashton-under-Lyne* (Market Place): 19, at 7.30, "Was Jesus a Failure?" *Southport* (on the Sands): 20, at 7.30, "When the Sleeper Awakes"; 21, at 7.30, "Humanity's Debt to the Rebel." *Wigan* (Market Place): 22, at 7.30, "The Devil and All His Works." *Colne* (Cumberland-street): 23, at 7.30, "Who said Damn?" *Nelson* (Technical School Yard): 24, at 7.30, "The Latest Thing in Gods."

BURY (Town Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Sunday, August 18, at 7.30, "Gods—Ancient and Modern"; 19, at 8, "Behind the Veil."

HEXWOOD (Town Centre): Joseph A. E. Bates—Tuesday, August 20, at 8, "Comique-Opera Christians."

ROCHDALE (Town Hall Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Thursday, August 15, at 8, "Evolution of the Cosmos" (diagram illustrations); 16, at 8, "Friedrich Nietzsche"; 17, at 7.30, "Rationalism, Crime, and the Criminal."

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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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