

THE Freethinker

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Two of the finest and most disciplined modern intellects, Comte and Sainte-Beuve, were neither Catholics, nor Protestants, nor Deists, but convinced Atheists.

P. G. HAMERTON.

The Plot Thickens.

WE have been warning the Freethought party in particular, and advanced movements generally, for the last fifteen years at least, that a great wave of reaction was spreading over the whole European world, including Great Britain, and especially the southern part of it called England. Nobody took any notice of our warning. But in time they were bound to take notice of it; or rather they were bound to take notice of the facts, which proved to those who had any eyesight at all that the evil day we predicted was arriving.

First came a prosecution for "blasphemy." That was the first prosecution of the sort since the *Freethinker* case in 1883. We saw the importance of resisting this revival of the Blasphemy Laws. We rallied the Freethought party, got the National Secular Society to throw itself into the fight, raised over £200, engaged first-class legal talent for the "blasphemer's" defence, and brought about a big stand against the forces of religious bigotry, which are the mainstay of all the political and social evils that curse and degrade the world. Since then there have been several "blasphemy" prosecutions. Three "blasphemers" have been imprisoned for terms of three, four, and three months respectively; a fourth imprisoned a fortnight under the Police Clauses Act, and a fifth and sixth fined under the same Act, with the alternative of a fortnight's imprisonment each in case of default.

Since the first prosecution for "blasphemy" in London the reactionary County Council has cherished, and partly carried out, a deep-laid scheme for suppressing all advanced propaganda in places under its control. A beginning was made at Streatham Common, where the novel theory of freedom was started that when a rowdy crowd attacked a speaker it was the duty of the police to arrest *him* for letting them do it. And when it was rumored that the attack was to be supported by Billingsgate fish porters and King's College divinity students the authorities recognised that he deserved severe punishment. The magistrate, as usual, played into their hands. But he and they overreached themselves. They laid the punishment so thick upon the "blasphemer" that they raised an outcry against it, and the sentence had to be very much modified.

This was followed by the introduction of the system of "permits," which was a particularly skillful move. It was undeniable that mere adventurers got up in the places allotted for public speaking in the public parks and other open spaces, and took up collections for themselves, and that something was necessary to put down this nuisance. The suggestion seemed reasonable that "permits" should only be granted for collections and the sale of literature to *bona-fide* societies. No opposition was raised to it. But in due course of time this system of "permits" was made use of as a masked battery

from which the reactionary artillery could fire upon all societies carrying on propaganda in the parks that might be distasteful to the London County Council. "Permits" could be given or withheld—or given and afterwards withheld. And thereby hangs our tale.

The National Secular Society applied for and readily obtained one of these "permits." For the sake of convenience it was a collective one for all the London N. S. S. Branches that held meetings on the London County Council territory. All the Council's conditions were complied with. Miss Vance sent in a quarterly financial statement of the collections, etc., and followed this up with a copy of the N. S. S. annual balance-sheet. This went on for three years. No complaint was made, no objection was raised. But suddenly there came a bolt from the blue. Miss Vance applied as usual for the "permit" in April. Answer came that the "whole question" was being considered. Finally she was informed that the N. S. S. "permit" would not be renewed, as the Council was not satisfied that the whole of the money collected was devoted to a public object. An explanation of this cryptic announcement was politely asked for, but it was not vouchsafed. The N. S. S. collections were not dropped. The Council threatened prosecution. We advised that the collections should go on. The object was to force the County Council into action of some sort, so that the question might be fought out in the open, instead of being decided in huffer-mugger. Summonses were then served upon Miss Vance (Parliament Hill Fields) Miss Kough (Finsbury Park), Mr. Cunningham (Finsbury Park), Mr. Neate (Victoria Park), and Mr. Wood (Brockwell Park). Miss Vance's case came first. It was heard at the Marylebone Police Court on Monday afternoon (August 19), the result being that she was fined £3 and 4s. costs on two summonses. Her defence, turning upon law, was conducted by Mr. Clement Edwards. He pleaded that the magistrate should not decide the case upon the mere technical ground that there had been collections without a "permit," but take a broader view and decide it upon the whole clause in the County Council's Bye-Laws relating to the matter at issue. There had been a "permit," it had not been renewed; the Council was bound to exercise its powers in a reasonable manner, just as Licensing Magistrates had to; the "satisfaction of the Council" could not mean its arbitrary whim; the situation of which they complained had been created by the Council itself; he asked the magistrate to take that view, or at least to state a case for an appeal to a higher court. Mr. Taylor refused to sit in judgment on the County Council, but he was on the point of promising to state a case, when a few words from the plaintiff's solicitor caused him to hesitate and then refuse to do anything of the kind.

We shall deal with our remedy next week. Meanwhile we beg to say that the *Standard's* report, representing the "permit" as being denied to Miss Vance for the N. S. S. "in consequence of what had become known," is viciously misleading. Nothing of the sort was suggested. And we repeat that no complaint of the N. S. S. has ever been made.

G. W. FOOTE.

God and Morals.—II.

(Concluded from p. 514.)

IT goes without saying that very strong objection is raised to the Atheist stating the case against the "moral government of the universe" in the way it has been put. We are told by one apologist that—

"The forces of nature are giants which may be tamed and controlled. They have no malevolence in them. They never do harm to man on purpose. The accidents occur mainly through our ignorance, or carelessness, or want of skill—because we know too little about the forces, or are not vigilant in watching them."

This is true enough—from the Atheist's point of view. But it is not true from the point of view of the Theist. Natural forces are to the Atheist neither malevolent nor benevolent; are engineered by neither a spirit of good nor a spirit of evil. But it is of the very essence of the Theistic case that all these forces express purpose. They do what they are created to do. Everything is part of the divine plan. Nothing can occur haphazard. Once admit that anything in nature can happen undesigned, so to say, and the whole case for the moral government of the universe breaks down.

Granted, therefore, that many of the disasters of life are the consequence of want of knowledge or of carelessness, we are driven to the supposition that God's relation to man is that of an Almighty Power ever ready to take the opportunity of exacting the uttermost penalty from those who are neither skilful enough nor watchful enough to be ever on their guard against his machinations. And after all, ignorance and carelessness are not such fearful offences that they deserve the punishment of death. No human being would be excused who inflicted severe and often irreparable punishments for either mere carelessness or mere ignorance. As a matter of fact, human forethought does exactly what almighty love and wisdom decline to do. Around dangerous machinery it places a protecting girdle that will prevent the ignorant and the unskilful being injured thereby. And the man who objected to take all reasonable precautions against such accidents would be properly held responsible for the damage caused. Can we honestly absolve God from the same responsibility?

It is no reply to say that we have to learn by experience. This is quite true—at least, so far as the race is concerned. But if we could learn without this lengthy and tedious process, who would object? Every sensible person would regard it as an unqualified boon. The only merit in experience is that we cannot—so far as the race is concerned—learn without it. But so far as individuals are concerned, it is simply untrue that they have to learn by experience. If it were true, if every generation had to acquire everything by actual experience, there would be no development from savagery. Civilisation depends not on learning by experience, but on an inheritance of experience. One generation learns a lesson at the cost of much labor and suffering. The next generation inherits the lesson, and reaps the benefit without paying the price. By experience the race discovers everything, because there is no other way in which things are to be discovered. It is not a perfect method; it is simply the only method. But individually man does not learn by experience. He finds the rules of life drawn up, the safe and easy path indicated. Necessarily he has experience; but the major part of his life is made easy by the advice and guidance of others. And here, again, human methods provide an impeachment of the "Divine method" of government.

In any case, the reply will not help the Theist. For the argument breaks down on the fact that if we learn by experience, it is not always by our own experience; while those who provide the experience often cannot profit by it. A man, for example, goes down a disused well for some purpose. Foul gases have accumulated, and, as a consequence, he is suffo-

cated. Who benefits by this experience? Certainly not the man himself; he is dead. Those who ran none of the risk, and who may have hung back from sheer cowardice, reap benefit from a braver man's death. To establish any ethical justification for learning through experience, the profit should accrue to those who bear the pain. But this is very seldom the case. In fact, so far as the individual is concerned, nature seems so fashioned as to place a premium upon many undesirable qualities. Cowardice may save a man his life, while courage, by exposing to danger, would lose it. A man of quick and ready sympathies will lose his life in trying to save one from burning or drowning. One of a more selfish and self-centred disposition remains unscathed, and may even gain a certain reputation by subscribing to the other's funeral. Nature never asks whether a man is really good or bad, whether he is selfish or unselfish, before laying on her strokes. It is entirely a question of whether you are open to attack or not. Of course, so far as the race is concerned, the balance is redressed somewhat, and the more amiable qualities receive greater emphasis; but this is certainly not true of all aspects of individual life.

Look at the matter from a slightly different point of view. For years men and women worked in coal pits under conditions—easily remediable—that meant death to a certain number of people. Those responsible for these deaths underwent no social censure, they ran no risks, their minds were perfectly at ease. Finally, the Government—or, rather, the common sense of the public, expressing itself through the Government—insisted that this condition of things should be altered. Measures were passed, and we are then informed, by way of apology, that if these people had never been killed precautions would never have been taken for the protection of future generations. Agreed; but would it not have been, from all points of view, better had either mine-owners been more alive to their responsibilities, or the getting of coal been unattended with danger? Who would have suffered could we have got coal as easily as we get potatoes? There is no benefit in experience merely as experience. Its only use is that it prepares for an emergency. And what would any reasonable person think of one who invented difficulties and dangers in order that—after paying toll in suffering and death—they might be overcome? Yet this is exactly the position in which Theistic apologists place their Deity? He deliberately created the disasters and the dangers in order that he might one day learn to overcome them. He provides the poison with absolute certainty, and leaves the discovery of the antidote to time and chance.

Well, but would we have a world without pain and without disease? we are asked. Certainly, if we could get it. We are most of us trying to get rid of as much of both as we can. And even Christians are looking forward to a heaven where pain and disease shall be non-existent. But pain and pleasure are correlative states, we are reminded, and if we abolish one we abolish the other. This is only saying the world is what it is, and being what it is, things are as they are. We pay a price for everything we get, and we cannot get things without paying. But suppose the world were so constructed that knowledge could be obtained without suffering, that we understood what to do without going through the clumsy process of trial and failure; suppose, in brief, that the end were realised at once, and for everyone—that every man and woman offered the highest ideal of excellence, would not life then be a much more admirable arrangement? There can be doubt as to what the reply is to such a question. And the strength of human desire for such a condition of things is really a measure of human disapprobation of the constitution of the world, and its condemnation of the goodness or intelligence of God.

But there is still the future life. I am forgetting that to the Christian this life is only a preparation for another, and that to criticise fairly the plan must

be considered in its totality. But our judgment of the moral government of the universe must be based upon as much of it as we know. We cannot reckon upon the assumed remaining part that we do not know. At most this is an act of faith; at best, it is an act of charity towards God. We are giving him another chance to correct the blunders committed here. Man is much more forgiving than his Deity, and so asks for a suspension of judgment until we see what awaits us beyond the grave. It is all very pathetic, but it is very fallacious. Every reason that can be invented in favor of things being different in the next world is an implied condemnation of the "moral government" of the world we are now living in. It is an admission that the criticism of the Atheist is sound, and that his position is impregnable. Let the next world be what it will, it cannot undo the misery and injustice experienced in this. It is not the punishment of the wrong-doer the Atheist desires, but the prevention of wrong-doing. He does not desire compensation for unmerited suffering, but that the suffering itself should not transpire. It would not occur if good men had the power to prevent it. Why should it occur if a good God rules all?

A missionary once related to a savage the story of the sufferings and death of Jesus. The story was told very realistically, and the comment of unsophisticated and unspoiled human nature was, "Let us hope it isn't true." So may we say of the story that the world has been created and is governed by an almighty and all-wise God—"Let's hope it's not true." Its truth would be the most horrible disaster that could overtake the human spirit. To fight with nature as it is, to realise how puny is human effort when opposed to colossal cosmic forces, to see our plans overthrown in an instant, and our best-laid schemes reduced to naught, is bad enough, but to realise that all this is part of the pre-arranged plan of an almighty intelligence is simply paralysing in the intensity of its horror. It leaves man helpless before a power that callously scrutinises all his operations, and takes every opportunity of reducing them to chaos. The Theist, if he properly realises all that his beliefs imply, certainly ought to hope they are not true. The Atheist knows they are false. The forces that dominate life are incapable of joy or sorrow at human success or failure. They are oblivious to our needs, but they are conquerable by our intelligence. And in that lies the real key to the problem of human salvation.

C. COHEN.

Science and God.

THE Rev. Dr. Horton has the reputation of being a great leader of the Free Churches, a man of learning and saintly character. In the latter capacity we are not in the least concerned with him, nor are we interested in the quantity and quality of his learning except in so far as it touches matters of a non-religious or anti-theological nature. A little while ago he assured his public that the celebrated French philosopher, M. Henri Bergson, who is not even a Theist, was rendering invaluable service to the Christian Church by his repeated attacks upon Materialism; and now, in a Monthly Lecture which appears in the *Christian World Pulpit* for August 14, he claims the founders of modern science as devout Christian men. He opens with his usual sneer at Professor Haeckel, this time characterising that distinguished biologist as "that rather noisy man," and grossly misrepresenting him. Then he cites seventeen of the great masters of physics, and seventeen others who have been the leaders and discoverers in biology. "First of all the biologists," he says: "Priestley, Lavoisier, and Cuvier, who are the real masters and authors of modern biology." We rub our eyes and stare at those names, wondering whether the compositors have played the reverend gentleman some trick. It takes one's breath away to

find Priestley and Lavoisier classed with the biologists. Why, Joseph Priestley was a Unitarian minister who dabbled in chemistry; and he was chemically as unorthodox as he was theologically. In no sense was he a great scientist, though it is generously admitted in Roscoe and Schorlemmer's *Chemistry* (vol. i., p. 16) that "no one obtained more important results or threw more light upon the chemical existence of a number of different gases than Joseph Priestley." Lavoisier was likewise a chemist, and the discoverer of the law of the persistence of matter. He was one of the founders of modern chemistry, but not of modern biology. Only inexcusable ignorance can be responsible for so palpable a blunder. Why does the reverend gentleman omit the great name of Buffon, who occupies the front rank among the founders of modern biology? The fact is that Buffon was not a Christian believer, and made no profession of religion. On account of his heretical views he was condemned by the Sorbonne. Lamarck was another of the illustrious founders of this science, and he too was a Freethinker of an advanced type.

Having made such an untoward, blundering start, Dr. Horton does not improve as he proceeds. Take the following as a sample of his reasoning:—

"We have to recognise at once that the great bulk of scientific men do not, in the course of their work, express their views upon religion. There are many of them, like that brilliant young scientist, the electro-magnetist, Heinrich Hertz, who conscientiously keep their religious thoughts to themselves.....A large proportion of the great men in England have been of that temper of mind—Darwin, Lyall, and, in Germany, Helmholtz, and we might mention others who scrupulously present their science separated from their moral and their spiritual contentions."

The worst about that extract is that it is partly true and partly untrue. It is perfectly true that the great bulk of scientists keep silent on the subject of religion; but it is equally true that they do not identify themselves with any religious activities. On the other hand, some of them do speak out with no uncertain sound. The allusion to Darwin is exceptionally unfortunate. Dr. Horton ought to be above misrepresenting a great man whose biography is within reach. It is on record that though Darwin began life an ardent Christian, he ended it an avowed Agnostic (*Life*, pp. 55-55). Equally misleading is the reference to Sir Charles Lyell, for in a letter to Darwin, explaining "a confession" he had made in an after-dinner speech, he wrote (*Life of Sir C. Lyell*, vol. ii., p. 384): "I said I had been forced to give up my old faith without thoroughly seeing my way to a new one. But I think you would have been satisfied with the length I went."

Now, the fact that a few scientists have been Christians is evidentially of no value whatever. The fact that counts is that the majority of scientists are not believers. It is well known that Faraday was a fervent disciple, and always said a little prayer before meals; but it is also well known that Huxley assailed the Christian position in the name of scientific criticism. What does it signify that Ampere, the founder of electro-dynamics, left behind him a thoroughly evangelical prayer that he used to pray? It is frankly admitted that in his scientific work he never spoke of religion; but such an admission shows that Ampere's religion was not derived from or supported by his science. In all probability his religion was much older than his science, and persisted in spite of it. The truth is that no scientist has ever been scientifically religious. Religion is a something apart, even the existence of which science does not recognise. Dr. Horton says that science leads to God; but Dr. Horton is not a scientist; and it is an incontrovertible fact that the majority of scientists are not led to God. He quotes Pasteur as a believer in God and immortality; but Metchnikoff, Pasteur's successor, is an open unbeliever in both, affirming that science knows nothing of either.

Dr. Horton is nothing if not audacious and even reckless. Having made various quotations from

several scientific workers, he comes to this amazing conclusion:—

"I must not attempt to quote more to-night, but to my question that I put at the beginning: What is the attitude of the really great men of science towards God and the soul and religion? the answer comes without any hesitation: The great men of science like all other great men are reverent, believing; they know God; they bow before him; and they recognise in the Christian Truth the highest that we know of God, the way by which we live and must live if we come to God."

The greatness of a scientist is determined, for Dr. Horton, solely by his attitude towards the Christian religion. Even Charles Darwin was not a really great man of science, because he confessed in his Autobiography and in letters to his friends that he did not know God; that he saw no trace of design or purpose in Nature; that he was not a believer in Jesus Christ; and that he did not expect to survive death. Simply because he is an Atheist, Haeckel is merely "a noisy person," who deals in nothing but "noisy dogmatism." Every great man everywhere is a humble and sincere Christian who always walks by faith, and never by sight. It is inconceivable how sensible people can sit and listen to such stupid arrogance. It sounds uncommonly like "noisy dogmatism" indulged in by a man under the sway of religious fanaticism. No, Dr. Horton boggles at nothing which he thinks may be of service to him in the pursuit of his profession. He even asserts without blinking that science itself presents an irrefutable proof of the existence of God. His argument here is refreshingly illogical and inconclusive, as will be seen by the following passage:—

"It is never supposed that science makes the Universe; all that science does is to record the facts of the Universe. But if the men who record the facts and observe the Universe are so great, if their genius strikes us as amongst the evidence, the greatest evidence, of human greatness, if the men who simply observe and record the great Universe are so great, what is to be said of the Maker of the Universe? I say the Maker, not the makers, because it is science itself that taught us to recognise that there must be in the Universe a single central principle; science can never be polytheistic, it must be monotheistic. Where monotheism prevails Science can work, but until monotheism begins science is searching in the dark."

Then is reached the very summit of absurdity in the following astounding statement:—

"It is evident directly you see the point that science, instead of being the disproof of God, is always and necessarily the proof of God. There never could have been science unless there had been God."

Dr. Horton always labors under the delusion that the matter of the Universe must have had a beginning and a Maker, whereas "the really great men of science" can perceive no evidence whatsoever of a beginning. Even Sir Oliver Lodge, the idol of the Free Churches, admits that it is impossible to conceive of matter as either coming into or going out of existence, or that a beginning is an unscientific idea. On this point Lodge and Haeckel are at one. A beginning is a Biblical, theological, not a scientific, conception. With the divine it is a perfect obsession. He can never get away from it; and in his blindness he takes for granted, contrary to abundant evidence, that science is governed by it too. Dr. Horton has been hugging it affectionately for years, and everyone who declines to follow his example is at once set down as nothing but "a noisy person."

The curious thing is that with a few exceptions "the workers in science to-day are apparently without God and without religion." This is a staggering fact; but Dr. Horton is not dismayed by it. Without turning a hair, he accounts for it by saying that the present workers in science are specialists who, investigating only small fragments of the Universe, are unable even to see the whole, and are, in consequence, without God and without religion. Of course, if a man is a thinker, as well as a specialist, he can see the whole, and seeing the whole, he

becomes of necessity a believer in God and Christ and the world to come. Is it any wonder that the world is getting tired of and turning away from such "noisy dogmatism," and yearns more and more for the salt of common sense? It is too late in the day for anyone to declare airily that all really great men are on his side and recognise the truth of his petty system. And yet, in spite of all, the earth moves, the light is spreading, the sun has risen, and man is slowly learning the art of living, without the aid of priests or parsons, of rites or ceremonies, under the sole guidance of his own head and heart.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Shadow of the Cathedral.

The Shadow of the Cathedral is the title of a work of fiction by Vincent Blasco Ibanez, translated from the Spanish by Mrs. W. A. Gillespie, which deserves to be widely known among Freethinkers everywhere. Although not a novel in the narrow sense of the word, as dealing with the vicissitudes of the course of true love, the enlightened reader, to whom the tale of humanity's progress is of greater solicitude than individual matrimonial bliss, will find in the mental evolution of the Catholic seminarist who is the principal figure of the history, and the results that followed, a story of absorbing interest. To the lover of music, too, and also to those with a knowledge of architecture, there are conversational discourses scattered through the book that will appeal to their sympathies, quite apart from the religious significance of the author's main object.

The story opens with the figure of a weary, emaciated-looking traveller, at early dawn, on a cold, bleak morning, waiting in front of the Cathedral of Toledo, the mother-church of Spain,—waiting for the opening of its doors and the appearance of its ecclesiastical functionaries at the early service. To the eyes of the few scattered worshippers who had assembled, he presented the appearance of a beggar who had failed of a night's lodging. But he was no stranger to the place. Gabriel Luna, who had been absent for many years from these scenes of his childhood, had been born in the precincts of this sacred edifice, and but for the caprice of Fortune might have spent his life repeating endless and useless prayers in the service of the Cathedral. Nurtured in the religious and mental atmosphere of the Church, the long, long thoughts of youth with all their associations were vividly revived as he gazed once more upon the beautiful architectural structure.

The Lunas from time immemorial had been the gardeners of the Cathedral, and were proud of their humble but historic association with the institution. Some of the ancestors of the Luna family had taken a fancy to go and fight the Moors, and had captured castles and become lords. And although the stock to which Gabriel's father belonged had remained as humble retainers in the service of the Cathedral, it was his proud boast to count as distant relatives Pope Benedict XIII. and Don Pedro de Luna, the fifth Archbishop of Toledo.

When Gabriel was born, his mother affirmed with a blind faith that he was a living image of the Child Jesus that the Virgin of the Sagrario held in her arms. "He looks like a saint," his mother's sister, Tomaso, used to say to her friends; "you should see how seriously he says his prayers. Gabriellillo will become somebody; who knows if we may not see him a bishop?" In the imagination of his old father, who watched his early development, he might even aspire to one day become a Pope. And so doubtless he might if he had remained under the ecclesiastical shadow of the Cathedral.

When Gabriel was sent to school he made astonishing progress with his lessons, and "Silver Stick," the old priest, looked upon him as a prodigy. Later he was presented to the Cardinal, who gave him a scholarship, so that he might continue his studies at the seminary gratuitously. And he mastered the

Humanities, theology, canons, everything, with an ease which surprised his masters. They compared him to the Fathers of the Church, who had attracted attention by their precocity. "He is called to the pulpit," they said, in the Cathedral garden. "He has all the fire of the Apostles. He will become a Saint Bernard or a Bousset. Who can tell how far this youth will go, or where he will end?" But these sanguine hopes were never realised. The breath of Freethought dispelled all such ecclesiastical dreams, and turned the budding Pope into a social revolutionary.

There came a day when the mental peace of the priests in the Cathedral was greatly perturbed by the news from Madrid of the outbreak of a revolution, and the consequent peril of the Church. The revolutionary mob had invaded and profaned the churches, and the priests were afraid to go about the streets in their cassocks for fear of being hooted and insulted. The Cathedral of Toledo contributed secretly its quota of younger members to fight the forces of infidelity. Gabriel, along with his other accomplishments, had acquired in the seminary that ecclesiastical sternness that turns the priest into a warrior when the interests of the Church are at stake. And although he had never been away from the Cathedral, the remembrance of the Archbishops of Toledo, those brave ecclesiastical princes, implacable warriors against the infidels, fired his warlike feelings. And so one night he, too, without acquainting his family of his intentions, fled from Toledo with a scapulary of the Heart of Jesus sewed into his waistcoat, and joined one of the insignificant bands who were upholding the honor of the Church by pillaging the country. Gabriel's military ardor suffered a severe check when he discovered the nature and objects of the rabble of which the ranks were composed. Expecting to find in the armies of the Faith something akin to the ancient crusading expeditions, he found them nothing but a lawless armed mob, who, for the sake of women, wine, or plunder, would shoot their leaders just as readily as they would the enemy. But this disillusionment had its compensation in the knowledge that at present they were fighting for the Church. On entering a town they would shout "Long live religion!" but on the slightest provocation they would commit the most heinous atrocities in the name of God and all the Saints, not omitting in their filthy oaths to swear by everything most sacred in that same religion. The assault of Cuenca, the sole victory of the campaign, made a deep impression on Gabriel's memory; when the knowledge that they were masters of the place drove these ruffians mad with the lust of pillage and of blood. He saw how the roughest of the mountaineers destroyed in the Institute all the apparatus of the Cabinet of Physical Science, breaking it in pieces. They were furious with these inventions of the Evil One; and although the seminarist was also delighted at all this destruction, it was with the calm and reflective hatred bred in the seminary against all positive and material sciences. For the sum-total of Gabriel's reasoning was that they came perilously near to the negation of God.

When the war came to an end, the rebels were driven over the frontier, where they were compelled to give up their arms to the French custom-house officers. Many availed themselves of the amnesty, anxious to return to their own homes. But the daily routine of Gabriel's life had been broken; during the war he had tasted of worldly delights, and experienced a new and delightful sense of freedom, and he was not desirous of returning immediately to the restrictions of Cathedral life. He had learnt already that Spain was not the world, nor the Cathedral of Toledo the pivot upon which it moved. The material progress, too, the refinement of civilisation, the culture and well-being of the people of France came to him as a great astonishment. And when he could express himself fluently in French, he made his way to Paris, where a friendly abbé procured him employment as a corrector of

proofs in a religious library close to Saint Sulpice. The attitude of French Catholicism to modern ideas he soon found to be vastly different to that which prevailed among the ecclesiastics of Spain. He noticed a certain humble shrinking in the representatives of religion when they came face to face with science—a desire to please, not to be censorious, to help on with their sympathy any conciliatory solutions, so that dogma should not fall to the ground in the rapid march of events. Entire books were written by eminent priests with the view of adjusting and bringing into line the revelations of the holy books and the discoveries of modern science, even at the risk of doing some violence to the former. And with a fever of curiosity Gabriel wished to become acquainted with the mysterious perfume of that hated science which had so disturbed God's priests, and had made them deny indirectly the beliefs of nineteen centuries. For two years young Luna did little else but read; and, as the result, his faith in Catholicism as the only religion died completely. Losing his faith in dogma, he lost also, by inevitable logic, that belief in the monarchy which had driven him to fight in the mountains, and he understood clearly now the history of his country without prejudice of race. The foreign historians showed him the sad fate of Spain, arrested in the most critical period of her development, when she was emerging young and strong during the most fertile period of the Middle Ages, by the fanaticism of priests and inquisitors and the folly of some of her kings. Those people who had broken with the Papacy, who had turned their backs for ever on Rome, were far happier and more prosperous than that Spain which slept like a beggar at the door of the Church.

The mystery of faith which had held the mind of Gabriel captive was gradually dispelled by the light of science; one by one his old traditional beliefs vanished until, with the disappearance of that most tenacious superstition, an anthropomorphic Deity, not a shred of his former faith remained. He had journeyed from Rome to Rationalism. His allegiance was transferred from faith to science.

Gabriel then threw himself with all the ardor of the enthusiast into the social movement for the enlightenment and economic freedom of the masses, with which Continental Freethought has always been more or less allied. And in the rôle of social revolutionary, advocating a state of society free from the domination of tyrants, priests, and kings, he visited most of the countries of Europe. After eight years of this wandering life, when the privations and persecutions which he suffered had told upon his health, he conceived a desire to return to his beloved Spain. He reached Barcelona just as the time there was an industrial riot, accompanied by some bomb-throwing; and, although he was entirely innocent of any knowledge or connection with the outbreak, he was seized, and suffered two years' imprisonment in the fortress of Montjuich. It is after his release from prison, when he is a physical wreck, that we find him waiting outside the Cathedral of Toledo to claim the privilege of ending his remaining days in the bosom of his family.

The above is merely a brief outline of the introduction to the book; the subject-matter of the history being concerned with Gabriel's life and experiences after his return and his relations with the numerous ecclesiastics and dependents connected with the Cathedral services. Two of the incidents recorded may, perhaps, whet the appetite of the reader for a further acquaintance with this exceptional work. After his partial return to health, which was due to the careful nursing of his brother, an official of the Cathedral, Gabriel, having a knowledge of three or four languages, occasionally acted as interpreter to the foreign tourists who constantly came to see the Treasury and other curiosities connected with the Cathedral. This he did for his brother's sake, on whose hospitality he was depending.

One day a phlegmatic Englishman interrupted the interpreter:—

“‘And have you not among all these things a feather from the wings of St. Michael?’

“‘No, senor, and it is a great pity,’ said Luna in a serious tone, ‘but you will probably find it in some other Cathedral; we cannot have everything here.’”

On another occasion, at the festival of Corpus, he was one of a company of ten who carried the platform of the Sacrament through the streets. He was appointed to attend the look-out and guide the car during the procession, the unseen bearers beneath the platform following the directions he gave them. The ironical situation tickled him extremely, that he, of all men, with his round religious denials, should be the one to pilot the God of Catholicism through the devout crowd—an Atheist guiding the footsteps of God through the Spanish Jerusalem. There is something ludicrously funny in the thought of an Atheist guiding the footsteps of God!

To use a phrase of Mark Twain's, I have read acres of fiction, good, bad, and indifferent. I have freely sampled Scott, and Dickens, and Hardy, and dipped into Hugo, and Balzac, and Anatole France. But, in the whole realm of fictional literature, I know of no work dealing so directly with the problems that are of such vital interest to Freethinkers, nor any that surpass, in the grandeur of its conceptions and the artistic treatment of its theme, *The Shadow of the Cathedral*.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Opinions.

“For the worst opinion gotten for doing well, should delight us.”—BEN JONSON.

IN Swinburne's magnificent appreciation of Jonson, we had the good fortune to discover the pretty little gem quoted above. It arrested our eye, and the more we looked upon it, the more it scintillated and diffused tiny shafts of light from its splendid setting. Honest Ben may not have had the courageous convictions of his more outspoken contemporary, Kit Marlowe, but this may be explained by his extensive patronage from the court of James I. His numerous dramas, masques, and lyrics show a wonderful depth of knowledge, and their illustrious author must have observed, with his keen perception, the results of holding unpopular opinions. We may safely assume that opinions figured to a great extent in his duel with a fellow actor, and, therefore, he was fully aware of their attendant significance.

Opinions are like water lilies. They may be good, bad, or indifferent, but they indicate the place where their roots may be found. On the surface of thought a ripple may send them this way or that way, but down in the river bottom of conviction they have their roots firmly fixed. If they draw their sustenance from the wrong kind of foundation then it is only by dredging that they can effectively be uprooted. In this subterranean occupation the builders of rational thought have always suffered. The slime of abuse has always been flung at the pioneers of reason, and the lives of Paine and Bradlaugh prove that the wheel of progress takes its toll as relentlessly as the sea.

It is laughable to notice with what vigor the pugnacious Christian assails the opinions of the Freethinker, who, with his innate modesty, only asserts the right to live rationally.

Brass bands and church organs, though respectively useful and ornamental, are the vulgar weapons of a creed whose faith lives on noise at the expense of truth. That is a Freethinker's opinion. The difference between a faith and philosophy is noise. Therefore, as noise and distraction cannot be nourished from the foundations of reason, the Freethinker will have none of it; the roots of faith find their sustenance in that bottomless abyss of absurdity—the Athanasian Creed. For daring to dispense

with all these external symbolisms there awaits the saintly gauntlet of slander. If the disbeliever escapes the charge of wife-beater he is proved to be an evil liver. Thus bad begins, but worse will follow; he may, in the final stages of humiliation, be converted to what is sloppily termed the faith learned at his mother's knee.

Opinions are the outriders of conviction, and conviction based on knowledge, instead of speculation, marches like a well disciplined army, against which superstition cannot stand. Instead of a small, insignificant territory adjoining the Mediterranean Sea, the Freethinker chooses the world for his school, and natural philosophy for his teacher. With his mind fettered by no despotic creed he can absorb the wisdom from Homer down to Anatole France. And with a freedom denied to the orthodox he may garner the golden grain from those wise philosophers who were content with one life at a time.

A Freethinker's opinions have never yet been so depraved as to require a human sacrifice for their existence; neither have they closed the eyes of helpless children and taught them by one father at home to beat a prayer to another in heaven. They have not caused the knee to bend, and thus destroy at the outset the spirit of independence in a youthful mind. They have not placed together in an attitude of prayer and helplessness two tiny baby hands which should only clap together with joy and delight. They have not condoned the black magic of those whom Nietzsche described as “Poisoners, whether they know it or not.” All these are what a Freethinker's opinions have not caused, and deep down in the earth of reason and common sense they have their roots nourished and sustained by the sound teachings of men who enriched the world by their lives.

Freethinkers do not form the feather-bed majority of mankind; the rose-strewn path of Christian conformity does not appeal to those who will not sacrifice truth at the altar of hypocrisy. Their opinions bring them no fierce ecstasy of emotion; but, if they are exempt from these peculiar advantages of faith, they at least can face the eternal problem called life, with a mind freed from unhealthy and unnatural fears. And what are the rewards for a life of battle and turmoil against the insidious forces of superstition? Is it not noble to sacrifice the easy, slothful, Christian attitude for the sterner and more truthful one? What can comfort the declining days of life better than the knowledge of dedicated service to humanity? He would be a churl indeed who could hear a child's merry laugh, or look into wide eyes of babyish candor, and not rejoice in the knowledge that truth had made him free to annihilate the evil influences which had rendered his own youth one sad round of needless terror. To posterity the Freethinker turns his eyes. There is the land of promise. In that fair land will children play in happy freedom from ghostly tales of barbarism, from tales which, in their very crudity, prove that man has risen.

These are a few of the compensations to be derived from unpopular opinions. And, as a Freethinker knows that death is as natural as life, he may, when the Reaper approaches, look back with no vain regrets on those days when he fought for truth, and, by so doing, smoothed the path and lightened the burden of those who follow him.

J. W. REPTON.

DRIVEN MAD BY EVANGELIST.

As the result of a religious spell under which they were put by an itinerant evangelist whose strong suit was heralding the second coming of Christ, Mr. and Mrs. Ogden Bolton, well known people of Rincon Valley, near Santa Rosa, Cal., are both insane. Bolton became so violent that he was hurriedly taken to the Napa Asylum, and his wife is strapped down in a local hospital. It is believed that she can be restored. They have two children. Mrs. Bolton is a talented vocalist.

Acid Drops.

Selling an ounce of tobacco, or a packet of cigarettes, or a working man's twopenny laranaga, on a Sunday is a dreadful crime in the eyes of the Rev. J. Davison Brown, President of the Wolverhampton Free Church Council. Selling religion on Sunday is all right. Mr. Brown and all his clerical colleagues do that every Sunday of their lives. For how can it make any difference whether they take money for seats in their churches every time they are open for divine worship *plus* a sermon, or take the money quarterly in the shape of pew-rent? Messrs. Brown & Co., religion merchants, Wolverhampton, know that their business is in a parlous condition; they therefore want the Sunday all to themselves; nobody else must be allowed to trade on that day; not even tobacconists, newsvendors, and the vendors of lollipops that delight the heart, and other organs, of childhood. Shall a young fellow buy his girl a packet of chocolate on Sunday? Perish the very thought. Let him buy them on Saturday, even at the risk of her inquiring if he bought them on the hire system. Better do that than incur the holy anger of the Rev. J. Davison Brown, who calls upon the Watch Committee to stop all Sunday trading, and thus preserve "the English Sabbath," which, as everybody knows, is the secret of England's greatness.

Mr. Brown repudiates the idea that he and his clerical brethren are moved by commercial motives. All they want, he says, is the good of the people. They wish to keep Sunday as a day of rest; although it happens to be the principal working-day in the week for the priests, parsons, and preachers themselves. What these gentlemen mean by "rest" is stagnation—with the right to go to a gospel-shop as the one break in the people's monotony. Mr. Brown, indeed, has the hardihood to say—though it discounts all his fine talk about "rest"—that the Sabbath was "made for religious worship." He is talking nonsense. We don't say he knows it, for there is no limit nowadays to the ignorance of the know-all men of God. The weekly day of rest was a social device originally. It was intended to prevent the slave population from wearing out. But the priesthood seized upon it, as they seized upon everything they could. They told the people that the only wise, safe, and profitable way of spending the weekly day of rest was "attending to the ministrations of religion." Mr. Brown says the same thing now. And he shows his hand still further by deploring that "one of the most serious features of modern life is the growing irreligion of the young." If that isn't stopped it means the ruin of Messrs. Brown & Co.'s business. We do not wonder that he calls upon all his fellow directors in the Wolverhampton Branch to be up and doing to conserve their sacred privileges. No Sunday opposition! No Sabbath rivalry! The Wolverhampton Watch Committee are called upon to wage war against Sunday sweets and Sunday "fags." Let them watch over the interests of the gospel-shop keepers. And the way to do that is simple. "They must make Sunday closing," as Mr. Brown says, "one of the strongest planks of the political platform."

A word in conclusion. Mr. Brown claims the right of free speech. Good! We support him in that—though we feel pretty confident that he wouldn't extend the same support to us. But he might reflect that other people have the same right to free action. As long as they don't interfere with the equal right of free action in others, they are entitled to go their own way without consulting anybody else—and least of all the members of Free Church Councils.

There are some good comments on this Wolverhampton affair in the *Sunday Chronicle*. We are surprised, however, to see our lively contemporary announcing that "you cannot prosecute people into piety, or promote religion by the aid of magistrates." Oh yes you can—if you do it thoroughly. Religion has always been promoted in that very way. As the late Mr. Justice Stephen once remarked in a prominent magazine article, religion was never established without exhausting all the terrors of this world as well as of the world to come. Faith, Fraud, and Fear are its three great agencies. Fear comes last, but it is the most efficacious, for it supplies all the deficiencies of Faith and Fraud.

Some complaints have been raised that those Picture Palaces which are allowed to open on Sunday, on condition that they devote all their profits to charity, are making money out of the business. We are not surprised that this should be so, and we do not see that any blame is attaching to the proprietors of the exhibitions. There must be a demand for the shows, or the public would not attend. No

objection has been raised to the character of the pictures, and it is simply monstrous that any Council should dictate to anyone pursuing a legitimate business to what portion the profits should be applied. It is all an exhibition of bigoted Sabbatarianism and shady Christian morality. If these places ought not to be opened, it follows that local governing bodies are sanctioning wrong for the sake of a few thousand pounds. And if there is no reasonable objection to the exhibitions, devoting the profits to charities is nothing less than a system of blackmail. It is even more objectionable than the newspaper accounts of the police blackmail of America. An obvious and admitted wrong is comparatively innocuous when compared with a wrong done in the name of public and private morality.

There is one good thing about Sabbatarianism. It is nothing to what it used to be. In 1862 powers were obtained by Cambridge University compelling the Great Eastern Railway not to take up or set down passengers at Cambridge Station, or at any place within three miles thereof, between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., on any Sunday, under a penalty of £5 per passenger. That monstrous Act was not repealed till 1908.

"When the Bible was translated into Japanese an equivalent to the word 'baptise' could not be found, and the word 'soak' had to be used instead. So that Japanese Biblical students are acquainted with a person named 'John the Soaker,' and with a doctrine of 'soaking for remission of sins.' In that case the mistranslation is due to inadequacy of language. It is oftener due to ignorance. A schoolboy once rendered 'Miserere, Domine!' into 'Oh, heart-broken schoolmaster!' And another recovered from German the text, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak' in the form, 'The ghost, of course, is ready, but the meat is feeble.'"—*Daily Chronicle* (August 14).

"John the Soaker" is good, but there is something still better (or worse) in an older story. An English missionary in China translated the New Testament—or rather the Four Gospels—into the special dialect of the district in which he was working. They had no word for "God," so he adopted what he considered the nearest paraphrase. It was a bad misfit, but the Chinese were too polite to upset him by calling his attention to it. They smiled—inwardly. Imagine the shock he suffered when he found out that, for twelve months or more, he had been preaching "Stinking Fish."

The Salvation Army reports that during its twenty-one years of existence, the Hadleigh Farm Colony has received 6,870 men. Of this number, 1,553 were dismissed as useless or unsuitable. Taking these figures for granted, one is curious about the 1,553. Those retained, one may safely presume from what is known of the Salvation Army's methods, were such as it paid the Army to keep. The balance were thrown back upon society, to sink or swim, as the case might be. But the Salvation Army scheme was floated and subscribed to save the "submerged tenth." If the Army is simply to select from the poor such as can be turned into profitable servants, it obviously leaves the problem it claimed to deal with untouched. The 6,870 entrances, with its net residue of 5,317, looks imposing; but as this only averages just over 250 per year, it comes a long way off the results promised, and is a poor return for the money expended. Moreover, a large number of this 5,317 did not belong to the "submerged tenth" at all. Many were ordinary working men, temporarily out of employment, and some were actually paid for by such agencies as the Mansion House Fund.

The Methodist Missionary Society reports that in Spain and Portugal the revolt from Papal domination has not been entirely helpful to Protestantism. This is only another way of saying that when people shake off Roman Catholicism they, in the vast majority of cases, become Freethinkers. This is what we have always said does result, and all history supports this view. When there is a fair field, ex-Catholics do not become Protestants. Protestantism was established by force in every country in Europe; and once established, as in England, it offers social inducements to many to join its ranks. But in a country where Roman Catholicism is, or has been recently established, no such inducement exists, and matters pursue a more natural course. Moreover, the idea that Protestantism can beat Catholicism in a fair encounter is absurd. It has never done this, and never will do it. People break away from Catholicism owing to causes that reach far beyond Protestantism. And the forces that sap the strength of the older Church undermine the foundations of all forms of religious belief.

The Bishop of Manchester has been delivering a course of sermons in Blackpool on the message of Christ to an age of unrest. He thinks that no good can be done by strikes and lock-outs, and, as an illustration, asserts that slavery only died out because the owners were convinced that it was not righteous and was contrary to the principle of Christian brotherhood. This is history as understood by a Christian Bishop. As a mere matter of fact, we may point out that slavery was never abandoned by any Christian country while it was profitable to maintain it. Black slavery—that is, the modern Christian slavery—was instituted by Christians purely for purposes of gain, and the owners held to the institution so long as they could. And in England, instead of the owners surrendering their slaves because they found holding them contrary to Christian brotherhood, they actually defended the practice on Scriptural grounds, and claimed that it enabled them to bring the blacks under the influence of the Gospel. The Bishop must surely have forgotten that England actually paid twenty millions sterling as compensation to the slave owners.

Christian charity still prevails at Belfast. Tom Hood, in his great "Song of the Shirt," bewailed "the rarity of Christian charity under the sun." He didn't know Belfast.

Three "blasphemers" during the present year have had ten months' imprisonment between them. Practically they were punished for "insulting language" concerning religion, and thus "offending the susceptibilities" of Christian people. How rarely are Christians prosecuted for the same offence—minus the ridiculous and hypocritical charge of "blasphemy"—and how lightly are they sentenced! George Owen Carroll, aged sixty, a Methodist preacher, was charged at Marlborough-street Police Court, on Saturday, August 12, with having used "insulting words and behavior" in Hyde Park, and was fined 7s. 6d., with the alternative of five days' imprisonment. Five days for the Christian. About a hundred days each for the Freethinkers. The figures tell their own tale.

Ructions have occurred in Wellington Square, Calcutta, between Mohammedans and Christians. Missionaries preached against Mohammedanism and stirred up the ill-feeling of the crowd, which led to a breach of the peace. According to English analogy, the missionaries should have been arrested and punished—for that is what is done when Christians here are "insulted" by hostile remarks on their faith. But it is different in Calcutta—or rather it is really the same at bottom, as the Christians hold the reins of power at both places. The Mohammedans were arrested for being annoyed by the Christian missionaries. The argument in favor of the Blasphemy Laws in England is thus reversed in India. The feelings of the majority must be respected here. The feelings of the minority must be respected over there, while the feelings of the majority count for nothing. The Christian motto with respect to other religionists or no-religionists is "heads we win, tails you lose."

Lancaster Parish Church has had to be closed. Male visitors sometimes smoked—perhaps as a disinfectant. Some of them kept their hats on. Female visitors, on the other hand, were often bareheaded. It didn't please the vicar and wardens either way. So the church is now closed to visitors altogether, and the result will be—nothing.

The British and Foreign Bible Society boasts of having circulated 7,394,523 copies of the whole or portions of the Bible during the past twelve months. It would have been more to the point if one—only *one*—proof of the inspiration of the Bible had been produced in the same period.

Burying Freethinkers like Christians doesn't seem to be as easy a job in some places as it is in England. There was quite a riot the other day at Arbon, on Lake Constance, when the priest at the cemetery tried to bury with religious rites a young Italian Socialist who had been killed in a factory and was well known to be an Atheist. A number of his comrades entered the cemetery, drove the priest and his assistants away, and then buried him themselves, filling up the grave and leaving everything in order. The papers state that "two of the ringleaders were arrested." Two ringleaders in common honesty.

That ambitious cleric, the Bishop of the Sandwich Islands (No, no! That's wrong; it is the Falkland Isles), has been soliciting the British public for the sum of £100,000. That's all. It is a very modest figure. But the British public, which is gulled very easily, hasn't risen to this bait. It

didn't even rise when the right reverend gentleman took advantage of the Peru rubber horrors to bait his hook afresh. The subscription only realised £6,150 altogether. Thereupon "L. F. Falkland Isles" hit upon the plan of threatening the British public that if he didn't receive "an adequate response by the end of next month" he would throw up his bishopric. This terrible threat is expected to make the British public squirm—and shell out. Well, we shall see. In the meantime we suggest that if this episcopal collector of ready cash has to keep his word, he might do worse than go to an evening class and learn how to write English. Look at this sentence from the last begging letter he induced the newspapers to publish for him:—

"Even now I almost refuse to believe that, with over one hundred million pounds of British capital invested in Western South America, this country will not, even at this late hour, acknowledge the claim upon them, and subscribe the comparatively small sum of £100,000, one-eightieth part of the annual income which comes to these shores, for the religious, educational, and medical work which is clamoring to be done, and which would be so enormously beneficial both to our countrymen working on those coasts and those among whom they dwell."

We should be ashamed to print such a sentence in our own pages. "Even now" and "this late hour" are sheer tautology. "This country" should not have the pronoun "them" thrust upon it. And work "clamoring to be done" is a ludicrous confusion. It reminds us of the classic:—

"If you'd seen these roads before they were made
You'd lift up your hands and bless General Wade."

We wonder if the right reverend gentleman is Irish.

The earthquake in Turkey turns out to be far worse than we thought. We forgot to lay stress on the last word in the text "He doeth all things *well*." It was really a very fine performance. The deaths, the injuries, the miseries, and the devastations, were such as "Providence" need not be ashamed of. But the sufferers are only Turks, so we don't see any relief fund started in the (Christian) newspapers.

"Providence" worked up a nice storm off the northern coast of Spain about the middle of August. This also was a thorough success. Fifty fishing smacks were lost. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

"I hope God will forgive me." This pious sentence was found in a letter pinned inside the hat of Emily Searle, who committed suicide by jumping into the sea, her body being found off Lord Dorchester's Pier at Cowes. Not an Atheist, anyhow.

Robert Hicks Murray, who made a clean sweep of his family at Eastbourne, and then committed suicide, left a note in a little silver vase in the entrance hall of the house, which read thus: "I am absolutely ruined. I have killed all dependent on me. Bury us together. God help me." This was not an Atheist either.

The Kalem Oriental Company of New York has spent £12,000 in producing cinematograph films depicting scenes in the Life of Christ. We are told that "historic accuracy" has been sought—just as though there were any history in it at all. One "historic" blunder, we see, is repeated. Christ is depicted carrying the cross to Calvary. But it was only the cross piece that the condemned man carried to the place of execution—and that rather as an indignity than as a burden. The upright part of the cross was a fixture. It is stated that this series of pictures, which ends with the Crucifixion—though it ought to include the Resurrection and Ascension—begins with the life of Mary before she was espoused to Joseph. But the critical and interesting part occurs *after* she she was espoused to Joseph. There was the visit of Gabriel, who, according to the Koran and oriental tradition, appeared to Mary in the form of a handsome young man of twenty-five, in her bedroom at night, and foretold that she would have a baby whose parent was the Holy Ghost. He seems to have satisfied Mary that the "baby" part of the prophecy would be fulfilled. But we don't suppose that this romantic incident will be included in the two hours' entertainment promised after Christmas.

Mr. J. M. Robertson suggests that the New Testament story grew out of the religious plays presented to the people in the Middle Ages. We shall now see the New Testament story resolved back into a series of religious plays. Rather odd—is it not? The serpent's head and tail meeting again.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended until September.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £182 6s. 11d. Received since:—A. H. Deacon, 2s. 6d.

L. K. (S. Africa).—We were promised an article on Secular Education in Holland by a competent writer on the subject, but we have not received it yet. Mr. Heaford will perhaps take your hint and deal with the continuation of Ferrer's work since his property was released for the use of his heirs and executors.

JOHN LATHAM.—Your "confidential" letter is duly to hand and its contents are noted. We shall be writing you very shortly on the subject of your previous letter, which has had our full consideration. Thanks for the S. African cuttings.

G. F. DEPLAY.—We have listened to a lot of advice in our time, and little of it was ever useful. If we took up every "important cause" which any of our readers are interested in, instead of confining the *Freethinker* to its own special objects, well, it would be a paper! But it wouldn't be so long. Freethought doesn't mean that somebody else ought to find you a public. It respects your liberty to find one for yourself. That is all. Your chaotic epistles would be of no interest to our readers, and we have no space to waste.

W. AVER.—Thanks for your trouble, but the pages of pious dreams in the *Christian Herald* are not, to our mind, amusing, but simply silly. It is a sad reflection that thousands of people relish such mental pabulum. Such is the effect of orthodox Christianity on the minds with a natural tendency to superstition.

W. WICKHAM.—Pleased to hear you have been reading the *Freethinker* so many years with undiminished interest, and that it is doing good among the working-men in your district.

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

J. TOMKINS.—See paragraph. Thanks.

AVON DALE.—We believe it will be just as you say. But that doesn't perturb us. Our object was not personal. Thanks for your note.

C. T. SHAW.—You will see we have dealt with the matter.

A. NAILSON.—Yes, the Roman Catholic religion was the State religion of France, and levies upon the people were made for its support. A change came in with the French Revolution, but the Catholic Church was set up again by Napoleon, though not quite in the old way. Prior to the Separation of Church and State under the Act passed some seven years ago, the State paid a salary to all the parish priests in France and to all the "regular" clergy of whatever grade.

E. BURKE.—Yes, the enclosures are interesting.

J. ALMOND.—We are glad to hear that there were three special meetings for Freethinkers at the Esperanto Congress, and that Professor Bourlay, of Paris, in his atheistic speech, informed the members how necessary it is to translate the works of Ingersoll, Paine, and Voltaire.

STUART GRAHAM.—See paragraph. Thanks.

A. M. WILSON.—We cannot undertake to criticise verses on which correspondents would like our opinion.

E. B.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

A. GIBSON.—The point you have discovered as to the false genealogy of Jesus is a very old one.

F. HALSTEAD.—Sorry to hear it.

F. O. RITZ.—Very pleased to hear from you. Thanks also for copy of your pamphlet, which we shall notice in "Literary Gossip."

W. BACON.—We never heard of the matter you refer to. There are historic cases of the Papacy granting dispensations to marry in a way that would otherwise be illegitimate.

T. C.—Thanks for the reference, but the review doesn't promise much interest in the novel for us.

A. H. DEACON writes: "I've been a constant reader of the *Freethinker* for about ten years, and I should not like to miss a single issue."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

The American Freethought Tract Society was incorporated on July 11, 1912, with Mr. G. M. Macdonald as President, Mr. J. F. Morton as Secretary, and Mr. James A. Conway as Treasurer. Its object is to print and circulate cheap literature "appealing to believers and instructing them regarding the unsubstantial nature of their faith, and showing them that Freethought is the better way." Money has already been donated to this Society, which is expected to gain the support of the wealthier Freethinkers, who are able to give dollars, if nothing else, to the Freethought movement. The office of this Society is at 62 Vesey-street, New York City—the publishing office of the *Truthseeker*. The first tract issued, to the number of 30,000 copies, is "Why Be Good (Without Fear of Hell or Hope of Heaven)? The Answer to Freethought." The writer is "G. W. Foote, editor of the London *Freethinker*," and it is described as "an admirable presentation of the subject, giving a most satisfying and convincing answer to the first question that presents itself to the doubting mind." We appreciate the compliment paid us in selecting something of ours to start the work of the American Freethought Tract Society.

Mr. Cohen, who has been holidaying in Wales, resumes platform work to-day (Aug. 25) with two (afternoon and evening) lectures in Victoria Park. His East-end friends will be glad of the opportunity of hearing him again.

"A fortnight ago," a valued subscriber writes, "a friend was sitting in a wood reading the *Freethinker* and the *Malthusian*; a couple of ladies (strangers) were near and caught sight of the titles of the papers and asked for them. My friend presented both copies to the strangers. I hope that in this case also the seed has fallen on good soil." We hope so too. This correspondent has himself been the means of introducing the *Freethinker* to several persons who have become regular readers.

The Northern Tour, under the New Propagandist Scheme of the Secular Society, Ltd., is still going on well. A good many towns have been visited during the last ten or twelve days. Mr. Jackson, the lecturer, has been nearly washed away by the recent floods, and Mr. Gott, the literature seller and organiser, doesn't want to see any more rain during 1912—and not too much afterwards. They visited Bolton on Sunday. "In spite of the weather," Mr. Gott writes, "we did well. The people stood in the rain till many were soaked, and the literature was handed to the customers dripping wet. We got names and addresses of a number of people anxious to form a Branch of the N.S.S." The secretary *pro tem.* is Mr. Noah Birtles, 31 Bridgman-street, Bolton. Mrs. Mellows, 60 Bridge-street, who owns a fine café, has offered the new Branch one of her best rooms free of cost for committee and small meetings.

On Monday night Mr. Jackson and Mr. Gott visited Hyde, where there has been a lot of bigoted talk about stopping addresses in the Market Place "attacking religion." One sapient councillor was good enough to say that as they spent so much money on religion they were not going to "see it criticised" and shown up. "Permits" have to be got now before any addresses whatever can be delivered in the Market Place; even then the users of such permits are barred from "making an attack on religion"—in other words, they mustn't talk Freethought. Mr. Jackson got a "permit" and lectured on "Free Thought, Free Speech, and Blasphemy." The meeting was large and orderly, and there was a good sale of literature. Mr. Jackson's promise to return was loudly applauded.

The sale of the *Freethinker* at these Northern Tour meetings is, of course, a good advertisement of it—though what will come of the advertisement remains to be seen. But we wish to correct the impression that we are deriving a considerable profit from such sale. We are supplying the *Freethinker* for this purpose at a price largely below the lowest trade rate; very little, in fact, above the bare cost of production—that is to say, the paper and machining.

Dolet: The Freethought Martyr.—IV.

(Continued from p. 525.)

HE had removed to the Rue Merciere, the Pater-noster-row of Lyons, where he had printed the poems of Marot and the *Gargantua* of Rabelais. That was bad enough, but he did still worse. He printed the *Manuel du Chevalier Chrestien*, by poor Louis Berquin who got burnt to death for heresy. He even printed the New Testament in French, and several other religious works which were all filled, as the sentence on their printer and editor declared, with "damnable and pernicious heresies." All the incriminated books issued from his press in the first half of 1542, which shows an extraordinary lack of caution. As Mr. Christie says, "he rushed into the lion's mouth with his eyes open." His prosecution on the capital charge of heresy was decided on, and "to make his conviction and destruction more sure, the aid of the most terrible tribunal which the world has seen was invoked, and the court which assembled for his trial was presided over by the Inquisitor-General."

The Inquisition had practised infinite cruelty in France as well as in Spain. The vilest fiends could not have excelled the ingenious tortures it devised and inflicted on heretics. We have already described the horrible *strappado*; but we must find room for a few more delicacies from its hellish *menu*. The official code of the Inquisition, the fifth edition of which appeared in 1730, states that it is for the soul's health of the victim that his feet should not only be burnt, but first well steeped in lard. Another volume by the Inquisitor at Pavia and Piacenza, published at Venice in 1583, adds a new torture to the old *tickling* of the heretic's feet. Salt is to be first rubbed in, and then the feet are to be *licked by a goat*, in order to render the torment more exquisite! Dolet could expect little mercy from devils like these.

The Inquisition's public prosecutor collected matter for his indictment, and after his house and shop had been ransacked and his books seized, he was formally charged with heresy. The old offences for which he had been previously condemned were again cited; a long list of books he had published containing heretical passages was drawn up; and it was alleged that "he had eaten flesh in Lent and other prohibited times, that he had walked about during the Mass, and lastly that in his writings he seemed to doubt the immortality of the soul."

The trial lasted until October. All kinds of hearsay evidence were received against him, and he was himself submitted to examination. He defended himself as an obedient son of the Church, but it was of no avail, and on October 2 he was condemned as a heretic, and sentenced to be burnt at the stake.

Dolet at once appealed to the Parliament of Paris. On October 7 the King remitted the case to the Grand Council, and the effect of this was to ensure a delay. In the month of June, 1543, the appeal was again remitted to the Parliament, and Dolet was brought from his prison at Lyons to another at Paris. Fortunately he had a friend in Pierre Duchâtel, the King's reader, who personally and warmly urged his cause, and succeeded in procuring the royal pardon. After some further delay Dolet was liberated. Duchâtel was censured by the Cardinal de Tournon, the most powerful man in France, for his interference on behalf of "an Atheist"; but he proudly retorted "in accusing me of forgetting my duty as a bishop it is you who forget your own. I have spoken as a bishop, you are acting as an executioner."

Released from prison, Dolet returned to the bosom of his family and to his literary avocations. He fancied all was well, but his enemies were still on his track. Early in January, 1544, they put his name on two large packets of prohibited books. The ruse succeeded. The matter was brought before the Parliament, and on the 6th of the same month he

was arrested in the midst of his family and friends. Three days after he escaped from prison and fled to Piedmont, where he remained concealed for some months. In his absence a grand *auto-da-fé* was made of his books at Notre Dame, the great bell tolling, and the trumpet proclaiming that all printers of such works would be punished as heretics.

In his Piedmont retreat Dolet prepared a series of poems on his imprisonment, called *Le Second Enfer*—the Second Hell. To publish this, and to embrace once more his wife and son, he made his way back to Lyons. There he had the *Second Enfer* printed with two dialogues, *Axiochus*, then falsely attributed to Plato. This very volume cost him his life. Three words in one of the dialogues soon after constituted one of the capital charges against him. Mr. Christie says that some of the verses are of considerable merit, and are written in "a pathetic and elevated tone, full of lofty and noble sentiments." One epistle to the King is very outspoken. He calls on Francis to turn against those enemies of virtue who sought to annihilate before his face all good men and lovers of learning. It is of this epistle that M. Aimé Martin, the great historian, writes:—

"These verses as verses are far from admirable; but what elevation, what courage there is in the sentiments they proclaim! Thus to attack face to face the enemies of humanity, to throw light into the hearts of kings, to teach them that which no one dares to say to them, but which they have so much interest in knowing—namely, that they should make their glory repose on the happiness and intelligence of their people, to do that to-day, would be to deserve well of mankind, to do that in those days of superstition was to devote oneself to death."

Dolet set out with his volume for the royal camp, intending to present it to the king. But at Troyes he was arrested and conveyed to Paris, where he was tried for heresy in the *Chambre Ardente*, before Pierre Lizet, the first President.

As this man sentenced Dolet to death we pause to describe his character. He was a zealous hunter of heretics and had sent many to the stake. He busied himself in the prosecution of poor young Morin, who printed Des Periers' *Cymbalum Mundi*, and hastened the death of Louis Berquin. He kept a bookseller in his pay, one André, to discover and betray the sellers and buyers of heretical books. Although he prided himself on his learning, his Latin was so barbarous that one of his sentences caused the king to abolish the use of that tongue on the judicial bench. He was frightfully addicted to wine and women; his red nose and bald head were standing marks for the shafts of satire; and at length he became so rotten that his nose actually dropped off! Yet this vilest, meanest of mankind doomed to death one of the best men then living in the world. Thus does superstition elevate vice to the seat of power and prostrate virtue at its feet.

Theologians have often damned men on a very nice point, but there never was a finer one than that on which Dolet was lost. In the *Axiochus* he had, it was alleged, wrongly translated Plato, whom he had made to say "after death *tu ne seras plus rien du tout*—you will be nothing at all." The *rien du tout* was declared to be a damnable addition to the text. "You will not exist" would do, but "you will not exist at all" was a vile heresy. Dolet was damned on these three words. They formed "the sole ground of the charge of blasphemy."

Sentence was not pronounced until August 2, 1546. In the meanwhile occurred that horrible massacre of the Vandois, when murder, rape, and flames were let loose against a whole district; when women were outraged in churches and then murdered, and others smoked to death in caves; when hundreds of men whose lives were spared were sent to the galleys, and children were sold as slaves. Pope Paul the Third was delighted, the party of persecution triumphed, and King Francis finally joined them. There could now be no hope for Dolet. His doom was sealed. From his prison he penned a nobly pathetic *cantique*, full of resignation to his fate and

of courage to meet it. On August 2 he was condemned to be hung and then burnt with his books in the Place Maubert, and his property was confiscated to the king. Even the widow and orphan were to share the punishment! It was also ordered that he should be put to the torture before his execution and questioned about his companions; and "if the said Dolet shall cause any scandal or utter any blasphemy, his tongue shall be cut out, and he shall be burnt alive." This infernal sentence was carried out on the morrow, when Holy Church gave him as a birthday gift the ever-lustrous martyr's crown.

He was hung first, and then (for they were not very particular), probably while he still breathed, the faggots were lighted, and the author and his books were consumed in the flames. It is said that instead of a prayer he uttered a pun in Latin—"Non dolet ipse Dolet, sed pia turba dolet—Dolet himself does not grieve, but the pious crowd grieves." But the confessor who attended him to the stake told Montins that he had acknowledged his errors. "I do not believe a word of it," wrote the great Erasmus, "it is the usual story which these people invent after the death of their victims."

Thus perished Etienne Dolet, the Freethought martyr. France may well be proud of such a son, and Humanity must ever hold him dear. He is beyond the reach of admiration and love, but for our own sakes both should be given. Could we stand beside his grave, which bigotry has denied, our eyes might well mingle smiles and tears; tears of sorrow for the bitter fate of a valiant soldier of progress, and smiles of joy that such men have made the world fairer by their lives and holier by their deaths.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

The Evolution of Life.—III.

(Continued from p. 523.)

BETWEEN the Cretaceous period and the first division of the Cainozoic age lies a great breach in the geological record. The Eocene, or new dawn period, presents most striking contrasts to the epoch which it succeeded. All orders of dinosaurs had been blotted out. The plesiosaurs, ichthyosaurs, and flying lizards had departed for ever. The mammals had seized the reins of life's government. Apart from other contributory causes, their superior intelligence and greater care for their young were almost sufficient to account for their triumph over the defeated reptiles. Marsupials now gave place to placental mammals, whose offspring were well nourished and developed before birth. Five-toed herbaceous animals, somewhat resembling conies (Hyrax), and other forms not unlike the cubs of bears, enjoyed their place in the sun. Little, long-tailed, bear-like creatures, of carnivorous habits, heralded the coming of the later giant mammalian flesh-feeders. Other mammals were varying in the direction of the edentates, the stupid and slothful order which includes the ant-eaters and armadillos. These primitive edentates were better supplied with teeth than their living descendants, and appear to have been far less somnolent. The insectivores had also laid the foundations of their order. The appearance of primitive lemurs was the first indication that preparations for the advent of the paragon of animals were in progress. All the foregoing Eocene fossils have been discovered in Europe and North America.

Other important finds include the remains of the lophiodonts, or crest-toothed mammals. The most notable of these quadrupeds were the ancestors of the horse. The hyracotherium is probably the most primitive horse-like organism so far discovered. Its remains were embedded in the London clay deposits. The eohippus is another Eocene form. During this period these animals became as large as foxes; their

dentition gradually improved; the second toe became enlarged, while the remaining four toes diminished in size. From the same root-stock tapirs were evolving, and by the middle of this period it gave rise to creatures resembling the rhinoceros. Towards the end of this epoch, huge beasts, with rhinoceros-like heads, roamed over the North American continent, but all were doomed to speedy extinction. The true rhinoceroses of later times seem to have been descended from the European palæotheres. Other big mammals adorned Eocene annals both in the Old World and the New. Poor brain equipment, however, and the evolution of more adaptable forms of mammalian life brought about their early extinction.

In the meanwhile, various members of the rodent order were making headway. Ancestral elephants dwelt in Africa. Their trunks were as yet incipient; they were insignificant in size, but their dentition was promising, and their brains were larger than those of the majority of their contemporaries. At a later stage in the same deposits, the fossils of a more advanced type have been met with. These palæomastodons were larger than their ancestors, and their brains had also developed. Pig life had now started in a small way. The mid-Eocene American deposits have yielded the homacodon, a pig-like animal no bigger than a hare, while in later Eocene times a larger form of swine was dwelling in Europe.

In both worlds certain mammals had evolved flying powers, and various bats flitted through the air. Lemurs, with well-organised brains, large eyes, and foxy faces, and provided with the same number of teeth as human beings, were abroad. Dr. Max Schlosser, in 1910, unearthed the remains of lemurine creatures which were developing in the direction of monkeys, and Mr. Knipe, in his valuable work, *Evolution in the Past*, suggests that some of these lemurine forms "may have belonged to a stock whence sprang two lines of evolution, one leading to anthropoid apes, one to human beings."

The forerunners of wolves, polecats, and hyænas were increasing the struggle for existence. Dog-like creatures also prowled the earth in search of prey. Vegetable-feeders of the ruminant type were well represented during this period. Some were composite in character, and resembled both swine and deer. Others displayed a likeness to the camel and gazelle. The hyrax has now diminished to the dimensions of a rabbit, but an Egyptian Eocene form attained the size of a donkey. In 1901, Mr. Beadnell discovered the remains of the arsinotherium in the Egyptian deposits. This very hideous animal was of the size of a large rhinoceros. Other discoveries in the rich Egyptian strata prove that some mammals had already adopted an aquatic life. Creatures evolving in the direction of whales, dugongs, and manatees are all represented. At a subsequent Eocene stage, these mammals and their giant descendants were disporting themselves in the North and South American seas.

The toothed Cretaceous birds had all vanished from the earth. A few forms persisted, with beaks notched like saws. But modern bird life was in the ascendant. Primitive forms of the albatross, crane, ibis, herons, penguins, and other birds were in being. Birds of prey, of the eagle, falcon, and osprey types, were abundant. Feathered songsters had appeared. The ancestors of partridges, guinea-fowl, turkeys, and other game birds, as well as sparrows and starlings, had emerged into life.

The transformations in the vegetable world were considerable, but not so marked as those which the animal kingdom had undergone. The angiosperms had retained their conquered country, and added further areas to their dominions. The more ancient flora was now represented by pines, firs, yews, and cypresses. But the oak, laurel, ivy, and chestnut were firmly established in the European forests. In France, limes, willows, and alders were growing amid palms, tree-ferns, and other sub-tropical plants. But, as time went on, a higher temperature pre-

vailed, and the angiosperms of more Northern origin received a severe check.

Vegetation, which is now confined to the tropics, flourished exceedingly. The temperate region flora either succumbed, or was driven to the hills and high tablelands. The increased warmth proved congenial to the crocodiles, which now swarmed in all the lakes and streams, as also to the alligators, who had now presented an appearance in Europe. Turtles and tortoises, lizards and snakes, were all basking in the summer sun. Frogs jumped and croaked their satisfaction of the genial time.

Modernism was now the accepted rule in the seas. The sharks were more like their living descendants. Some ganoids persisted, but the teleosteans, or bony fishes, were in an overwhelming majority everywhere. Our old invertebrate friends, the crustaceans, sea-urchins, corals, and molluscs, had all maintained themselves in their long-established homes, although with varying success. The vast changes of Eocene days were confined to the land-dwelling population.

And, apart from the fact that lower marine life approximated more closely to prevailing conditions, there is nothing material to record concerning them in the succeeding Oligocene period. Fishes and reptiles also remained practically unmodified. Among terrestrial animals, various members of the rhinoceros family made sundry unsuccessful experiments in the warfare of life. Both in the Eastern and the Western Worlds the horses were making steady progress, and the pig group had greatly increased in bulk. Some elephantine swine-like creatures now appeared, but they lacked survival power, and were soon struck off nature's register. The deer and camels were varied and abundant, but remained diminutive in size. Carnivorous creatures were becoming more brainy, swifter of foot, and more deadly in dentition. Some of the more poorly provided carnivores held on precariously, but the battle was with the more highly developed forms. Various Eocene carnivores combined the anatomical features of the canine and feline mammals. Their distinct characteristics as yet lacked the precision which now marks them one from another. In others, feline structures were plainly predominant. The sabre-toothed tigers were unmistakably cat-like in appearance. Weasels and otters were evolving, and the rodents had spread far and wide. Among these gnawing animals, rats, mice, hares, and rabbits had arisen. The insectivora—animals with teeth adapted to an insect diet—were doing fairly well. Lemur-like mammals abounded, with other varieties more closely approaching living forms. And what is more important, some of the lemurs were assuming a more ape-like appearance. Those remarkable descendants of land animals, the whales and sea-cows, were distributed through the Oligocene oceans. Although the avarian rock records of this period are very imperfect, we possess ample evidence that birds had advanced far in the direction of their extant representatives. Pheasants, partridges, trogons, parrots, crossbills, woodpeckers, thrushes, and finches dwelt in the woods and brakes. Kites, crows, shrikes, buzzards, owls, and eagles had all commenced their sanguinary career. An enormous increase in insect life was a further characteristic of this period.

The climate of Oligocene Europe was tropical. The palm flourished in Northern Germany, and tree-ferns and other heat-loving plants were abundant in countries where they would now perish with cold. In America, however, more temperate conditions began to prevail, and the hardier angiosperms were spreading over the sites vacated by the retreating tropical vegetation.

Genial atmospheric conditions characterised the opening centuries of the succeeding Miocene period, but in course of time some decline in temperature took place in Europe, and the various deciduous Northern plants reoccupied much of their lost territory. Plums, pineapples, and other fruit trees now prospered, and the clematis, poppy, violet, and rose shed their perfumes in the air. The semi-

monkeys or lemurs moved southwards, but higher members of the primate order supplied their places. The apes and monkeys had at last appeared. The oreopithecus blended the characteristics of baboons and man-like apes. Dryopithecus combined the features of gorilla and chimpanzee. The pliopithecus closely resembled the gibbons of our own day. All these primates appear to have lived in the forest trees. A few insectivorous lemurs had followed the example of the bats, and flew from spot to spot.

The rodentia had been enriched by the appearance of beavers, squirrels, and porcupines. The rhinoceros family expanded throughout Europe, Africa, and America, but all the New World forms succumbed, while their strongly weaponed Old World cousins were embarking on a long and successful career. The defenceless deer of Eocene times were now developing horns, which were periodically shed and then renewed. The camel and the antelope had appeared in North America. Horses and pigs abounded in more modern guise. Primitive elephants roamed the European forests. These well-trunked, powerfully jawed pachyderms—the tetrabeledons—stood over six feet in height.

At this time South America enjoyed a protective freedom from the competition of the Northern continent. In its state of isolation from the neighboring land area, the unenterprising animals of Southern America easily held their ground. In these circumstances, ground sloths, glyptodonts, and armadillos held a high position in the affairs of life. Hoofed animals were also strongly represented in a variety of quaint forms. A few carnivorous beasts disturbed the peace, but these southern flesh eaters were not at all formidable either in size or intelligence. A poorly brained, flat-nosed monkey swung between the boughs of the forests. Ponched animals such as opossums and opossum-rats represented the once flourishing marsupial order.

In North America, a remnant of the pouched creatures lingered, but outside Australia this ancient order had everywhere declined. Whales and seals were numerous, and bird life was richly and extensively represented. Crocodiles, turtles, and tortoises were either stagnant or dwindling, while the lizards and snakes had made a substantial advance. Frogs and salamanders were the sole survivors of the former greatness of amphibian life. The anciently established non-bony fishes had put forth a greater variety of forms. New kinds of sharks had arrived on the scene. The bony fishes added many still surviving forms to their ranks. Invertebrate life remained practically what it had been in the preceding period.

During the progress of the succeeding Pliocene period, the continent of Europe assumed what are substantially its present outlines. Although hotter than the climate we now experience, the temperature had fallen far below its previous tropical height. The palms were vanishing and the crocodiles had turned their faces towards the south. The deciduous vegetation was now completely triumphant, and the grasses were growing in great luxuriance. Herbivorous quadrupeds, which included the giraffe, gazelle, and various antelopes were present in vast numbers. The horses, likewise, were doing remarkably well.

The European rhinoceros had by this time developed defensive weapons. The swine group maintained their position, and some forms were larger than the wild boars of our own time. Man-like apes, as well as lowlier representatives of the monkey family resided in the woods. The sabre-toothed cats were making matters unpleasant with their milder contemporaries, and, then, as now, the hyæna was a picker up of unconsidered trifles. The gentle bear was to be met with here and there.

The far-reaching discoveries made in the Siwalik Hill deposits of India, have thrown a flood of light on life in Pliocene times in that wonderful country. Ferocious cats of all dimensions must have established a reign of terror among the gentler creatures of the period. In their depredations the cats were

assisted by wolves and jackals. Immense herds of elephants browsed on the foliage. Flesh feeders of more ancient stocks which were elsewhere extinct still struggled on, but their line ended with the close of the Pliocene period. Horses, which Professor Ewart regards as the ancestors of the Arabs, thoroughbreds, and other existing breeds were there in plenty. Rhinoceroses, both horned and hornless, lumbered through the brakes and brushwood. Giant pigs fed in the woods, and wallowed in the swamps, while quite tiny porkers picked up a living. Hippopotami, more closely related to pigs than their extant forms, frequented the Indian rivers and lakes. Goats, giraffes, oxen, and many other herbivorous mammals graced the scene. Man's relatives were well represented. Orangs, baboons, chimpanzees, and gorillas played their parts in the woods and forests. The earliest ostriches travelled in small parties over the more open country. Crocodiles carried on their nefarious business in the waters, and some of these monsters, which were members of a species now happily extinct, attained a measurement of over fifty feet.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded)

"When Should Marriage Be Dissolved?" is the title of an article by Earl Russell in the August number of the *English Review*—which, on the whole, is not quite up to its usual standard of interest. His lordship's views on this question are generally known, and we need not discuss them here. In a general way, he pleads for an extension of divorce for other causes than cruelty and adultery. What we wish to draw attention to is the final paragraph of his article, in which he accuses religion of being responsible for most of the evils of society:—

"The witch-doctor and the medicine man, the curse of every savage tribe, evolve themselves in due course into the priest and the church, who have been for centuries the curse of civilisation, and whose perversions and dogmas are responsible for giving vice all the attractiveness it has, instead of making the healthy path of virtue the natural and attractive one. Their hand is seen not only in sex matters, but also in matters of education and in our smug self-satisfaction with the condition of the poor in a country that is called civilised. The root of the evil that is to be attacked lies here; for it remains as true as in the time of Lucretius—

'Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.'

We like this plain speaking. It is more than we expected of Earl Russell—and it is all the more welcome on that account.

Mr. J. Keir Hardie, M.P., as a poet! What a difficult thing to imagine! It is really unkind of the *Westminster Gazette* to call attention to his "Evening Prayer" which he is stated to have "composed some eighteen years ago." The following verse is quoted:—

"When the shadows o' Death's comin' mingle wi' life's wanin' gloamin',
An' the weary feet o' eldhood, tired an' sair, come totterin' in,
May the simple faith o' childhood, happy confidence inspirin',
Be ours to guide us safely to the happy hame abane."

This is about the funniest "poetry" we ever met. That a man should write it is excusable; that he should print it is inexcusable. And what does, or did, Mr. Hardie mean by "the simple faith o' childhood"? He has stated again and again that his parents were Secularists, which is perfectly true, and that they brought him up as irreligious as themselves, which is probably also true. There was no "simple faith" in his childhood. He picked up the simple faith "on his own." And it is simple.

Correspondence.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It would be unfair to the strenuous founders of the above Association to pass unchallenged the depreciatory remarks of my friend Mr. Beer (in your issue of June 16) as to their methods and their success prior to his joining them. The figures which he gives for attendance, multiplied by two, would about do for the committee meetings. At the public meetings there was a reliable muster of about twenty to thirty, out of some forty of our own members,

every time, except on the unfortunate evening when Mr. Beer was to have made his first platform appearance. On that occasion, if I recollect right, the advertisement miscarried, and probably the weather was bad. Anyhow, the audience amounted to sixteen, and at least five dropped in shortly after the lecture was given up.

Our high-water mark was fifty, and, of the eight or nine lectures two others attracted about forty and the least about twenty-seven. The hopelessness of our position lay in the fact that we were lecturing to each other, and not to possible converts. We quite realised the urgent necessity of changing our night from the Wednesday (half-holiday) evening, with its counter attractions, to Sunday evening; but we had no chance of a suitable room, nor had we, as yet, found any satisfactory lecturers.

At the time Mr. Beer took a hand, we also had two powerful recruits in the persons of Miss Nina Boyle and Mr. Manson—three splendid lecturers—and for the first time it became possible to take a large hall without making themselves ridiculous.

Of the original members, hardly one was a typical Agnostic, as suggested by Mr. Beer; and, in a letter addressed to you at the time, I described them as *Freethinker* men. I know of only one who, by simply changing his designation, justifies the charge, but he used to buy three *Freethinkers* a week.

Miss Boyle, who joined us just prior to Mr. Beer, considered religion to be dead, and wished to go in for science and ethics; and, as she was most able and influential, I daresay she would have got many prominent men to appear on our platform. She was the only militant upholder of the Agnostic style; but she was nevertheless a born fighter, and promised to be, next to Mr. Beer, our most "live" pusher. Another influenced by Mr. Beer's strenuous advocacy of definite Atheistic propaganda is Mr. Manson; but he was contemporary with Mr. Beer, and just as sturdy a fighter—like myself, a member of the defunct Secular Society. For the rest, the Agnostics put to rout by Mr. Beer were men who hovered on the outskirts of the Association, and gave us much advice and a few lectures, but resented the Atheistic tone, or were frozen out by the want of sympathy shown for their particular style. Of the original S. A. R. A. workers—they were more numerous than even to-day—I recall about ten Atheists to three Agnostics, and two of the latter were Freemasons, and quite capable of winking the other eye—the other I have referred to, he was the actual founder of the Association.

JOHN LATHAM.

Obituary.

It is with painful regret that we record the death of Mr. F. B. Grundy, which took place on August 5 at his residence in New Moston. His remains were interred in the Failsworth Cemetery on the 9th. The Secular rites of service were impressively read by Mr. John Pollitt, the veteran Superintendent of the Failsworth Secular Sunday School. The Male Voice Choir from the Co-operative Wholesale Society, Manchester (of which Mr. Grundy was a prominent member), attended, and gave the hymn "O perfect peace" and the part-song "The long day closes" at the graveside. The scene was most affecting and impressive. Representatives attended from the Failsworth Secular Sunday School and the local lodge of the A. S. E., the B. S. Party, and I. L. P., with all of which societies the deceased had been connected, and from his colleagues and fellow-workmen at the Trafford Park premises of the C. W. S., each of these societies bringing floral wreaths of great beauty. Mr. Grundy had adopted and accepted the Secularist position from sheer force of reasoning, having gained his early impressions from listening to the addresses at the Failsworth School by the leaders of the movement. He was courageous and outspoken in his opinions, and never flinched from his stand after having formed an opinion. For some time he had conducted the young men's class, in turn with others, his days of duty being looked forward to with interest. Mr. Grundy was actively associated with the Labor, Socialist, and Co-operative movements. He represented the Higher Ward of the township on the Urban District Council for three years, retiring on account of pressure of other matters. He also represented the Failsworth Industrial Society at the meetings of the Eccles Manufacturing Society. Possessed of a powerful bass voice, and with a pleasing, genial temperament, he was much in request for concerts, etc., and was ever ready to render service in the cause of the poor and unfortunate. His departure leaves a gap that will be hard to fill, and his memory will be cherished by a large circle of friends and companions. To his widow and family we extend our most heartfelt sympathies.—J. SMITH.

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, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

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

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

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, Mr. Hecht, "Meteorology: Biblical and Scientific"; 7, J. Miller, a Lecture.

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

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

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7.30, Mr. Hecht, "Creation v. Evolution."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE: Thos. A. Jackson—Burnley (Market Place): August 25, at 11, "Who Made God?" at 3, "When I Was in Prison"; at 7, "The Faith of an Infidel." Blackburn (Market Ground): 26, at 7.30, "Was Jesus a Failure?" Halifax (near Grand Theatre): 27, at 7.30, "The Latest Thing in Gods." Huddersfield (Market Cross): 28, at 7.30, "The Devil and All His Works"; 29, at 7.30, "Humanity's Debt to the Rebel." Leeds (Town Hall Square): 30, at 7.30, "The Wonders of Life"; 31, at 7.30, "The Christ Myth."

BOLTON (Town Hall Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Friday, August 23, at 7.45, "Evolution and Special Creation"; 24, at 7.30, "Royal Parasites"; 25, at 7.30, "Some Paradoxes."

WIGAN (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Monday, August 26, at 8, "Logic of Atheism"; 27, at 8, "Friedrich Nietzsche"; 28, at 8, "Before the Dawn—and After."

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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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