

THE Freethinker

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The highest possible philosophy is to enjoy to day, not regretting yesterday, and not fearing to morrow.

—INGERSOLL.

Booth's Mummy.

GENERAL BOOTH selected a very suitable time to die. We say "selected" because it can hardly be supposed that the death of so great a man, so much in the favor and counsel of God Almighty, was left to the hazard that obtains in the case of common mortals. It would, of course, be properly arranged, and the General's wishes would naturally count in the fixture. Parliament was not sitting; the weather on land had killed the phenomenal gooseberry, and on sea had settled the bash of the periodical serpent; Germany had not begun the invasion of England; and everything was favorable to the Grand Old Showman's having the arena to himself for the best part of a week.

We hope General Bramwell Booth will be equally successful in the matter of his death and funeral. He comes into his own, if we may express it so, rather late in life, but we don't wish to annoy him by suggesting that he may not reign a thousand years. We merely express a wish that, when his time comes, he will be as lucky as his old father, who enjoys a big advertisement on earth while disporting himself in Abraham's bosom; for everybody is cocksure that the old "General's" soul is "gone aloft." August 25, in fact, was called his "first Sunday in heaven." The idea that he might have gone elsewhere was not to be entertained for a minute.

We do not insult General Booth, we pay him a compliment, by calling him the Grand Old Showman. No other showman on earth ever travelled so far, performed in so many countries, and obtained the patronage of so many royal and distinguished personages. He had secured the Mikado in the East and Roosevelt in the West—and Emperor William and King George in between. Both the latter sent wreaths for his coffin. King George ventured to prophesy what posterity will think of General Booth. It is a good thing, perhaps, that his Majesty will not live long enough to be disappointed. Posterity has a way of minding its own business without asking the opinion of its predecessors.

Prophecy is a risky affair. George Eliot called it the most gratuitous form of error. But if some people rush in why should others fear to tread? We have as much right, and perhaps as much ability, to play the prophet as the King has, and we venture to challenge his prediction (When George meets George, then comes the tug of war!). We rather fancy that, in another hundred years, the people of this country will not be "appreciating the value" of General Booth. When an American admirer of Martin Tupper—and he had hosts of admirers over there then—asked Thackeray "Sir what do they think of Martin Tupper over in England?" the great novelist replied, "Sir, they do not think of Martin Tupper." A hundred years hence the English people will not be thinking of General Booth. No miraculous sagacity is required to perceive that religious reputations have all become ephemeral. Just as Butler was the last of the Bishops, Newman was the last of the theologians. Men of that

no longer enter the service of Christianity—which is dying of two things, first of being found out, and secondly of shortage of brains. Mere effort cannot keep a religion alive. A thousand Booths could not save Christianity. It lives ultimately on its ideas, and on nothing else; and when these have ceased to be credible it is doomed. Effort may prolong its life a little, and money may prolong it a little more, but that does not affect the end.

What the religious press (*all the newspapers belong to the religious press on such occasions*) has been saying about General Booth is mostly hypocritical. Hireling journalists write anything for a living. They take the "tip" from their employers. Things are white, black, or no color at all, according to directions. General Booth could be lauded to heaven or damned to hell. The former is the interest of the hour; the latter may be the interest of to-morrow; and either would be obeyed with equal ability and—equal sincerity. It is obvious that the Salvation Army, which is governed absolutely, while its members are kept out of politics, is sure to be useful to the "authorities." That is why the "classes" patronise and support it.

General Booth's funeral has been conducted on the most approved business principles. They could not have him die in public; that would have been an immense attraction; but they made the utmost use of his dead body. They had it embalmed—so there is no room for denouncing the superstition of the ancient Egyptians; they offered it in that state, but of course in a coffin, to the gaze of a hundred thousand admirers, filled with a morbid curiosity, yet not knowing what they were really gazing at. It did not occur to them that embalming a body makes it a mummy. It was a mummy that figured as the centre of all that orgy of emotion. General Booth's skull was there, for instance, but the brains were out. What did that matter? His head was no better full than empty at that stage of his career. The "noticeable feature" was intact, and it made up for the loss of everything else.

A hundred thousand people filed past a coffin and saluted a mummy. This is the upshot of Christian civilisation in "the most Christian country in the world." What would a Greek philosopher or a Roman statesman have thought of the possibility of such a degradation two thousand years after his own time?

This adoration of an eviscerated corpse, this outrage on the common decencies of physical and moral life, is performed by the very people who always have the cry of "gross materialist" on their lips against Freethinkers. What could be "grosser materialism" than their own practices? They who talk so much about the "soul" follow the dead body as if it were the only real existence; just as, in spite of their own doctrines, they "carry on" far more than Atheists do when they stand by the open graveside. Atheists know that the dead man or woman is dead; that the corpse is not the man or woman, but an encumbrance to be disposed of as decently as possible. It is the Christian who clings to the corpse, to what is but meaningless matter, to what is, except for mere association, no more than the carcase of the lowliest animal on earth.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christ and Criticism.

IN a recent *Academy* review of Dr. Drew's *Witness to the Historicity of Jesus*, Mr. Frank Harris remarked that the sceptical spirit had at length reached the supreme denial by questioning whether any such person as Jesus ever existed. Mr. Harris's acquaintance with the history and literature of the subject must be slight to treat this doubt as a new phenomena. It has been before the critical world for well over a century, and has been a commonplace of popular propaganda for at least half that period. Naturally it is now being championed by a wider circle of students than hitherto, but that is what one would expect from the customary course of events. It is only a very bold man who would publicly state such a doubt, and bold men are always scarce. But in time the truth makes headway, and what is at first whispered is afterwards shouted out that all may hear. Those who shout are not always duly mindful of those who have prepared the way; but that, again, is the way of the world. If Mr. Harris is really unaware of the fact that a denial of the historicity of Jesus is nothing new in the records of Freethought criticism, that, in its way, is a tribute to the efficiency of the Christian boycott. Well-established publishing houses—thanks to Christian intolerance—have declined to publish advanced sceptical works, and they have been compelled to gain the light of day through obscure channels which have placed a sharp limit to their circulation. Christian papers and Christian preachers have steadfastly pursued the policy of ignoring such questions, rightly feeling that their best security lay in the ignorance of their followers as to the strength of the evidence for the sceptical position. The result is that when a newcomer picks up a work on the subject he is apt to treat it as the freakish effort of a man of ability, instead of merely another link in a long chain of evidential writing.

The question has become more pressing of recent years. Some of our New Theologians, with a keener sense of the evidence against the historicity of Jesus than of the requirements of the Christian position, have not hesitated to assert that Jesus Christ was not, and could not have been, an historical character. They attempt to save the situation by arguing that it is the Christ ideal, not the personality, that is the essence of the Christian religion. But if this is admitted, it reduces Christianity to what the old Puritan preachers used to call "mere morality." If, on the other hand, we retain the doctrines and symbolism, there is no reason why the system should be called Christian any more than Mithraic, or by any of the other names that have been associated with them. Historically, Christianity has rested itself upon an actual personality as the groundwork of the New Testament. When it comes to a question of criticism, the historical evidence breaks down. And even if it did not break down, even though it were possible to prove that the Jesus of the New Testament actually existed, that he actually selected certain disciples, and that these took down an authentic report of his teachings, even though it were admitted that the gospels and epistles are contemporary documents, and that non-Christian contemporary writers made frequent reference to Jesus Christ, still Christianity could not withstand modern criticism. It is this aspect of the case that Mr. Frank Harris ignores, and in this he is only one of a numerous company. Of course, I do not admit that the historical evidence is there; I am only assuming it to be so, in order to show that even with this assumption the Christian case remains hopeless. From the point of view taken up in this article the lack of historical evidence is evidence of a much more important consideration.

In a recent article, the Rev. Dr. W. E. Orchard remarks that "the historical evidence outside the New Testament is certainly slight, but, in the circumstances, it could not have been otherwise.

There was nothing in the incidents of Christ's career to attract the notice of the great Greek or Roman historians."

I have italicised the last of these two sentences because it shows how completely a very vital consideration has escaped Dr. Orchard's notice. Is it true that there was nothing in Christ's career to attract the notice of historians? He was miraculously born, the importance of the birth was so far recognised that a wholesale destruction of children was ordered in the hopes of getting rid of this youngster in the general massacre. His after life was marked by a number of astounding miracles, and his career was closed by a remarkable trial. At his execution a three day's darkness overspread the earth, followed by a resurrection from the grave and ascension to heaven. Yet Dr. Orchard says there was nothing in Christ's career to attract the notice of historians! If the story is really as Christian theology has presented it, there never has been a career which contained so many features calculated to rivet the attention of contemporaries.

There are two considerations that would lead one to grant that Christ's career presented nothing specially attractive to historians, and both are absolutely fatal to Christian claims. The first is that the record is wholly fictitious, and, in that case, no more is to be said. The second is that the incidents related were so commonplace and familiar that there was no special reason why they should be noticed by any contemporary writer. This does not mean that such incidents would be either commonplace or familiar *now*; but they were then. Christians believed in Jesus as the Son of God, but there was nothing then of a startling or moral character in their so believing. They believed that this Jesus worked miracles. But every pretender to religious power did likewise. It was the badge of the tribe. He was the Savior of the World, but so were others; the term was applied to even the Emperor Augustus. He was one of a trinity, killed for the salvation of mankind. Here, again, the Christian belief was on familiar ground. It is no longer denied by anyone competent to express an opinion, that all the symbols and phraseology of Christianity were familiar to the Pagan world long before they became specially associated with the Christian religion. Taking for granted, then, the historical character of the New Testament documents, that is, that they are all authentic and date from contemporary times, we may admit that there was nothing in Christ's career that called for special notice by Pagan writers. But this is not because the incidents related are not of a remarkable character in themselves, and would command world-wide attention if related of anyone to-day, but simply because they were then so generally believed of religious leaders that they excited no comment when told of anyone in particular.

There are thus two ways of accounting for the silence of historians, either of which is fatal to Christianity. On the one hand it is pure and admitted myth that the more rational historians would not condescend to notice. On the other hand the career of Jesus recorded events, belief in which were so general and of so common a nature, that writers might well consider themselves justified in passing them by without notice. Or, suppose that there existed with contemporary writers lengthy notices of one Jesus Christ of whom was related all the stories contained in the New Testament. What would those notices prove? Simply that some people believed these things. This no Freethinker is called upon to doubt. It is, indeed, part of his case that such things were believed in, and that people called Christians, in believing them, differed in no important respect from other religionists of their time. It is not, then, a question of whether people believed in the Jesus legend or not, but whether that story is of such a character as to command the support of modern educated men and women.

The question of the authenticity of the Gospel writings is not really vital. The question of whether a certain Jesus lived, of whom these records speak, is not vital. The question of whether Tacitus, and

Josephus, and Pliny, and Lucian refer to Christ and Christians or not is not vital. Such questions were of great moment so long as Christianity was dealt with as a phenomenon unique in the world's history, and, consequently, belief in it by contemporaries would argue evidence of an absolutely demonstrative character. But when we take the whole Christian legend as made up of sayings and doctrines and happenings that existed before Christianity, as such, was heard of, when we know that similar stories were related of other religious leaders, and similar doctrines taught, the vital question is the credibility of such events, irrespective of the person of whom they are related, and of the time at which they are supposed to have occurred.

In other words, the vital question is not one of historical evidence, but of historical psychology. The question of whether an incarnate God appeared among a particular people is not a question of textual or historical evidence. It is solely a question of knowing the culture stage of the people named. All that either textual authenticity or historical evidence could show would be that people believed in some person as being an incarnate Deity. If the four evangelists actually lived with Jesus, if our Gospels are accurate transcripts of the writings, if Pliny, and Tacitus, and Josephus, and hosts of others actually testify to the existence of such a person, all that this proves is that people believed in the Christ legend. But it is no more evidence of its truth than is the ravings of a contemporary Methodist preacher. Many men have been acclaimed as incarnations of deity, many men have worked miracles, many have founded new creeds. The evidence offered for all is substantially the same. And this evidence is rejected to-day, not because it cannot be shown that contemporaries did not believe in these stories, but because we know the social and psychological conditions that gave them birth. We are not wondering whether the Christian story is true, and looking round for disproof of its verity. We know it is false. The only problem is how to make the general public realise the nature and strength of the evidence.

C. COHEN.

"The Divine Society."

LET us carefully analyse this somewhat loosely used adjective, "divine." Etymologically, it signifies what is of or belongs to the Deity, what proceeds from and partakes of the qualities of the Divine Being, or what enjoys God's sanction and support. Theologically, the Deity is the supreme, absolute, perfect Being, from whom all other beings emanate and on whom they depend. Consequently, whatever is qualified by the adjective "divine" is supposed to be godlike, heavenly, excellent in the highest degree, supremely admirable, apparently above what is human." Now, in the *British Weekly* for August 15, the Christian Church is called "the Divine Society," the society instituted, governed, and inspired by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the middle member of the triune Deity. The article under consideration abounds in quotations from a little book by Mr. T. R. Glover, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, entitled *The Nature and Purpose of a Christian Society*. Mr. Glover and the editor of the *British Weekly* differ widely on many points, but with regard to the nature, purpose, and power of the Church they are apparently at one. They both agree that "in religion the past is never irrelevant; that it is a guiding series of lights, and has to be prolonged." Their appeal is not to individual experience so much as to the history of the Church down to the present time.

Coming to particulars, we are assured that "the Christian character is a fact of commanding and decisive importance." Dean Church discerned an ethical content in the very name Christian; but it was as the result of a marvellous stretch of the imagination that he did so. It is by an equally stupendous stretch of the imagination that Sir W.

Robertson Nicoll finds that "in every age and land the Christian community has had the power to produce one high and distinctive type of character." We admit that the Christian type of character is "distinctive," but deny that it is "high." As already stated, the appeal for confirmation is to the history of the Church; and before this court we are quite willing to appear. Unfortunately, Sir William's appeal to history is of a tantalisingly general order. "In every age and land the Christian community has had the power to produce one high and distinctive type of character"; but having the power and actually producing are two different things. We deny the Church's possession of the power because we deny the actuality of the product. It is beyond controversy that multitudes of Christians have been excellent people, and in every age and land Paganism has had the right to boast of people equally noble and good; but we venture to affirm that the Christian type of character, however distinctive, is decidedly not high. In confirmation of this contention we make our appeal to history, as illustrated in the person and character of St. Bernard, the Abbot of Clairvaux. Bernard was undoubtedly the most powerful personality in the first half of the twelfth century. When the two rival Popes, Anacletus and Innocent, were fighting ferociously for the chair of St. Peter, it was the influence of Bernard that won it for Innocent. He was mightier than king and pope, and he became the people's idol. Ecclesiastically speaking, a more illustrious saint never lived. As Gibbon says, he "became the oracle of Europe and the founder of one hundred and sixty convents." His piety was above suspicion, and his loyalty to the Church knew no bounds. But what about his character? Was it of a type that redounds to the glory of the Christian religion? In the first place, he despised the body and all its functions. Self-mortification was his chief means of grace. He denied the world by retiring from it, and his own body by abusing it. He would only eat to avoid starvation, and sleep he regarded as loss and waste. His piety robbed him of his humanity, and prevented him from being a citizen of this world, or a worker for the welfare of society.

No wonder that the monks of this age were unutterably corrupt. No wonder that unnatural vice and prostitution prevailed on the alarming scale described by Cardinal de Vitry, Ordericus Vitalis, and Abélard, Bernard's contemporaries. There is a consensus of testimony that when Bernard was at the zenith of his power nearly all the monasteries of France were centres of the worst forms of sexual corruption. While such a state of things disgraced Europe, Bernard was absorbed in the holy mission of persecuting heretics. The first victim was Abélard, the most brilliant intellect of the period. He was the author of numerous works on philosophy and theology which enjoyed an extensive circulation, and exerted a tremendous influence; but he was theologically unsound, and Bernard attacked him with extreme bitterness, in which devout exercise his monks heartily joined. Abélard was stung to the quick, and challenged his great adversary to deliver his opinion of his writings in his own words before kings and prelates at the Council of Sens. It was a foolish challenge, because the kings and prelates concerned were Bernard's henchmen. Immediately upon hearing of the challenge the saint communicated with those who were to attend the Council, and secured their support. When Abélard realised what the situation really was, he declined to defend himself, and said, "I appeal to Rome." But, as Milman observes (*Latin Christianity*, vol. iii., p. 374), "an appeal from Bernard to Rome was an appeal from Bernard to himself," because Pope Innocent II. was Bernard's creature. Bernard instructed Rome to deliver what he knew would be the final blow to his victim. The Council of Sens reported to Rome in terms of which the following are a sample:—

"Peter Abélard makes void the whole Christian faith by attempting to comprehend the nature of God through

human reason. He ascends up into heaven, he goes down into hell. Nothing can elude him either in the heights above or in the nethermost depths. A man great in his own eyes, disputing about faith against the faith, walking among the great and wonderful things which are above him, the searcher of the Divine Majesty, the fabricator of heresy."

Bernard's epistles to Innocent contained savage allusions to Abélard's heresies, the chief of which was that "Christ was incarnate rather to enlighten mankind by his wisdom and example, and died not so much to redeem them from slavery to the devil, as to show his own boundless love." Bernard raves thus:—

"Which is most intolerable, the blasphemy, or the arrogance of his language? Which is most damnable, the temerity or the impiety? Would it not be more just to stop his mouth with blows than confute him by argument?"

"In every age and land the Christian community has had the power to produce" a large crop of saints of the Bernard type. The calendar is full of them. But this type of character, whilst "distinctive" enough, is abnormal, unhuman, anti-social, and morally degraded and degrading.

We are now quite prepared to agree with Sir William Nicoll in the statement that "the Christian character is a fact of commanding and decisive importance." It commands our severest condemnation, and the contemplation of it makes us completely decisive and final in our attitude of opposition to Christianity. We oppose it because it *does* produce a distinctive type of character, a type that causes its exemplars to be narrow in their views, bigoted in their convictions, and necessarily intolerant of all who differ from them in belief and opinion. It is this distinctive character that explains all the cruel persecutions and the religious wars which darken the pages of history. The first really great Christians in whom this distinctive character showed itself clearly were Ambrose and Augustine, though it had been implicit in the Christian faith from the first. It is this distinctive type of character that accounts for the burning zeal with which the Churches resist all attempts to break down their long-established monopoly of Sunday. They alone are worthy to have public performances on that sacred day. Indeed, only the other day a reverend gentleman asserted in the daily press that all the cinematograph shows should be closed on the Lord's Day forthwith; and then he most naively added that their being open was the thin end of the ugly wedge, which if allowed to be driven in, would inevitably result in the complete overthrow of religious institutions. Of course, there are brilliant exceptions to this character even inside the Churches. Bernard of Clairvaux was the typical Christian character of the twelfth century; but Peter the Venerable was a glorious exception. At the instigation of Bernard, Pope Innocent II. condemned Abélard, "absent, unheard, unconvicted," to perpetual silence, and his disciples to excommunication. On his way to Rome, the heretic was taken seriously ill, and could not proceed; and the Venerable Peter offered him asylum at his famous Abbey of Clugny. Abélard was most hospitably entertained here till he died. And this is how the good Peter spoke of him when all was over:—

"I never saw his equal for humility of manners and habits. St. German was not more modest; St. Martin more poor. He allowed no moment to escape unoccupied in prayer, reading, writing, or dictation. The heavenly visitor surprised him in the midst of these holy works."

Doubtless there are those who will maintain that Peter the Venerable was a truer representative of Christianity than St. Bernard; but surely that is equivalent to an admission that the Church as a whole has not been Divinely taught and led through all the centuries, but only an individual here and there. The fact is, however, that it was Bernard who expressed the real spirit of the Church, while in Peter we see a good natural character uncorrupted by ecclesiastical influences. In Peter humanism was

stronger than Christianity, while in Bernard zeal for the theological Christ dominant in the Church crushed his natural impulses and sympathies, and impelled him to be bitter and intolerant in his treatment of opponents. This is the root of our objection to Christianity; and it is the supreme evidence that the Church is of the earth, earthy, like all other organisations. A Christian apologist can do nothing more damning to his case than to appeal to history. It is the Atheist who can honestly derive any comfort from the contemplation of history, for here and there he can see gleams of humanism illuminating for a moment the surrounding gloom; and in those occasional gleams he can hear the word of prophecy, namely, that the day will dawn when humanism shall have put all enemies under its feet, and reign supreme in the minds and hearts of men.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Sincere Christian.

IT came on me as a shock. I have read of men who esteemed their bodies lightly. The old Eremitic, for instance, apparently considered his flesh fit only to be food for vermin. Anyway, we read that he rejoiced when lice and other creeping things took up a permanent habitation in the moist, dim recesses of his "hair shirt." Then there have been martyrs who went to the stake with a smile (perhaps—perhaps not), but all these figures are historic, they are lost in the mists of antiquity; and here, behold, in the twentieth century, I had found a man, in the full flush of health and vigor, yet fit only to be ranked with those heroes of the past.

Let me preface my story by saying that I was acting as *locum tenens* in one of those God-forsaken coal mining villages of South Wales. The freak of humanity who thus gave me furiously to think was a little oldish man with a black beard and sparkling eyes. He had borne the somewhat severe pangs of a nasty internal disorder with a rare patience, and now, much to my professional gratification, he was mending fast. Such little conversation as his illness permitted had apprised me of the fact that my patient was no unlettered man; his vocabulary was wide and sprinkled with exotic words which gained a whimsical force from a pronunciation that was, to say the least, erratic.

To-day, I found him sitting up smoking; and after cautioning him against any other than a very moderate indulgence in tobacco, I congratulated him on his recovery. Instantly he put down his pipe and his features took an expression of the most helpless despair, mingling with a deep sternness.

"'Tis not for me to gainsay the will of the Lord, but it has been a most bitter chastening for me, the most terrible disappointment."

"Come, come; your recovery should at least make you thankful that you have been spared," said I reprovingly.

"Ah! 'tis well for you to say so; you that have been the Devil's tool, so to speak—no disrespect, sir—but 'twas you kept me soul in me body just as I was slipping away into the arms of Jesus."

"And would you rather be in the arms of Jesus than in the arms of your wife?" I asked.

"Would I rather be in paradise than in this kingdom of the Devil? 'Tis only the unregenerate could ask me that. The Good Book says that Satan is the prince of this earth, and I ask you, sir, if it aint nacheral for a Christian to yearn for the land where the Almighty is king? The black door is only to fright the unbeliever, sir; an' I know why he's frightened, an' he knows; it's becos' of what's behind it. But them as have been born again, they long for death; never a night passes but they pray the good Lord to call 'em home. And that's the way I tell the saved from the damned."

"M'm," said I. "I'm afraid you'll be rather lonely up aloft. And so that's why you are looking so

miserable, because I was fool enough to keep the breath in your body?"

"I'm not blaming you, sir; 'twas the Lord's will, and we mustn't help ourselves to Paradise. Ah, you little know what a joy it was to me when the pains shot through me body an' I lay sweating an' gritting my teeth. 'Ah,' says I to myself, 'tis the knife of God searching for my soul; 'tis the lancet of love probing for the pearl of great price; 'tis the Great Surgeon trying to set me free.' An' every pang of pain was a pang of joy."

"Well, upon my word," said I; "so you hate this life and despise your body?"

"No, sir, don't say that; I don't hate life; I've had a happier time on earth than most. But as for the body, I hate it; for 'tis the body that is the barrier between God and man—'tis the body forms the nexus between man and the Devil."

I protested. "I don't see why you should condemn it, when your God made it and even came down from heaven to take upon himself the body of a man."

"Not the body of a man, sir, the *likeness* of a man. I holds my own opinion on these points. 'Tis unthinkable that God should live in a human body an' eat an' drink an', as I heard a lecturer say, onst, 'defecation and the demiurge are the antipodes of thought.'"

"Look here, old man," said I, suspiciously, "you are trying to pull my leg; where did you get hold of all these notions?"

"Axing your pardon, sir; sometimes I thinks 'em, sometimes I hears 'em or reads 'em; an' if I don't rightly understand the meaning of the big words, I don't see why a poor man shouldn't use 'em as well as his betters."

"All right, my friend, if I find you've been chaffing me I—I'll have something to say to you next time."

"Now don't accuse me of such levity and worldliness, sir; sure a man that's been dragged back, right from the gates of heaven, is inclined to be a bit uncivil like. Well, good-bye, sir, you're sure to come and see me again before you go?"

His black eyes sparkled so eagerly that I hadn't the heart to deny him.

As I went down the street I called in at the stationer's to buy a paper and have a chat with the only intelligent man in the place. He asked me how my old patient was doing.

"Well, Mr. Harkin," said I, "in body he is all right, or will be in a day or two; but as for his mind—is he a local preacher, do you know?"

"Local preacher? Ha, ha! That's good; he's a thorn in the flesh of the local preachers and the parson. Why he's the rankest infidel in town."

On my next visit to the invalid we had another long chat. After exposing his infamy I threatened him with asafœtida, castor oil, and other nice things. I'm afraid my appearance is too youthful to be effective, for the old rogue could only chuckle and grin.

Before I went I asked him if he thought there really was such a thing as an honest Christian—a Christian who regarded the approach of death with unmingled feelings of exultation and delight.

"Well," said he, filling his pipe carefully, "it's no good denying the possibility, and if there is I'll tell you where to find him."

"Yes," said I, "where is that?"

"In the lunatic asylum," he replied cheerfully.

M. AKIN.

A REFLECTION.

When that is proved but silver gilt
Which seemed without alloy,
The idol you yourself have built,
You shall yourself destroy. —N. E. B.

AN ADAPTATION.

Nature and nature's laws are hid in night;
Man says let science grow, and there is light.
—K. B.

About General Booth.

The most colossal silliness about the late General Booth appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* the morning after his death. "The nineteenth century," it said, "knew no greater man than General Booth." The best reply to this is "Wait and see." Time will deliver its verdict. Meanwhile it is enough to say that, even in the realm of religion, it is a ghastly joke to mention Booth in the same breath with Newman.

All the *Chronicle* could say in justification of its ineptitude was, "He took religion into the slums." And the slums are no better for it. What is wanted there is not the light of religion but the light of the sun, not godliness but cleanliness, not the destruction of sin but the destruction of insanitary dwellings, not a fight with the devil but a fight with the greedy and probably Christian landlord.

We have repeatedly pointed out that the results of Salvation Army work are immensely exaggerated. Salvationists have all to be teetotalers. What effect has that on England's drink-bill?—which has been going up again lately. Salvationists have all to be non-smokers. What effect has that upon the tobacco trade? Does it frighten Wills, Player, or Salmon & Gluckstein?

The Salvation Army beat the big drum till it sounds like the German invasion. But it turns out to be only the Awkward Squad on a beanfeast.

General Booth is lauded to the skies in the newspapers for his "social" work. It is really one of the greatest impostures of the age. We believe the *Freethinker* was the only journal that foretold this when the "Darkest England" scheme was launched. Where it did any good it could only be at the expense of evil in another direction. The philosophy of it was like that of the Irishman who lengthened his shirt by cutting a piece off the top and sewing it on the bottom. Our criticism of the "Darkest England" scheme may still be seen in our pamphlet entitled *Salvation Syrup*. We have always been pioneering. What we said then thousands of people say now. But they can't get it repeated in the lickspittle press of England, which, with all its pretensions, is the meanest in the world.

Even the new Labor paper, the *Daily Herald*, was as loud as the rest in singing General Booth's praises. It spoke of his "epoch making book" (oh those *epochs*!) *In Darkest England and the Way Out*—the bulk of which was really written by Mr. W. T. Stead. It called him "a social reformer," without any reference whatever to Professor Huxley's criticisms, to Mr. Manson's crushing analysis, or to the resolutions passed by Trade Unions against the "sweating" carried on in the Salvation Army "shelters." Not a word either, in this Labor paper (heaven save the mark!) about the "social reformer's" enterprise at the Hadleigh Colony, which looks like the courtyard of hell as you pass it in the train, and is conducted on business principles that would drive the whole of England into the hell of bankruptcy if they were universally adopted. From £2,000 to £3,000 a year is lost upon it still. Yet the great "social reformer" got his capital for nothing, in the way of charity; the unemployed admitted to the Colony are carefully sifted so as to exclude the most unpromising; a good many of them, we understand, are paid for by Boards of Guardians and other public bodies at a rate that must be more than enough to keep them in that place and in those conditions; and it appears that the only cash portion of the men's wages is sixpence a week. Yet with all these artificial advantages the Hadleigh Colony loses from £2,000 to £3,000 a year! How would the *Daily Herald* like to see the whole labor of England organised on the plan of this great "social reformer"?

The *Daily Herald* joined heartily in the snuffing chorus of eulogy over General Booth's "resignation" in bearing his "great affliction" of blindness. There are thousands of people in England who have to bear that "great affliction"—some for many years, some all their lives. General Booth's blindness came only at the very fag-end of his long career. We saw lately a much younger blind face than his, looking up with pathetic sightlessness in a police-court towards the place where the magistrate's voice came from. But there was a brave look upon it. A woman's face—an Atheist woman's face—the face of the Secretary of the National Secular Society. She was there in answer to a summons for challenging the high-handed action of the

London County Council in a matter of public importance. We had our own thoughts in gazing at that blind face. Resignation was there to the inevitable hand of nature, but no resignation to the hand of arbitrary authority. But courage, it seems, is expected of Atheists, and is only praised fulsomely in Christians—which is a poor compliment to them when you turn it over and look at it all round.

It is only fair to say that some days afterwards—on Friday, August 23, to be precise—the *Herald* published "Reflections" by one of its contributors, in which, while William Booth is praised for having "the genuine evangelical stuff in him," he "was from first to last a quack doctor" and an "interesting old charlatan."

The statement that General Booth "sent out large numbers of families to Canada" is one of those statements that we cannot help saying are intended to deceive the credulous British public. What families has the Salvation Army sent out? The word is a falsehood. It is meant to induce the belief in the readers' minds that General Booth sent out poor emigrants at the Salvation Army's expense. This is the opposite of the truth. The emigrants have simply gone out under the Salvation Army's auspices, they have paid their way to the last farthing, and the Salvation Army has taken an emigration agency's usual commission from the shipping and railway companies. No wonder the ordinary emigration agencies are angry at this sort of competition.

Mr. Harold Begbie was sure to gush copiously over the death of General Booth. Curiously, he denies the old "Army" chief's genius as an organiser, and says he would have ruined the organisation if it had been actually under his control. Bramwell Booth was the organiser. From first to last William Booth was the revivalist. Mr. Begbie makes a statement about the Salvation Army in India which he should be called upon to justify. "I have seen in India," he says, "whole tribes of criminal races, numbering millions, and once the despair of the Indian Government, living happy, contented, and industrious lives under the flag of the Salvation Army." Where are those millions to be found in India? We pause, as the orator said, for a reply; and we are afraid we shall have to pause a long while for a satisfactory answer.

We hear a good deal about the Salvation Army "Trust Deed." There was such a document, but it was examined by Counsel for Professor Huxley, and reported to be practically worthless. It was a Trust Deed with only one trustee. Legally, therefore, the only person who could call William Booth to account was William Booth himself. The "General" hadn't that nose of his for nothing.

While we have attacked the principles and policy of the Salvation Army we have never found fault with its autocracy. Such an organisation could not be run on any other lines. And if Bramwell Booth cannot maintain it he and the Salvation Army will meet a speedy doom. The only thing William Booth ever said worth repeating (to our knowledge) was in connection with the "Darkest England" scheme. His appeal to the British public—which, by the way, owed so much to Mr. Stead, brought in the £100,000 asked for, and more; and he was urged to place the scheme under the supervision of a public committee. The 'cute old "General's" reply was a peremptory "No." He would have no committee. "If the Jews had gone into the wilderness under a committee," he said, "they would soon have gone back to Egypt and sausages."

General Booth's family relations were not of the happiest. There were quarrels and estrangements, which lasted apparently right up to the old father's death. A "heathen" family could hardly have been more divided. We should disdain prying into the domestic affairs of the Booth family, but these divisions are matters of public knowledge; indeed, they were forced upon public attention.

William Booth has been called the John Wesley of the nineteenth century. Whether the Salvation Army is going to last like the Wesleyan Methodist Church remains to be seen. What is certain is that John Wesley was a scholar and a gentleman, and a writer of beautifully simple and lucid English. Edward Fitzgerald, the translator of Omar Khayyam, had the greatest admiration for Wesley's pure style—and Edward Fitzgerald was certainly no Christian and probably an Atheist. John Wesley, too, would have shrunk with disgust from the building up of a great commercial business in the

name of Christ. He did shrink with disgust at what is called lying-in-state. In one of his sermons he denounces that loathsome and impious practice, as he considered it, in the strongest language. We have not time to look up the passage just now, but we will quote it in full if our statement is challenged. John Wesley's feelings were more refined than William Booth's. The General of the Salvation Army exhibited his wife's dead body for sixpence per spectator, and the gate-money amounted to a considerable sum. He has now been exhibited himself in the same way. The Salvation Army has one motto already—"Blood and Fire." It should have another to keep that one company—"Put money in thy purse."

Booth's motto was "Blood and Fire." He patented it. It is the Salvation Army's trade mark. None of the newspapers expressed the least disgust at this brutal phrase. We admit that it is an accurate summary of the Christian religion; the complete essence of it in two substantives and a conjunction. You must plunge into the blood of Christ on one side or fall into the fire of Hell on the other side. This is plain New Testament teaching. This is Christianity.

G. W. F.

Acid Drops.

Bishops have been asked if it isn't time to offer up prayers in the churches for fine weather. The Bishop of Carlisle returns a very astute answer. Listen to the crafty old fox:—

"Have not yet issued any suggestions to the diocese for prayer for fine weather; but if this weather continues shall probably do so next week" (*Daily Mail*, August 24).

But if prayer can move God at any time, why wait till "next week"? Why not switch it on this week? Why not make an immediate request for divine assistance? The explanation is extremely plain. Every week's delay is necessarily a week nearer a natural change of weather. If the clergy postpone prayer until the fine weather can hardly be far off, they feel that they will be able to say "We did it" when the change occurs.

"The tragedy of the harvest deepens day by day." So said the *Daily Chronicle* on August 24. We respectfully suggest that our contemporary's observation should be addressed to "Providence." Its readers are not responsible for the weather.

The state of mind of the Scotch elder who absented himself from the harvest thanksgiving service because he didn't want to approach the Lord in a spirit of sarcasm would be appreciated by the Rev. G. S. Streatfield, of Bicester. This gentleman writes to the *Guardian*, asking what is to be done this year? With the prospects of farmers having to face the worst season since 1879, Mr. Streatfield asks whether it is seemly to thank God "at the very moment when the calamity is most acutely felt by those most nearly concerned?" We should say not, although our opinion on the subject is not likely to carry much weight. Still, if God really is responsible for the good harvests, we do not see how he can escape the responsibility for the bad ones. And in that case the proper course would be a harvest *blame-giving*. It would be quite refreshing to see some bluff, outspoken farmer rise up in church and tell the Lord what he thought of his management of things. Unfortunately, Christian worship does not encourage that kind of spirit. It breeds mental cowardice, as it encourages social hypocrisy.

A ghost was "on the walk" in Victoria Park, Portsmouth. Thousands of people looked through the railings for it, and were not disappointed. They saw a mysterious something dancing about weirdly and waving its arms. A number of bluejackets and small boys climbed the railings with a view to hunting the ghost down. While they were chasing the ghost the police chased them. It was a terribly mixed affair. But the explanation of the "ghost" was that the rays of a street arc lamp were reflected on a large and highly polished name-plate affixed to the obelisk commemorating those lost in the *Victoria* disaster, and the waving of arms was the flickering shadow cast by trees swaying in the wind. The "clanking of chains" heard after the railings were climbed was due to an energetic bluejacket operating with a tin can and a stick.

The namby-pamby Christianity which is so common to-day finds its way into the Labor movement as well as

other political bodies. The *Daily Herald* is sufficiently affected, and the forthcoming *Daily Citizen* promises to be no better. Mr. Frank Dilnot (a *Daily Mail* offshoot, we understand), who is to be its first editor, has explained, through the friendly columns of the *Labor Leader*, the attitude of the new daily to various matters, including religion. There is to be "a religious column" in the *Daily Citizen*, and the efforts of "noble men" in the Catholic, Anglican, and Free Churches "on behalf of the great under-mass will be sympathetically related." "Materialism," the editor adds, "is, I think, the natural starting-point for ruthless capitalistic triumph." Heaps of triumphant capitalists are professed and often ostentatious Christians. How many Freethinkers are found in the list? Mr. Dilnot is simply talking nonsense—and probably knows it. *Daily-Mailers* are likely to be more "slim" than honest.

They were christening the new motor lifeboat at Campbelltown, and the audience was singing "Eternal Father Strong to Save," when the temporary platform suddenly collapsed, and the officials and guests suffered a severe shaking. Mr. Daniel Currie, of London, was pinned under the falling structure, and sustained a serious fracture of the right leg. What a peculiar answer from the "Eternal Father" to his praying children!

Christians are just like Freethinkers in one thing. They die when their time comes. "One thing befalleth them; yea, they have all one breath." Mr. T. G. Young, of the Working Men's Mission in the New Cut, Lambeth, was conducting a prayer-meeting there on Tuesday evening, August 20, when he suddenly dropped dead. "Providence" has no special respect for the godly. It sometimes seems to give them extra beans.

The Mormon authorities of Salt Lake City intend enlisting the services of the cinematograph as an aid to faith. Fifty thousand dollars are to be spent on a cinematograph propaganda, and amongst the pictures will be the finding of the golden plates that provided the material for the Book of Mormon, and the visit of the angel to Joseph Smith. Probably this will be conclusive evidence to some. We remember that Talmage once exhibited a lump of pitch as truth of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. And it is the kind of evidence that has helped very largely to build up a faith in Christian teaching.

As a way out of the difficulty connected with the Sunday opening of picture palaces—it is, of course, a religious difficulty only—the *Christian Commonwealth* suggests the Churches running them as part of the work of the Church. It is also said that they might then become powerful as "uplifting educational agencies." We quite fail to see how the picture palaces could become more educational in the hands of the Churches than in those of their present owners. The Churches have their own places of meeting, and if these fail to attract there is little to be gained by any other plan. Moreover, the only way in which the picture palaces could be used would be by setting up religious subjects. And cinematograph people will do this on their own account if the Churches do not object. It is they who protest against the representation of Biblical subjects. Otherwise some of the Old Testament stories might compete with some of the popular Red Indian films. Then there is the question of profit. Great objection is raised to profit being made by these shows. The *Christian Commonwealth* says that if the Churches run them this would be eliminated. The question might; but one can hardly conceive the Churches sacrificing any profit that was to be made. Finally, in what way would there be less labor employed if the Churches ran the shows than is now employed under present conditions? The whole agitation, when examined, is reduced to undiluted Sabbatarianism. And the suggestion of the Churches taking the shows over reminds one of Ruskin's comment that if engineers could build a tunnel to hell, Christians would invest their money in it, and shut up all the churches for fear of lowering the dividends.

Putting on one side the maudlin sentimental piety of such as Harry Lauder, the opposition of the Actors' Association to the Sunday picture shows is rather hard to understand. Certainly, it is as reasonable for theatres and concert halls to be open on Sunday as it is for picture palaces to be open, and for our own part we should prefer absolute freedom in the matter, with the legal guarantee of one complete day's rest for every employee. But we are in Christian England, and must not expect to be guided by that which is reasonable. Apart from this, we cannot see that actors suffer any particular injury from the Sunday opening of picture palaces. Their competition with theatres can only exist

during weekdays. The question of seven days' labor per week can affect neither the theatres nor music halls. It can affect the picture palaces themselves, but this is only part of the general question of securing proper rest for all. And this, as we have said, is to be secured by a very simple and very obvious method. We sincerely hope that actors and music hall artists will not allow themselves to be made the instruments of a Sabbatarian agitation.

On this question people should make up their minds as to what it is they really desire. If they desire the closing of all places of amusement on Sundays, their position is understandable, although absurd and ultimately bad. That means a return to the old-fashioned Sunday, with its gloom and mental and moral demoralisation. If, on the other hand, they desire one day a week on which, freed from their ordinary occupations, all who wish it may enjoy harmless and legitimate entertainment, the cry of preserving Sunday is absurd. Thousands will gain mental recreation from a concert who can never get it from a church service. And even the poorest picture palace or music hall entertainment would be less demoralising than condemning to absolute inactivity many thousands of young men and women who simply will not attend church, and who, in default of other attractions, will lounge about the streets developing bad habits. It is not really a question of whether profit is made on Sunday; it is not even a question of seven days' labor per week. The first question is illegitimate, and the second is incidental and easily answered. It is really a question of the social advisability of providing opportunities for rational recreation and enjoyment for all classes and all tastes on the day when the vast majority of people are released from the toils of daily drudgery.

Virginia Christian, an educated negress, has been electrocuted at Richmond, Virginia. She was condemned to death for the murder of her mistress, who reprovved her one day for a domestic fault "just as if I was an ordinary nigger." Her mistress's abusive language threw her into a fit of passion, and she killed her. Before taking her seat on the electric chair, she declared that life had no value for educated blacks. She also jeered at the clergyman in attendance. "The white man's religion," she said, "has no place in it for a black." She might have added that there was plenty of room for blacks in the white man's lynchings.

Dr. Sheepshanks, Bishop of Norwich, being dead, has no further control over his wealth. He couldn't very well have taken it with him, for everybody and everything are in "the melting mood" in the place he has gone to, if there is any truth in the New Testament. The fortune left behind by this right reverend father in God amounts to £43,965. How could the episcopal camel hope to get through the needle's eye with a hump like that?

Rev. John Henry Hudleston, of Cayton Hall, South Stanley, Ripley, Yorkshire, left £72,454. Poor Christ! Rev. Charles Voysey, of the Theistic Church, left £5,684. But he didn't preach "Blessed be ye poor."

Rev. William John Coussmakor, Lindsay, rector of Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, who died in June, left £33,128 15s. 2d. He couldn't even take the twopence away with him. He must have passed a bad quarter of an hour if he has met the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount.

The world was startled by the Peruvian rubber horrors. Nothing, however, seems to have been done yet to stop the cruelties or punish their perpetrators. All the time has been spent discussing whether a Catholic or a Protestant mission should be sent out to deal with the matter on the spot. How characteristic!

Dr. Forbes Winslow has been making another calculation based on the growth of insanity. His latest discovery is that, if the present state of things continues, there will be one out of every four of the population insane in 2159. This is worse than the late Prophet Baxter. Dr. Winslow insists that it is the vices of modern civilisation that are causing the increase of insanity, and places them in the following order: Drink, cigarette smoking, heredity. This is the first time we have seen heredity catalogued as a vice; and in truth Dr. Winslow's whole position is very debatable. Those who say there is an increase of vice of recent years simply do not understand what the conditions of a hundred years ago were. And as drunkenness is on the decline, it is difficult to see how it can become a cause of an increase of insanity. We fancy, too, that in those cases where insanity

is ascribed to drink it would be found, on a more correct diagnosis, that the drinking was itself the expression of a nervous constitution that might easily have achieved insanity by other methods. This is the manner in which ill-informed magistrates and temperance lecturers talk; but scientific men really ought to be more careful before they express an opinion.

In the gush of sentiment over the death of General Booth, only one paper that we have seen has ventured a word of criticism on the Salvation Army. This is the *Church Times*. In a leading article, the editor says:—

"The book called *Darkest England and the Way Out*, which he owed in secret to the journalistic genius of the late Mr. Stead, was one of the worst of its kind ever written; his plans for social betterment were crude and showily inefficient; the public gave him much money to spend on them, but happily not a tithe of what he asked; his shelters and colonies are the despair of rational reformers, and his schemes of emigration have degenerated into a trading agency. Meanwhile, the original work of the Army has come to a standstill. There is a large and wealthy organisation that now does little but advertise its own existence."

We congratulate the *Church Times*.

From the tone of several of the articles in the morning papers, one suspects that they were written by members of the Army itself. In the *Daily Chronicle* Mr. Harold Begbie has been letting himself go at great length. And as the new king inherits all the virtues of the old one with the crown, so the new General has inherited all the wonderful qualities of the old one. One day, Mr. Begbie finds General Booth to be the greatest organising genius of his time. The next, Bramwell Booth, the new General, is a more able man and the first organiser of his period. Such is modern journalism! Several of the papers have said—in almost identical words—that Lord James's Committee that inquired into the administration of the Darkest England scheme completely exonerated the General. It did nothing of the kind. The Committee was appointed to see whether money subscribed to the Darkest England scheme was properly administered. The Committee sat while the scheme was still new, and there had really been little time for maladministration. It reported, however, that the books were kept properly; it discovered at least one case in which the money had been wrongly applied; and, above all, reported that there existed no adequate safeguards for the distribution of the money subscribed. Those who expected that these safeguards would be created did not know the Army. And after that, General Booth firmly declined any other committee of investigation. What would that Committee have said about the Army's emigration business, for example?

The *Daily Telegraph* recalls the fact that one of General Booth's most generous supporters in the old days of the East London Christian Mission was Samuel Morley, the famous Nonconformist Liberal. This is the gentleman who implored the Nonconformist Liberals of Northampton not to vote for an Atheist to represent them in Parliament. Charles Bradlaugh got his own back, however, at the next elections, when Samuel Morley lost his own seat at Bristol.

"The Gospel of Freethought" is announced as the title of a forthcoming book by the Rev. H. D. A. Major, vice-principal of Ripon Clergy College, and editor of the *Modern Churchman*. It will apparently be nothing but a talk with his fellow clergymen about the shortcomings of the Church. We are sorry to see so good a title taken for such a subject. We used it ourselves some thirty years ago, and the little essay we wrote under it is included in our *Flowers of Freethought*.

"If an Atheist like Robert Ingersoll was to appear to-day," a Canadian preacher says, "he would have a hard time to get an audience." An American minister cries out for "another Ingersoll to strengthen the Church with his opposition." How they agree! And how they hate Ingersoll! Which is a compliment to *him*. The hatred of some people is the natural opposite to the love of others. Positive and negative polarity.

We met Mr. L. K. Washburn at Boston in 1896 and liked him. We meet him again some years afterwards in London and liked him still better. He is a Freethinker of zeal, accomplishments, and ability, with a pointed, epigrammatic way of writing, and we can endorse nearly all he contributes to the New York *Truthseeker*. But there is a recent sentence of his which we are far from endorsing. "It should be a crime," he says, "to print and sell the Bible, the nastiest book tolerated by society to-day." Steady, friend Washburn,

steady! Don't let Freethinkers imitate Christian bigotry as soon as they get a chance. Don't let them perk themselves up as censors of literature, and dictate what other people may read. An apostle of Freethought turning persecutor is "a sorry sight"—as Macbeth says of his ensanguined murderer's hands. We believe that friend Washburn wrote that lamentable sentence in haste, and will cheerfully withdraw it on second thoughts. We quite agree that the Bible should not be placed in the hands of children in State schools. We have pleaded that principle for any number of years. But the idea of preventing adults from reading the Bible, by means of the criminal law, in unworthy of a Freethinker.

That peculiarly superficial person, Dr. R. F. Horton, delivered a lecture the other day on "Science and God." It was considered important enough for the *Christian Commonwealth* to print it as a special supplement. In reality, it belongs to the commonest class of Christian evidences. It is not concerned with the question of the bearings of scientific knowledge—that is, verifiable knowledge—on the belief in God, but what have been the beliefs of scientific men about God. And this, of course, makes it easy running for Dr. Horton. By putting on one side "a noisy person like Haeckel"—fancy a mere Hampstead preacher referring to Haeckel in that manner?—and by ignoring others whose opinions are as anti-Theistic as is Haeckel's, Dr. Horton is able to cite a number of names belonging to scientific men who have professed belief in God. Therefore, he is happy. None of these produced any evidence; Dr. Horton does not produce any on his own account; but they said they believed in God. That is enough for thinkers of the calibre of Dr. Horton. It never dawns on him that the mere opinion of an equal number of dustmen would be of just as great value.

When one reads Dr. Horton's list of names, the question that occurs to one is, "What does it matter?" On a question of biology, or of chemistry, or of dynamics, the names cited properly carry weight. Because then they are dealing with a subject they understand, one they have studied, and the knowledge acquired can be imparted to others, and verified by tests agreeable to common sense. But on the question of the existence of a God they know nothing; they have no means of information that is not open to all; and have no more information to impart than the meanest among us. Moreover, their belief in God did not spring from their scientific studies; it existed beforehand. The most that can be said is that they held it in spite of their science, and one would not be far from the truth in saying that they so held it because they never brought either their knowledge or their methods to bear upon their belief. Dr. Horton confesses that "a large proportion" of great English scientists have kept silent about their religious beliefs; and, again, one would be warranted in saying that their silence was tantamount to rejection. Naturally, English scientists, when they have had religious beliefs, have not been slow to avow them; and, unfortunately, when they have not had any religious beliefs, they have frequently been content to keep silence. And their reward has been the patronage of preachers like Dr. Horton; one who says that when he reads their opinions, as expressed through their letters and memoirs, he makes the "singular discovery" that they are Christians. Singular, indeed, since he names as one of these Christians Charles Darwin, an avowed Agnostic, and, as another, Sir Charles Lyell, whose unbelief was, as Alexander Bain says, expressed over the dining-table of his friends.

Ohio is a long way off England, but they know some things over there that we don't. For instance, the Rev. Dr. Rowland Dwight Grant, whose friends describe him as "one of the most original thinkers" on the intellectual horizon, has discovered the important truth that the great Charles Darwin recanted even his scientific convictions before he went to meet his God. Addressing a crowd of pious folk at a Muskingum Valley Chautauqua, this reverend gentleman said: "Darwin, near the time of his death, confessed that he did not believe in his own theory of the origin of species; and I have seen and can produce the evidence of the truth of my statement." Well now, the sooner he produces it the better. He will immortalise himself as the clergyman who knocked Darwin out in the first round. But it won't do to keep the "evidence" in Ohio, and in religious circles even there. It should be sent across to England, where Darwin was born, where he revolutionised the thought of the world, and where he died. Men of science should have an opportunity of seeing it. But we are seriously afraid it will never be seen here. It may be far too delicate to survive the voyage. We really don't expect to hear of the Rev. Dr. Rowland Dwight Grant again.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

September 29, Manchester.
 October 6 to December 15, every Sunday evening, Queen's
 (Minor) Hall, London, W.

To Correspondents.

- L. KOTHE.—The "Useless Missions" cutting has already been dealt with in our columns. Wouldn't it be wise to confine your cuttings to purely local matters that would be likely to escape our attention otherwise? South Africa is a long way off, and much time elapses before your letters can reach us.
- A. M. WILSON.—We understood your reason, but it does not alter the fact that we have no time to oblige our readers with criticism of their friends' verses.
- W. ALLAN.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- MAY COLEMAN.—We don't see much calling for our notice in your report of the reverend gentleman's sermons. Moreover, it is a good while since January, and few sermons "keep" so long. Glad you still regard the *Freethinker* as "clever, interesting, and most welcome," and do your best to promote its circulation.
- H. SMALLWOOD.—Sending as requested. Thanks.
- E. B.—We congratulate the young lady.
- NORMAN MURRAY (Montreal) writes: "I must congratulate you on *Bible Romances*. I read it some years ago, but I have just finished reading it the second time." Mr. Murray suggests that Freethinkers should drop the "Christian superstition era" and adopt the era of 1789, at least when writing amongst themselves. We suppose he knows that the Positivists have done this, to some extent at any rate.
- A. D.—You will see that our reply to Mr. Blatchford's rejoinder is postponed till next week. The subject will keep, at least the Shelley part of it will. "Pinnacled dim in the intense inane" is the last, and crowning, line of the great speech of the Spirit of the Hour at the close of the third Act of *Prometheus Unbound*. Tennyson took the "inane" from Shelley, also the fine word "ruining," and used them both in the splendid "Ruining along the illimitable inane" in his noble *Lucretius*. Tennyson was a wonderful artist, but not as great and original a poet as Shelley. Many have caught the trick of Tennysonian blank-verse; no one ever caught the trick of Shelley's. It is a strong mark of originality that you cannot be imitated. Here as everywhere else Shakespeare stands supreme. No man has ever written a single line of blank-verse that could possibly be mistaken for the Master's by any decently competent judge.
- T. DOBSON.—We note the resolution you send us from the Islington Branch of the Industrialist League, expressing approbation of the "attitude adopted by the N. S. S. with regard to the tyrannical methods of the London County Council."
- S. J. JASSEMEN.—Thanks for your trouble in copying them out, but they are very venerable "chestnuts."
- C. T. SHAW.—Pleased to hear you sold 7 extra copies of last week's *Freethinker*, thanks to our comments on the Rev. J. D. Brown, of Wolverhampton, and his colleagues on the local Free Church Council. Thanks for the photograph.
- M. BARNARD.—We can only answer your first question by saying that the Free Churches boast of having two hundred members in the House of Commons. The Conservatives belong in the bulk to the Anglican and Catholic Churches. We don't quite understand your second question. Thanks for address.
- C. J. PEACOCK.—Pleased to see your handwriting again.
- GWINNELL.—Advice is so easy, and action is so difficult. It is a fine idea to get Robertson, Burns, Morley, Earl Russell, etc., to do the work instead of letting the weight of defending free speech fall upon the poor N. S. S. But as a practical policy—! We leave the rest unsaid.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- WHEN the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are especially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

London "saints" will note that Queen's (Minor) Hall reopens for regular Sunday evening Freethought lectures on October 6. Mr. Foote will occupy the platform every Sunday evening until December 15. A fuller announcement will appear in our next issue.

Mr. Foote will only pay one provincial town a lecturing visit on this side of the new year. That will be Manchester on the last Sunday in September. Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Cheshire "saints" will please note this fixture.

Mr. Foote has accepted a unanimous invitation to preside at the annual Bradlaugh Dinner on Wednesday, Sept. 25, at the Holborn Restaurant.

The Northern Tour goes on well in spite of the weather, which is so wet and cold that even common-garden Christians are losing their fear of Hades. Our readers know from Lecture Notices what places are visited. At the Nelson meeting many questioners arose. One of them put a crusher: "What do we lose by believing in God?" "Among other things, your senses," was Mr. Jackson's reply. In the midst of laughter on the part of the audience the questioner's voice was heard: "By God, tha's done me." We are happy to hear from Mr. Gott that an excellent sale of literature continues.

Three good meetings were held on Sunday at Burnley, and we hear from Mr. Gott that friends attended from Blackburn, Accrington, Nelson, Colne, and Padiham. "We are gathering together," Mr. Gott says, "a body of enthusiasts." He adds that a new N. S. S. Branch is now assured at Burnley "with a real live man as Secretary in the person of Mr. George W. Moore, 44 Healey Wood-road."

Writing last week on the fight that has opened between the London County Council and the National Secular Society, and honestly confessing that the former won in the first round, we said that we would deal with the Society's remedy in the next *Freethinker*. We are quite able to deal with it as promised, but there is a good reason for waiting another week. The N. S. S. Executive meets on the last Thursday in the month—a couple of days after the *Freethinker* goes to press; and it will be good taste as well as good sense to let the Executive consider and decide upon its future policy in this grave matter before definitely and finally addressing our readers on the subject. No doubt we shall have to close our address with a serious appeal for the sinews of war in the further developments of this important battle. Meanwhile we have to report that all the County Council summonses are postponed with a view to the Society's contemplated legal action in the Courts.

We regret that we overlooked the two summonses served on Mr. H. Silverstein by the London County Council for "collecting money without a permit" at the Bethnal Green N. S. S. Branch meetings in Victoria Park. He rightly desires to have his name with the others' in the roll of honor. "Overlooked" is perhaps the wrong word. We were really ignorant of Mr. Silverstein's having been summoned. He was away holidaying, and found the two summonses awaiting him on his return home.

A letter by "Freethinker" in the *Transvaal Leader* calls the Rev. H. W. Goodwin to book for telling his congregation that if it were not for Christian influence Johannesburg would be like Sodom or Gomorrah. One half the population of that city are not Christians, to begin with, Johannesburg being well stocked with Jews. "Freethinker" thinks his own morality is quite as high as the average local Christian's; anyhow, he is not in need of Christian influence (Goodwin's or any other brand) to keep him in the right path. We are glad to see Christian arrogance rebuked in this fashion.

Our remarks in "Literary Gossip" a fortnight ago on Mr. Robert Blatchford's depreciation of Shelley as a poet were replied to in last week's *Clarion*. We have neither time nor space for a rejoinder to Mr. Blatchford this week, so many other matters being in hand, and occupying our attention and our pen in the present number of the *Freethinker*. We shall deal with Shelley (and incidentally Mr. Blatchford) next week in a careful manner and at considerable length. To Freethinkers, at least, the poetical reputation of Shelley is of more importance than Mr. Blatchford seems to fancy.

Dolet: The Freethought Martyr.—V.

(Concluded from p. 539.)

DOLET'S character has already been largely described in the course of this biographical sketch. But a few more touches may be added. His disposition was somewhat proud and turbulent, liable to make enemies, and not apt to conciliate them. Yet his quarrels do not seem to have been personal, and we must make great allowance for his vehement language. The age was not remarkable for urbanity in discussion, and even a century later we see by Milton's invective against Salmacius that literary manners had not much improved. Longfellow has humorously hit off this temper in a well-known passage:—

"Seraphic Doctor:—

"The Lord have mercy on your position,
You wretched, wrangling culler of herbs!

"Cherubic Doctor:—

"May he send your soul to eternal perdition,
For your treatise on the irregular verbs!"

Dolet must not be made responsible for the common failing of his time. If he had, as Mr. Christie alleges, "serious faults of temper and temperament," he nevertheless "excited the affection, the admiration, and the respect, and obtained at least for a time the friendship of every man of learning and virtue with whom he came into personal contact." He never penned an unkind word of any man who had once been his friend, and we have to learn the story of his quarrels with intimates from other sources than his own writings. Mr. Christie confesses that the exalted estimate of Dolet's character, with which he began his researches, has been lowered in their progress; and he frankly states his opinion that the great printer had faults of head, and perhaps some of heart, which contributed to his misfortunes. But who is perfect? It is surely enough that "with all these drawbacks he remains a man possessed of many most admirable qualities, of high talent, an intense desire after knowledge for himself, and an equally intense desire of communicating it to others, an intense sympathy with every kind of intellectual progress, and an intense hatred of ignorance, bigotry, and priestcraft."

We should judge Dolet, says Mr. Christie, as a scholar and a man of letters. And he continues:—

"If we cannot place him among the two or three foremost names of his contemporaries, he is certainly entitled to a high position.....His *Commentaries* were one of the most important contributions to Latin scholarship which France had as yet given. His *Formulæ*, his criticisms on Terence, and his translations, are all among the most meritorious works of their kind.....Nor must his services to the French language be forgotten. He was one of the few scholars of the day who had formed a true conception of its importance, and of the method of treating it scientifically. His grammatical tracts and his translations afford us proofs of this, and add to the many other indications of what he might and probably would have done had a longer life been allowed to him. For in judging of his talents and abilities we must not forget that he had only attained the age of thirty-seven years at his death, and that the last four years of his life were almost wholly passed in prison."

Mr. Christie points out something beyond and above all this. He notices that both in his Latin and in his French verse Dolet "rises to a height of pathos, vigor, and imaginative power rarely, if ever, to be found among the poets of the day, and which certainly induce us to believe that, had he devoted to French verse the labor and pains which he gave to elaborating and polishing his Latin prose, he might have equalled any of his contemporaries, and surpassed all except Marot."

Was Dolet an Atheist? Mr. Christie affirms that nothing in his published works warrants the belief that he was. He wrote as a true Catholic, and submitted to the authority of Mother Church. But so did Rabelais, Des Periers, and nearly everyone else. Mr. Christie tells us that Dolet was held to have

been executed as a relapsed Atheist, and although it is not so stated in the sentence, he "inclines to think that this was its effect and intention, and that the almost universal belief that he was a Materialist, or (for the words were then and afterwards used as synonymous) an Atheist, was shared by his judges." If not really an Atheist, it seems pretty certain that he was put to death as one.

But let us hear some of his contemporaries. Scaliger, in a brutal ode written after Dolet's death, calls him "Atheist," and says that he was "filled with an arrogant madness which, being armed with the most consummate impudence, would not even confess the being of a God." Franciscus Floridus, after charging him with plagiarism, adds—"This fellow asserts the soul to be mortal, and the highest good to consist in bodily pleasure." Bernard Bochetel, Bishop of Rennes, said that Dolet "fell in a short time into the most execrable blasphemies I ever heard." And lastly, the sweet-mouthed Calvin wrote, soon after Dolet's execution—"It is a matter of common notoriety that Agrippa, Villanovus (that is, *Servetus*), Dolet, and such-like *Cyclopes*, have always ostentatiously despised the Gospel, and at length they have fallen into such a depth of insanity and fury, that not only have they vomited forth execrable blasphemies against the Son of God, but, as regards the life of the soul, have declared that it differs in no respect from that of dogs and pigs." It is probable that Dolet gave freer vent to his scepticism in his conversation than in his writings. And this view is borne out by the words of Floridus in his reply to Dolet's defence. "The opinion," he writes, "of your impiety, which is everywhere held, cannot be got rid of by any extracts from your *Genethliacum*, for I hold this to be certain, that what you believe concerning God and the soul you would speak of cautiously and not openly to all, lest you should be immediately seized and put to the torture."

Such a general belief must have had some foundation. Dolet did not take much interest in theological controversy, nor was it likely that he would show his heresy in his works, except "between the lines." In that age men wrote, so to speak, with the halter round their necks and the faggots at their feet. The slightest indiscretion was dangerous. When the bloodhounds of persecution were on their track, Freethinkers who had no desire for death were obliged to imitate the cunning of the fox. A Rabelais, with infinite strategy and wit, might contrive to avoid being burnt for the love of God; but fervent impetuous natures, like Dolet, were almost sure of a tragic doom.

Mr. Christie concludes that Dolet was "a sincere Theist." We do not dispute it, but we say that the evidence is incomplete. Mr. Christie himself admits that Dolet's avowals of orthodoxy are "ostentatious," and that "they do not strike the reader as proceeding from the writer's heart, but as being inserted rather as a matter of form than of actual belief."

With respect to the immortality of the soul, he was at least dubious. His ode, already cited, on the death of his friend Villanovus, proves this. And there is another short Latin poem in the same volume, which concludes: "Do not be terrified by the arrows of death, which will cause you either to be deprived of sensation, or else to be sheltered in happier regions and to be in a joyful condition, unless the hope of heaven is vain."

In his *Commentaries*, on the word *Mors*, he breaks into a noble strain of panegyric on immortality, but the immortality there meant is the immortality of fame. After quoting the names of great scholars, poets, warriors, and statesmen, he says that "the works of men of such excellence, consecrated as they are to immortality, are clearly beyond the power of death, and will, I am certain, never perish, but rather the sharpness of death and of time, which tramples all things under its feet, will be blunted by their virtue." In this immortality he was, as Mr. Christie allows, in his heart of hearts a believer;

and he hoped, by passing his life "nobly and courageously," to participate in its glory.

"To say that he was a Christian," writes Mr. Christie, "as the term was then used or accepted equally by Protestant and Catholic, would be undoubtedly to say what is not the fact." As M. Aimé Martin remarks, "Philosophy has alone the right to claim on its side the illustrious victim of the Place Maubert, whom the Reformation has denounced as impious by the voice of Calvin."

Dolet sided neither with the Church nor with the reformers. His religion, to use Mr. Christie's apt language for the last time, was "a religion of duty in relation to this world only, and troubling itself not at all with the future, as being a matter of which nothing can be certainly known, and concerning which it was useless to reason or to speculate." What an admirable summary of Secularism! Dolet was with us, and we claim him as a martyr of Freethought, another name on the noble list of our sacred dead.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Evolution of Life.—IV.

(Concluded from p. 541.)

THE later Pliocene deposits reveal many changes in the development and distribution of mammalian life. One-toed horses were now grazing in European pastures. Mastadons as well as true elephants were flourishing; rhinoceroses and hippopotami were dwelling in a prosperous environment. The ranks of the tapirs and giraffes had been reduced, in all probability by migration. Swine and oxen of modern cast, and various species of deer, made a good display. But wolves were abroad, and the sanguinary sabre-toothed tigers played havoc with the herbivorous fauna. Lynxes and lions were being evolved, and true bears had become numerous. The higher apes had forsaken their old European haunts, but some lower forms still remained.

The climate underwent a marked change. Crocodile life was moving nearer the equator. During the entire Pliocene period there was a pronounced decline in the tropical and sub-tropical vegetation, and at its close the flora of Europe presented an aspect very similar to that which now prevails. Tropical life in the seas was likewise displaced by harder northern organisms.

South America was now attached to the northern continent by a newly-formed land connection, which enabled many mammalian animals to journey south. But the southern continent proved large enough to accommodate the emigrants without seriously inconveniencing the less developed native animals. The Australian continent was the most backward of all zoological provinces. About the commencement of the Eocene period it was isolated from the great centres of animal development. The marsupials constituted its highest mammalian achievement. Nevertheless, within the limits imposed by marsupial structure, remarkable diversity of form was displayed.

The wonderful wealth of ape life which distinguished the Pliocene period gave full promise of the early advent of man. In the Asiatic island of Java, and in Pliocene strata, Dr. Dubois discovered the remains of *pithecanthropus erectus*. This creature's skull carried massive ape-like brow ridges, but its brain capacity was almost equal to that of the lowest existing savages. The thigh-bone and the teeth bridge the differences which separate men from apes. The eoliths which have been found in various parts of the world may well have been the rude weapons of these primitive ape-men. It is certainly a very suggestive circumstance that numerous eoliths have been discovered in the same strata both in France and England.

From later Miocene times onward, there was a tendency towards a decline in the temperature of the Northern Hemisphere as a whole. Towards the passing away of the Pliocene period and the dawning

of the Pleistocene the cold wave was increasing in strength. Many migrations and some extinctions of living things had already taken place. A few animals appear to have compromised the matter by residing in Europe during the summer season, while wintering in more genial climes. More arctic organisms were settling in Europe. The hardy spruce fir was travelling south. Mountain sheep, musk oxen, grizzly bears, and other boreal forms were descending from their extreme northern homes. Pre-glacial man undoubtedly existed in Europe at this time. The remains discovered indicate close affinities with the apes. Curiously enough, these early men appear to have buried flint flakes in the graves of their dead. The fossil remains of these savages show that their under jaw was powerful, although destitute of a chin. The roots of their teeth are ape-like, but their tooth crowns are distinctly human in appearance.

As the Pleistocene period advanced a process of land upheaval, which had been for some time in progress, still went on. Vast masses of northern uplands became the rallying grounds of immense masses of snow. From these snow-fields tremendous glaciers proceeded, and ultimately invaded the plains and valleys of the neighboring country. The Atlantic was reached at last, and the ocean was dotted with islands of ice. The animal population was depleted, and the vegetable growths were stunted or killed. Polar willows and boreal mosses usurped the seats formerly occupied by the tropical and temperate floras. In addition to Northern and Central Europe, Asia and North America were subjected to the sway of ice and snow. As the centuries rolled on, these rigorous conditions were somewhat relaxed—in any case in Europe—and an inter-glacial period set in. In consequence of this return to milder conditions, the arctic plants and animals retreated towards their northern homes. The horse, hippopotamus, elephant, and rhinoceros returned to Europe. Even the lions appear to have re-crossed the land-bridge which at that time united Africa with Spain.

Owing to causes as yet undetermined, many arctic animals afterwards returned to Europe. Polar foxes, reindeer, the giant Irish deer, the elk, and various other mammals became abundant. The probable explanation is, that on the higher lands the cold continued intense, while less frigid conditions were experienced in the lower valleys. The extraordinary medley of life which the deposits of the period disclose can only be thus accounted for in the present state of our knowledge.

During this inter-glacial period man was dwelling in Europe. To this time many Palæolithic human implements belong. The human remains unearthed in the Neander Valley also date from this period. These Neanderthal savages were strongly built men, and stood about five and a half feet in height. Although their features were ape-like, their brain-pans were larger than than of *pithecanthropus*. Other relics brought to light in 1907 at Dordogne point to men with remarkably receding foreheads. Regarded as a whole, these inter-glacial men were more bestial in appearance than the most degraded of living savages.

The inter-glacial break having lasted some thousands of years, snow and ice again asserted a despotic sway over Northern Europe. But, although the North Sea became one solid mass of ice, and the Scandinavian Peninsula was overwhelmed, Southern England and the whole of Holland managed to escape the polar visitation. But Switzerland was completely covered in ice. The cold must have been intense in Northern Europe, as the reindeer, polar fox, and other Arctic animals wandered to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. But at last the ice gave way in real earnest, and commenced to retreat towards its present boundaries; and no such desolate conditions have since returned.

Semi-erect savages of similar stock to those living in the inter-glacial period, left their remains at Spy in Belgium in post-glacial times. These, however,

had advanced considerably in culture. Their stone weapons and implements were less rudely wrought, and were designed for a greater variety of uses. Still another contemporary savage race, with gorilla-like necks and bigger brains than the Spy men is now known to have existed. Comparative anatomists conclude that the vocal powers of these savages were greater than those of the Spy race.

These savage peoples were succeeded by a much higher stock. The fossil remains from Mentone, Engis, and Cromagnon do not indicate any close racial affinity with the earlier savage-hunters. These later skulls, though still betraying simian ridges, were more like those of modern Europeans. And, although these "cave men" were still in the Old Stone age, their implements were greatly improved. Their stone hatchets were now provided with handles, and flakes of toothed flint were used as saws. Bone needles prove that the art of sewing had been discovered. Nor were the fine arts unknown. Realistic representations of the mammoth and other animals were scratched on bone, horn, and ivory. Primitive fresco work was also attempted on the walls of caves.

The ice retreated in North America, as in Europe, and many modifications in the scenery resulted. Rivers widened their courses, and various new lakes were formed. But whether the human race was represented in the Western World in pre-glacial times, or even immediately after the Glacial epoch had passed away, is still an open question.

Marsupial life in the large Australian area had now reached its maximum. While this ancient order was descending to death in other lands, the pouched mammals of Australia had evolved into a condition of unexampled luxuriance. The diprodoton—an animal of wombat form—attained the proportions of a hippopotamus. Kangaroos had grown to the size of giants. The Tasmanian devils were far larger than their living descendants. Pouched wolves were in plenty, and the "pouched lions" do not always appear to have restricted themselves to a vegetable diet. Immense wingless birds, with ridiculously small heads, were another feature of this singular fauna. But whatever developmental possibilities lay concealed in the life of this island continent were cut off by the invasion of man. The native Tasmanians in all probability were descended from these early invaders, but, unfortunately for science, these lowly savages are now extinct. The surviving Australian aborigines are unquestionably the most degraded savages extant.

Towards the end of the Pleistocene period, Europe once more experienced the warmer climate of the past. The woolly-rhinoceros, the mammoth, and other hardy animals departed. Lions, leopards, and jungle-cats largely increased, and the elephant and hippopotamus penetrated into Britain. But this heat wave soon spent its force, and the warmth-loving animals took their departure to more congenial climes.

The European climate now became what it has ever since remained. This embraces a period of between 25,000 and 50,000 years. The earliest savages of the present, or Quaternary period, left the evidences of their lives and times in the shell mounds of ancient Denmark. Not that they fed entirely on molluscs; they were also partial to pork and venison. They chased the wild boar, red-deer, and roe-deer, and as hunters were far superior to the cave-dwelling savages of an earlier date. Moreover, they had discovered the great art of domestication, and had trained dogs to accompany them in their hunting expeditions. They captured fish and caught birds; they had learnt the value of domestic pottery. Their weapons were polished, and therefore of the improved new-stone type. But there is nothing to indicate that these pre-historic people had reached the agricultural stage of savage society. Other tribes were settling, or about to settle, in Continental Europe. Some of these had domesticated the goat and the ox. Others cultivated the soil, and raised crops of barley, millet, and wheat.

Various tribes dwelt in houses erected on the borders of lakes, which rested on piles driven into the mud. The earliest were constructed in a very primitive manner, but they became immensely improved as time went on. To the manufacture of pottery, these lake-dwellers added the art of spinning. France and Spain were the chosen countries of other races. These peoples reached a higher stage of culture than the Italian and Swiss lake settlers. They made great progress in pottery production. Their tools and weapons were improved, and their domestic animals included dogs, horses, goats, oxen, and deer. They constructed canoes, and were thus enabled to cross narrow sheets of water. As a result, some of these enterprising savages reached the British Isles. They interred their dead in regular graves, and buried articles for use in the other world.

Succeeding waves of emigration appear to have brought the so-called Kelts—a bronze-using people—into Europe. We have now reached the dawn of the historical period, most certainly in Egypt, whose civilisation and culture date back so many thousand years. As the foregoing considerations prove, the mental and material evolution of the modern races was by this time well advanced. Man's richest and ripest achievements in Greece and Rome, and in civilised Europe and America are to be traced back step by step to the rudest beginnings in savage and barbaric life and society.

The history of living things from their earliest appearance to their latest development has now been outlined. In our day the decline in lower animal life is everywhere apparent. Man is now, for all practical purposes, the master of the world's affairs. Let us hope that he will extend a full measure of justice and mercy towards his less successful cousins and competitors in the struggle for supremacy. For there is nothing that will broaden his sympathies with the less powerful products of organic nature than an understanding recognition of his kinship with everything that breathes and moves.

T. F. PALMER.

Literary Gossip.

Mr. H. S. Salt, the honorary secretary of the Humanitarian League, is so modest that many who admire him for his constant work for the League are unaware of the fact that he is an excellent scholar as well as a fine writer, who might have made a considerable name in literature if he had not devoted himself to a high labor of benevolence. We welcome his *Treasures of Lucretius* (Watts & Co.), consisting of select passages translated from the great *De Rerum Natura* by the most powerful of the Latin poets, whose grand verse and profound scepticism induced Mrs. Browning to say that he "denied divinely the divine." Lucretius did not exactly deny the mere existence of the gods; he never addressed himself to that question at all; what he denied was that they had anything to do with mankind or that mankind had anything to do with them. Mr. Salt well says that "the central belief which lay at the heart of his poem was that the universe is ruled by wholly natural laws, and that mankind is free to work out its own destiny, undisturbed by any supernatural guidance." Lucretius denied the doctrine of a future life and its moral usefulness. He declared the hereafter to be a fable and a dream. Moreover, and this is sometimes startling, Lucretius anticipated all the main ideas of modern Evolution. Every now and then, and for whole pages together, he is like a great poet versifying the teachings of Lyell and Darwin. It is these pages, mainly, that Mr. Salt has translated into vigorous and vivid English. He has translated them in such a way as to bring out the full force of the poet's conceptions. From that point of view, we should give him the palm amongst the English translators of Lucretius. We have good reason, therefore, to commend Mr. Salt's little book to the attention of our readers. We hope it will find a place on the bookshelves of many of them, as it will have an honored place in our own library,—amongst the books within easy reach.

One of the really unanswerable objections to the Bible as a divine revelation is that, even if the original text were inspired, no care was taken to preserve its integrity, and

that great variations must have occurred in the course of time, merely in the honest multiplication of copies, century after century, by the human hand. When printing came in this danger was minimised, but it was far from abolished. Blunders in the original edition of a book are too often repeated in its reprints, and other blunders arise which are in turn repeated in subsequent editions. Shakespeare himself, who found printing in full swing when he went to school—and doubtless before, in his father's house, is frequently misquoted, although it is so easy to check the reproduction of any passage from his writings. We were looking, the other day, at the volume of selected essays by J. A. Froude in Dent's "Everyman's Library." It is a good enough selection, though not the one we should have made ourselves. It includes the entertaining essay on "Reynard the Fox," in the course of which Mr. Froude says that "even Iago shows some sort of conscience." If he respects nothing else on earth, he respects his own intellect. After one of his interviews with Roderigo, his conscience calls him to account for keeping such company, and he pleads in his own justification:—

"For I mine own gained knowledge should profan
Were I to waste myself with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit."

That is how the passage is printed in the "Everyman" volume. A glance sufficed to show that the second line, as it stands, was never written by Shakespeare. In a moment or two we recollected the very words of the Master. We verified them, of course, by reference to the text. This then is what Shakespeare wrote:—

"For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane,
If I would time expend with such a snipe,
But for my sport and profit."

(By the way, what a triumph is that same "snipe." These sudden and absolute felicities are so characteristic of Shakespeare. He stands in this respect immeasurably beyond all other writers). * * *

Now that quotation from Shakespeare must have been made by Froude from memory—and a bad memory too, for Iago spent his *time* but did not waste *himself* on Roderigo. Why didn't the essayist turn to the play, find the passage, and quote correctly? One should always do that when one is not positively certain. Probably he was too lazy. It was too much trouble to be accurate. Which is what Froude's sharpest critics always say of him as an historian. And the same thing is said of him on account of his blunders in the *Life of Carlyle*. He couldn't quote accurately, they say, from a document right under his own eyes when he was writing. * * *

We were rather curious as to whether the "Everyman" misquotation might not, after all, be an error of the "Everyman" printers. We therefore pulled down the old four-volume edition of Froude's *Short Studies on Great Subjects* from one of our library shelves, and turned to "Reynard the Fox." The same misquotation was there. Froude was the guilty party. The printers were blameless. * * *

No "reader" had detected that misquotation. No one, apparently, had called Froude's attention to it. Very likely we are the first to notice it—and that after a lapse of some forty or fifty years. Such is human frailty even in the "hupper suckles" of literature. Let none of us boast too much. We are none of us infallible, as Jowett said—not even the youngest. * * *

The point to be remembered is this. If such a misquotation as Froude's from Shakespeare, hundreds of years after the first practice of the art of printing, can stand uncorrected for forty or fifty years, how easy was it for mistakes to creep into copies of manuscripts, when books could only be multiplied by the pen. Let that go on for two or three thousand years, according to Christian chronology, with the oldest extant manuscripts never reaching back within hundreds of years of even the latest events, and what becomes of your "inspired Scripture"? Why, there are thirty thousand various readings of different texts in the New Testament.

G. W. F.

Missionary Mistakes.

For ten years I travelled in the wilds of Africa and saw many missionary encampments among the natives. That they brought civilisation (with all its attendant evils), a measure of education, means to dress wounds and cure stomachaches is true enough, and if that was their aim they succeeded, but as far as converting the heathen savage to Christianity, the whole thing is a sheer farce. Good,

earnest men they are, most of these missionaries, but their native adherents are held to them solely for what they can get out of it, as the missionary will invariably acknowledge after a year or two's disheartening labor.

All the missionaries did and do in Africa up in those wild places is to open up trade for the white man—and trade inevitably means liquor, tawdry clothing, and an unfortunate knowledge of the least desirable attributes of civilisation. Time and again we have seen the childlike innocence and happiness of the natives on an up-country journey, returning two years later to find them cunning, sly, overdressed, greedy—changed for the worse in a hundred ways.—*Times* (Los Angeles).

Obituary.

Death of the late Administrator of the Escuela Moderna.

I deeply regret that it becomes my painful duty to record the death, at his residence in Walthamstow, of Senor Mariano Batllori. Batllori is another victim of the modern Inquisitors in Spain. When I saw him last, in London, three weeks ago, he bore more visibly than ever the marks of the cruelties and privations inflicted upon him, and the other friends and co-workers with Ferrer, during the period of their arbitrary arrest in Barcelona in August, 1909, and their banishment to the mountainous and inhospitable wilds of Ternel.

Batllori's crime was that he was the Administrator of the Escuela Moderna, a witness capable of proving Ferrer's innocence, and, as such, an outlaw and a hunted exile during all the terrible period of the reaction organised by Maura after the events of Barcelona in July, 1909.

Batllori was the tried and trusted friend of Ferrer during the later years of the Martyr's life, and was the intelligent and faithful interpreter of Ferrer's wishes in carrying out the program of the School.

Batllori never recovered from the murderous policy of privation and semi-starvation to which he was subjected during the time of his enforced stay at Ternel. Not content with tampering with their correspondence and stealing the money sent to them in registered letters for the purchase of food, the exiles, including Soledad Villafranca, the learned Anselmo Lorenzo, Cristóbal Litran (afterwards appointed, together with the undersigned, testamentary executor of Ferrer's will), and our friend Batllori, suffered the intense moral agony of being refused the right and the opportunity of tendering their testimony either personally at the court-martial or by affidavit in disculpation of Ferrer at the mock trial. All this preyed on Batllori's kind and sympathetic nature, and impaired his not too vigorous constitution. He was murdered, morally, by the bigots; but they took three years to complete the process.

For some time since these Christian proceedings were enacted, Batllori, who, like the other exiles, was released ultimately, without meeting any accusation or taking trial for any alleged offence, came to England and settled at Walthamstow with his wife and child—a daughter, Hypatia, seven years old. The widow and the orphan are left behind to mourn the loss of a fond husband and a kind father, and we who knew him lament the death of a staunch Freethinker and an ardent friend of the cause of Rationalist education as Ferrer understood it. English Freethinkers will, I am sure, join with me in expressing deepest sympathy with Batllori's widow and child. Batllori's friends in Spain and the two Americas will grieve at his loss.—Wm. HEAFORD.

It is with regret that we record the death of Mrs. Alice Whitmarsh, of Stoke Newington, which occurred on August 15, after a month of severe illness, bravely endured. Mrs. Whitmarsh was a convinced Freethinker and a faithful member of the N. S. S., though latterly circumstances militated against her taking an active part in Freethought propaganda work. She was a sister of Mr. William Davey, a prominent worker in connection with the Kingsland Branch, and a member of the Executive Committee. The interment took place at Chingford Mount Cemetery on Wednesday, August 21, when a Secular Service was conducted at the graveside.—J. T. L.

We are sorry to report that Mr. and Mrs. H. Oakley, of 34a Tyemouth-road, Mitcham, have suffered a grievous bereavement by the death of their eldest child, Henry George William, in the seventh year of his age. Henry George William was an exceptionally promising boy, and a fine intellectual career had already been mapped out for him. He died of heart-failure, after an operation. He was buried in Mitcham Churchyard on Thursday, August 22, and a Secular Service was conducted at the grave.—J. T. L.

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, Miss K. Kough, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

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

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, R. H. Rosetti, "Christian Sects; or, We Are Not Divided"; 7, J. Bellamy, a Lecture.

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, J. Rowney, "Holy Moses and Company."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, E. Burke, "The Present Position of the Bible."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE: THOS. A. JACKSON—*Blackburn* (Market Ground): September 1, at 11, "Who Made God?" at 3, "When I Was in Prison"; at 7, "The Faith of an Infidel"; 2, at 7.30, "The Devil and All His Works." *Bacup* (Town Centre): 3, at 7.30, "Was Jesus a Failure?" *Accrington* (Market Ground): 4, at 7.30, "The Latest Thing in Gods." *Leeds* (Town Hall Square): 5, at 7.30, "Humanity's Debt to the Rebel"; 6, at 7.30, "Primitive Man." *Rochdale* (Town Hall Square): 7, at 7.30, "The Wonders of Life."

WIGAN (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Thursday, August 29, at 8, "Conservatism in Religion"; 30, at 8, "Flagellated by the Past"; September 1, at 7, "Rationalism, Crime, and the Criminal."

ACCRINGTON (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Monday, September 2, at 8, "Behind the Veil"; 3, at 8, "Royal Parasites"; 4, at 8, "Strange Gods."

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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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