

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

"So drink till that."—What drink, because the abyss
Of nothing waits? Because there is for man
But one swift hour of consciousness and light?
No.—Just because we have no life but this,
Turn it to use; be noble while you can;
Search, help, create; then pass into the night.

EUGENE LEE HAMILTON.

Mr. Blatchford's Blunder re Shelley as a Great Poet.

THIS is the third instalment of my reply to Mr. Robert Blatchford's attack on Shelley as a great poet. Some may say that the reply is longer than the attack. It must be so in such cases. Mr. Blatchford simply states his own opinion; his argument is merely an *ipse dixit*; he only dogmatizes. I have to offer various kinds of evidence and demonstration.

If I imitated Mr. Blatchford in discussion I might terminate this debate very speedily. A correspondent wrote to him "that Morris is a second-rate poet, and that Tennyson is a great poet." Mr. Blatchford replied:—

"Very well. Some men know poetry when they read it; other men don't. You are one of the men who don't. I am sorry for you. But that is the sad truth."

Framing my reply upon this polite model, I might say to Mr. Blatchford:—

"Some men appreciate Shelley when they read him; other men don't. You are one of the men who don't. I am sorry for you. But that is the sad truth."

But that is not my way of conducting a controversy.

I do not question Mr. Blatchford's right to hold that Shelley is not a great poet, and I do not object to his saying so. What I object to is the frequent repetition of the statement without a word of justification. This is not good journalism, it is not honest journalism, and it is an insult to his readers, who should be assumed to have some intelligence and self-respect until they prove the contrary. Mr. Blatchford could not possibly act in that way in any other paper than his own. He should not take advantage of the fact that he is master of the *Clarion*. He should remember the fine old maxim—*Noblesse oblige*.

Resuming the thread of my argument in previous instalments of this reply, I have to ask Mr. Blatchford a question which I asked him before, but which he did not answer. Why is he not more diffident in respect to his view of Shelley when he holds it in flagrant opposition to his admitted betters—for such, it must be allowed, are Browning and Swinburne, to say nothing of the other poets who have so enthusiastically praised Shelley as the greatest of English lyrical poets? Mr. Blatchford has a right to regard Shelley as a minor poet; he has a right to say so; but he has no right to expect his readers to take his judgment in preference to that of other men whom he himself offers to them as distinguished poets of the first order. Surely poets must be good judges of poetry. Surely they are better judges—if it is to be merely a question

of judgment—than non-poets; and when the verdict is six to one—with such a six and such an one—surely the case is decided against him.

Mr. Blatchford just declares that Shelley is not a great poet. He offers no evidence except his own opinion. He does not mention the name of anyone who agrees with him. His word is sufficient. He evidently expects his readers to take it. Mr. Blatchford was never too modest, and he has grown oracular.

I wish to be frank and fair. I admit that Mr. Blatchford offered one reason why he might be right and all Shelley's admirers wrong. He likened the false admiration of Shelley to the false admiration of the Bible—as though there were the slightest analogy in the two cases. Children are taught to reverence the Bible; who teaches them to reverence Shelley? They are rather, if anything, taught the contrary. "The fact is," Mr. Blatchford said, "men become obsessed by a reputation—we all do; and they talk wildly—we all do." Perhaps they do—though the number of people who talk wildly about any poet who died a hundred years ago would hardly need much counting. But what answer is it, after all, to say that Browning, Swinburne, Thomson, Landor, etc., talked wildly about Shelley, while Robert Blatchford monopolised the voice of sanity? It is Robert Blatchford's own statement, and is worth—what everybody can see it is worth.

It would scarcely be possible to adopt a more unhappy argument than this of "obsession" in the case of Shelley. When were Englishmen "obsessed" in his favor? They were taught to regard his very name with contempt or hatred, with derision or disgust. Byron's publishers paid him some £40,000 in all. Shelley was never paid a penny for all the masterpieces he poured forth so rapidly during the last six or seven years of his life. It is doubtful whether a single copy of *Prometheus Unbound* was actually sold over the counter. One critic—it is said to have been Theodore Hook—remarked that the volume was well named "*Prometheus Unbound*" for who would ever think of binding it? Where is that cheap-witted gentleman now? And where is Shelley? A copy of the original edition of Shelley's supreme masterpiece would fetch in the open market several times its weight in gold.

"Obsession!" Shelley's reputation had to fight every inch of its way. Admirers and lovers wore his colors in the lists—and were thought as mad and bad as he. But they were of the best, as Shelley's poetry was of the best, and they won "on the merits." Let it be remembered, too, that Shelley's poetry, in the main, could not be separated from his ideas. His name became a rallying cry to the ever-growing few, scattered over the whole land, whose faces were turned from the dark and desolate past to the dawning light of a wiser and nobler future. Young men, with the ideal fermenting within them, lifted up their eyes to the sad-sweet countenance of that more than crucified hero. The evolution of his fame was the work of generations, and it is not completed yet. Mr. Blatchford says that "Shelley could not fail in a time when Byron was the rage." Byron got the £40,000—Shelley's writings dropped still-born from the press. What on earth is Mr. Blatchford writing about? He doesn't know. His fatal defect is

sciolism. He is as accurate about Shelley as he is about Dryden. "Dryden," he says, "thought the eighteenth century poets superior to Chaucer, Milton, Spenser, and Shakespeare." Dryden didn't. That's flat. Dryden never read an eighteenth century poet. He died in May, 1700. Dryden's appreciation of Chaucer may be read in his Introduction to the *Fables*. His praise of Shakespeare as the greatest of poets may be read in a dozen Prefaces to his Plays—and especially in the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*. Why on earth does Mr. Blatchford let himself perpetrate such "howlers"? If one's judgment isn't infallible one might at least master the facts.

The one poet whom Mr. Blatchford seeks to press into his own service is Matthew Arnold. Now the truth is that precisely the qualities which prevented Arnold from appreciating Shelley are those which prevented him from being a great poet himself. He had intellect, taste, style; he lacked fire, passion, enthusiasm. Great poetry excites us, as Landor said, inferior poetry gives us repose. Arnold gives us repose. Nobody ever jumped up from his seat at a line of Arnold's. It was fitting that he should start the "beautiful and ineffectual angel" theory of Shelley. It is the most ridiculous theory of all. Mr. Blatchford endorses it. So much the worse for Mr. Blatchford.

How curious it is that no one ever equals your unenthusiast in belittling your enthusiast. There is a great word about it in Victor Hugo's book on Shakespeare. It is hardly printable in an English journal. But let it come out. It is the jack-mule's hatred of the stallion.

Shelley's lovers will smile at Mr. Blatchford's opinion that "Alastor" is "the highest flight of Shelley's muse." They will smile perhaps more disdainfully at his chaff of "poor Mr. Alastor." If he read the Preface to "Alastor" he would understand how short he fell of wisdom in that poor witticism. And what he says about Shelley's egotism in writing of "the poet" would have been impossible if he had read Shelley's treatise through and understood that it was a reply to Peacock's essay *against* poetry—and had absolutely nothing to do with any poet in particular. Mr. Blatchford's sneer at Shelley in this connection is really disreputable. Shelley's modesty was always doing him an injustice. Not only did he regard Byron as whole mountains above him, but he actually regarded himself as inferior to Tom Moore. The great full organ inferior to the penny whistle!

I have already said that neither Mr. Blatchford nor I can settle the question whether Shelley was a great poet. But as Mr. Blatchford has quoted so will I.

Tennyson, who didn't love Shelley, though he studied him very closely, remarked that some of Shelley's shorter poems were "exquisite." Now I will just take two, vastly different in themes and treatment; two that nobody else could conceivably have written. Here is the first:—

"TO JANE.

The keen stars were twinkling,
And the fair moon was rising among them,
Dear Jane!
The guitar was tinkling,
But the notes were not sweet till you sung them
Again.
As the moon's soft splendor
O'er the faint cold starlight of heaven
Is thrown,
So your voice most tender
To the strings without soul had then given
Its own.

The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later,
To-night;
No leaf will be shaken
Whilst the dews of your melody scatter
Delight.
Though the sound overpowers,
Sing again, with your dear voice revealing
A tone
Of some world far from ours
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one."

No insensitive and untrained ear will extract all the music from that song to Jane Williams. It is a "miracle" of subtle grace and fervor, swimming in a sea of beautiful emotion, under the loveliness and mystery of the heaven of night. Nowhere outside Shakespeare shall we find a short poem of this quality. Its peculiar and exquisite melody grows upon one at every fresh reading.

Now turn to a totally different short poem on "Liberty":—

"LIBERTY.

The fiery mountains answer each other;
Their thunderings are echoed from zone to zone;
The tempestuous oceans awake one another,
And the ice-rocks are shaken round winter's throne,
When the clarion of the Typhoon is blown.

From a single cloud the lightning flashes,
Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around;
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
An hundred are shuddering and tottering; the sound
Is bellowing underground.

But keener thy gaze than the lightning's glare,
And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare
Makes blind the volcanoes; the sun's bright lamp
To thine is a fen-fire damp.

From billow and mountain and exhalation
The sunlight is darted through vapor and blast;
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
From city to hamlet, thy dawning is cast,—
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night
In the van of the morning light."

I don't envy the man who can read that mighty verse without a lifting of the lungs and a throbbing heart. It was a theme and a measure so easily spoiled. But it was in the hands of a master. The genius of Shelley saved it from being grandiose and kept it grand. Just as, in a smaller way, the genius of Hood saved the "Bridge of Sighs" with its perilous measure from being a miserable fiasco.

I must devote one more article to the vindication of Shelley, with the object of gaining him fresh readers—not for his sake, but for theirs.

G. W. FOOTE.

JESUS.

A man asked me the other day if I did not think the religion of the Bible was a good thing for the world. I had to confess that, so far as the Bible defined religion, I thought it was. At once trouble began. He then asked me why I did not support Christianity. I told him that I did not know that Christianity was religion according to the Bible, and quoted to him the only definition of religion in the book: "Pure religion and undefiled.....is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James i. 27). The man said, such a religion as that would not build a church. I agreed with him; but I said it would help the world. I read the Bible to learn what was in it. I did not believe what I was told about it. My teachers told me that the book was divine, that God was its author. After I had read it, I concluded, if the Bible was divine that divinity was not different from humanity, and, if God was its author, that God wrote very much like a man. I found this book human, as far as I could judge, and in no wise above the works of men. I have not changed my opinion in forty years. The only way for a man to find out what the Bible is, is to read it for himself. The so-called Beatitudes of Jesus contain some queer notions. Take the third Beatitude, for instance, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Now, who inherit the earth? Everyone knows that the sons and daughters of the rich inherit the earth, and that the meek get nothing but the cast-off clothing of their wealthy relatives. Meekness to-day is hypocrisy. It is a sneak; a Uriah Heep. Meekness is a counterfeit of modesty, a humbug, a fraud. It is a religious imitation of a great human virtue. The nauseating use of the word Jesus has finally turned the world's stomach. The hymns with the blood of Jesus oozing from them are being condemned even by ministers. The "fountain filled with blood" is running dry owing to the disgust of mankind. The slaughter-house salvation celebrated in sermon and song for so many years is at last being rejected by the awakening sense of decency in humanity. To kill God to save man was once the highest idea of religion. To kill religion to save the truth is now the highest idea of right. Is the truth a better foundation for human life than falsehood? That question leads all others to-day.—L. K. Washburn.

More About the Origin of Life.—II.

(Concluded from p. 594.)

THE *Daily Telegraph*, in its comments on Professor Schafer's address, noted that his deliverance was less guarded, and more emphatic, than when Huxley and Tyndall spoke on the same subject forty years ago. The *Methodist Times*, on the other hand, said that the Professor "displayed a caution which is in marked contrast to Professor Tyndall's over-confidence, and shows how entirely the cruder materialism has been cast aside by the more scientific thought of the present." But whether the Materialism be crude or refined, the essential point is that it is still there. If supernatural intervention is demolished, I really cannot see what it matters to the *Methodist Times* how it is done. A man may be killed by a bludgeon or a stiletto; be dashed to pieces or pass away peacefully under the influence of an overdose of morphia. But the substantial fact is that he is dead. If science shows that there is no room and nothing for Deity to do in the world, it is really of small consequence how this is shown. He may be curtly dismissed, or he may be politely conducted to the confines of the known universe and courteously dismissed with ironical thanks for past services. But the dismissal remains.

The fitness of the editor of the *Methodist Times* to even discuss the subject is seen in the remark, "It may be true that, as the German aphorism puts it, that without phosphorus there is no thought; that is within the narrow range of human experience; although even this is doubtful. But certainly phosphorus and thought are not and cannot be made interchangeable conceptions." Such a comment is almost hopeless in its colossal ineptitude. Because it is laid down that an analysis of living matter and nervous matter shows that, along with numerous other substances, phosphorus is an invariable concomitant, Dr. Scott Lidgett gravely comments that phosphorus is not the same thing as thought. There are two ways in which one may be protected against criticism. One is to know *all* about a subject. This, however, involves labor, and some degree of ability. The other is to know nothing at all about it; to be providentially denied the capacity for understanding it. This is the most complete form of protection. It is acquired without effort, and is impervious to all attack. The critic is powerless before it. He can only retire, marvelling at the completeness with which Nature has fitted Dr. Lidgett to edit a religious paper.

For those who grasp at mere words there were a few crumbs of comfort in Professor Schafer's speech in connection with the use of the word "soul." Most of the religious papers called attention to the fact that the Professor carefully distinguished between "life" and "soul," and drew therefrom the comforting conclusion that at any rate belief in the soul remained untouched. Here are the actual words:—

"Strictly and literally, the words 'animate' and 'inanimate' express the presence or absence of 'soul,' and not infrequently we find the terms 'life' and 'soul' erroneously employed as identical. But it is hardly necessary for me to state that the remarks I have to make regarding 'life' must not be taken to apply to the conception to which the word 'soul' is attached. The problems of life are essentially problems of matter."

Now by this Professor Schafer may have had, and probably did have, two things in mind. First of all there was the primitive meaning of "soul," the double which the savage assumes every person to possess, and which provides the foundation for the more refined conception of the later religionist. In this case the warning uttered would merely indicate that the speaker did not regard life as being separable from the body, but as a mere expression of its functional activities.

The second may have been the perfectly defensible meaning that "soul" covered a more restricted

field of phenomena than that covered by "life." Whatever be the origin or nature of mental phenomena, their existence is unquestioned and unquestionable. They belong to living beings, although all living beings do not possess them. And as a mere descriptive epithet it may be both convenient and permissible to classify mental phenomena under the heading of "Soul," as we class vital phenomena under the heading of "Life." In this respect Professor Schafer was quite correct in saying that his remarks concerning life would not apply to the conception to which the word "soul" was attached. For no one—that is, no one who understands what he is talking about—assumes that chemical analysis will ever show us the nature of an emotion or of an idea, any more than a knowledge of vibration will ever show us the nature of a sensation of redness. It is only religious writers who deal with the subject in this manner. Their ignorance may be real, or it may be assumed, in so dealing with it. Their chief concern is, however, that it pays.

If Professor Schafer were asked the question, he would undoubtedly reply that, in his judgment, psychological phenomena arise out of vital phenomena, as life issues from the non-living. One is built upon the other, and each is dependent on the other. And he might add that you can no more adequately describe psychology in terms of biology than you can adequately describe biology in terms of chemistry. None but a fool would expect it to be otherwise. But how does this help the religionist? The "soul" he requires to support his belief is something that arises out of nothing but itself. It is in the body, but not of the body. It bears about the same relation to the body that the works of a clock does to the case that covers them. And this is the kind of a "soul" with which modern science has nothing whatever to do. It is as useless as a theory to explain mental phenomena as is the assumption of a vital force to explain organic changes, or of aquosity to explain the properties of water. Even the study that arose out of the conception of "soul" has now completely discarded it. Psychology is no longer concerned with the activities of a "soul," but with a series of feelings, emotions, ideas, and their origin in a corresponding series of neural commotions. Modern psychology—untrue to its name—is emphatically a science without a soul.

The *Methodist Times* finds consolation in the fact that when Professor Schafer set on one side supernatural activity, he qualified it by saying there was no "immediate supernatural intervention." The comfort is small, since the phrase is here the equivalent of "at no stage of the cosmic process." It does not imply an ultimate or original creative act, because ultimate or original as implying a beginning is scientific nonsense. The editor of the *Methodist Times* fatuously remarks that the best description of the activity manifested in the universe is "the great declaration 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' The perfect continuity of the whole process in no wise interferes with, but on the contrary strengthens, the ground of the great affirmation." It is difficult to be serious with a man like Dr. Scott Lidgett, but in all seriousness one would ask, How can a process, which, wherever it be examined is always a process, with an illimitable before and an equally illimitable after, be described by a statement that someone or something created it in the beginning? If at no stage of the process are we brought any nearer a beginning, how can we say a beginning describes the process? And how can the perfect, the unbroken continuity of the process, strengthen the affirmation? It is admitted that the process does not disclose anywhere or at any time supernatural intervention. Dr. Lidgett admits this. How, then, in the name of all that is wonderful, can failure to detect supernatural intervention anywhere prove that supernatural intervention must have been there in some unproven and unimaginable beginning? This is the kind of statement that is very widely made, but one need spend

but a few minutes analysing it to realise what unmitigated nonsense it really is. And nonsense remains nonsense whether the one responsible for its utterance be Dr. Scott Lidgett, Professor Alfred Russel Wallace, or Sir Oliver Lodge.

Mr. R. J. Campbell, who is one of the philosophic exponents of current religious mysticism—it seems that anyone can attain this position if their utterances are only sufficiently vague in meaning and indefinite in application—is quite willing to admit that science may show that life has originated through perfectly natural processes. Still, when this is done, “it is as much in the dark as ever as to what lies beyond the confines of sense and experience.” “As to what lies at the back of phenomena, it is as ignorant to-day as in the days of Aristotle.” One is compelled to plead guilty. But if science is destitute of this knowledge, if the scientist cannot, so to speak, pick himself up by the waistband of his trousers and carry himself round the room, can the religious man essay the task with greater success? When will these profound thinkers grasp the simple lesson that the ignorance of science—temporary or permanent—is the ignorance of all. And when will the general public realise that this claim of the religious “mystic” to avenues of information not open to the scientific investigator really belongs to the Dark Ages. Nay, it is a survival from the time when semi-savages, after torturing and drugging the body, mistook their self-induced delusions for divine illumination. The method changes with the age, but the result is the same.

Mr. Campbell, “without being greatly daring,” is still daring enough to make the claim that “the spiritual already knows something of what life is and whence it came.” We are on the verge of great revelations, and we hold our breath in expectation. The revelation is that life “is the forth-putting of the eternal divine substance under temporal conditions and limitations that it may declare its inmost quality.” Oh, sacred and most revered Abracadabra! Most blessed deliverance! But does anyone know what on earth it means? Is it any more than the “forth-putting” of the most delectable nonsense? What it is supposed to mean, one suspects, is that life is the “divine substance.” And the divine substance is—Life. Nothing could be clearer; and one can imagine with what profound admiration the City Temple congregation heard its pastor deliver himself of so tremendous a conclusion. How comforted, too, must they have felt to hear that science cannot affect religion, because “the criteria of religious experience have no dependence whatever upon the findings of science, but are derived from other sources wherein the wise and understanding have no advantage over babes.” Good news for the babes! Through no effort of their own they are, in spiritual matters, on a level with the wise and understanding. In religion the philosopher hath no pre-eminence over the fool. Nay, it may even be that his very folly will earn him the character of a philosopher—of the religious variety.

I have reserved the *New Age's* laboriously inconsequential attack on Materialism for separate treatment.

C. COHEN.

Self-Reliance.

WHY did George Meredith, in a letter of 1870 to Captain Maxse, characterise the “Parsonry” as “these sappers of our strength”? That they exerted no emasculating influence upon him is beyond doubt; but he was profoundly convinced that the general trend of their ministrations was to deprive the community of its intellectual and moral vigor. According to the great novelist, so far are the clergy of all denominations from fortifying the manhood of their followers, that they must be charged with sapping whatever force of character they may naturally possess. This is a serious indict-

ment of a profession that makes such unique claims for itself; and the question naturally arises, Can it be sustained by ample and irrefutable evidence? It will be generally conceded that the Rev. Charles Brown, D.D., minister of Ferme Park Baptist Chapel, London, is a fairly representative Christian teacher; and in the *Baptist Times and Freeman* for September 20 there appears a sermon by him, entitled “The Secret of our Strength,” and based on Ephesians vi. 10: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” As an exposition of that well-known text Dr. Brown's discourse could not have been better; and to those who believe the text, its appeal must be exceedingly effective. Dr. Brown alludes to the timidity and fearfulness which are so characteristic of the majority of people; but the thought never dawns upon him that the lack of self-reliance and courage is the inevitable fruit of the teaching embodied in his sermon.

The two emphatic words of supernatural religion are surrender and trust. People are earnestly exhorted to distrust themselves, to regard themselves as impotent, as worthless worms, and to put their whole reliance upon the vitality and strength of another. Little children are taught to believe that of themselves they can do nothing that is noble and good, that their own powers are mean and despicable, and that unless they repose their trust in one higher and stronger than themselves, they shall be for ever lost. True manliness can never be the result of such unwholesome and deleterious teaching, because it is a teaching that stands in direct contradiction to the nature of things; and there is that in every human being which resents and rebels against it. Dr. Brown asks, “How is it that the lad is too weak to kneel down and say his prayers in new company?” and we answer that the lad shrinks from kneeling down and saying his prayers in any company not because he is weak, but because he instinctively feels that praying is an undignified and unmanly exercise. Almost everyone is ashamed of and makes an apology for his religion in public, because dependence upon another for salvation and strength is an insult to human nature. Sometimes Dr. Brown is not above playing to the gallery by singing the praises of human strength and courage. He says that “we have the power to deal with our weaknesses.” “What do people imply,” he asks, “when they say, ‘I will be brave,’ but this: we can either yield to weakness and fear, or resist and perhaps conquer them?” So he believes that to call upon a man to be strong is to appeal to his reserves of courage and fortitude. But this is sheer mockery, for the preacher immediately proceeds to point out that man can be strong only when arrayed in the strength of another. Here are his own words:—

“The real secret of your fear and your weakness is your lack of faith. Paul is not telling these people to summon up the strength that is in them; he is rather reminding them of the strength that is not theirs, but that may be.....If it were not for God I would have sufficient reason to be weak and to be afraid. Indeed, if it were not for the fact of God, I would not care, and I would not dare to live. I would be such a coward here and now, that I would almost take my own life.”

Dr. Brown ought really to be heartily ashamed of himself. He gives himself the very worst possible character. He virtually confesses that were it not for his faith in God he would be an incarnate fiend. It is as if a man said, “Did I not believe in God and a future life I would burgle your house, or murder you the first chance I had.” Having read the above extract, one can fancy the reverend gentleman expressing himself thus: “It is the Big Policeman away up in the sky, whose eye is ever upon me, that accounts for my being the fairly decent fellow that I am. Were that glaring eye to relax its vigilance for one moment, there is no knowing what unspeakable deeds I would instantly commit.” And he thus depreciates and villifies himself in the full belief that God made him, which, on the lips of a Christian, is a vile blasphemy against both God and himself in one breath.

We do not even suggest that Dr. Brown is not thoroughly Biblical. He could not be more so if he tried ever so hard. His loyalty to the Bible blinds him to the facts of life. Is he not aware that there are five hundred million Buddhists in the world who, on an average, are as honest, conscientious, and philanthropic in their behavior as Christians, and, generally speaking, much happier? And yet Buddhism is a non-Theistic religion. The great Dhammapada, as versified by Dr. Carus, says:—

"No one saves us but ourselves;
No one can, no one may;
We ourselves must walk the path—
Buddhas merely teach the way."

We have the testimony of most reliable witnesses, who speak from first-hand knowledge, that in Ceylon, Siam, Burma, China, and Japan, as well as in other countries, there are countless thousands of men and women living almost ideally noble and beautiful lives on *entirely non-Theistic lines*. But, ignoring all such facts, and speaking from unfathomable prejudice, Dr. Brown talks serene nonsense thus:—

"My friends, the spiritual foes of man are so many and so strong and so skilful and so persistent that, unless God is a reality to you, you will go under. Unless you look away from the things that threaten and the people who perhaps threaten, you will fail. For they are very real, and it is quite certain that right-doing under all circumstances is very difficult, so difficult as to be impossible apart from God. And indeed if God be not a reality, and if he be not presiding over the oft bewildering affairs of life, if we are at the mercy of the mere process of evolution and the sport of a machine called law, it would have been far better for us if we had never been born."

That is enough. One's gorge rises at the nonsense and stuff of it. No wonder people of intelligence and culture decline to listen to it, and never enter church or chapel; and small wonder, as Dr. Brown himself once complained, that those who do attend pay scarcely any heed to it. What an infinite relief it is to turn from such odious twaddle to a rational utterance like this of Emerson's: "Trust thyself; every heart vibrates to that iron string." It is Emerson, too, who quotes the wise saying of Caratach, in Fletcher's *Bonduca*, in answer to the admonition to inquire the mind of the god Audate:—

"His hidden meaning lies in our endeavors;
Our valors are our best gods."

"Our valors are our best gods"; and there are no others. How apt, also, is the popular adage, "God helps those who help themselves." Help of the helpless there is none. God's interference in human affairs is insusceptible of any sort of demonstration. Those who cannot help themselves of necessity go under. No God of love and mercy ever looks near them. Those who *can* help themselves become comparative conquerors in the strife. If Dr. Brown will allow himself to honestly face the facts he will be compelled to admit that this is true. The God of Christendom is either asleep or non-existent; and in either case to believe in and preach him is vanity of vanities. If he existed and were awake London alone would be his eternal damnation. Our repulsive, disease-inviting slums; our West-end, with its enervating luxuries and mind-obscurating pleasures; our East-end, with its grinding poverty and sweated industries; our debased criminals at both ends; our asylums, reformatories, and prisons, all crowded, side by side with our churches and chapels,—are these proofs or symptoms of the active existence of a God who cares and loves and is touched with a feeling of our city's enormous infirmities and sufferings, of a God who watches over the paths of men and seeks to make them straight? O how shockingly easy it is for a well-paid minister to talk eloquently about a God who loves and cares and sympathises to a congregation of comfortably-off and well-dressed people, forgetful of the fact that oppression and injustice, high-handed inhumanity and black-hearted cruelty, shameful vices and degrading iniquities, flourish almost unchecked on every hand.

The simple truth is that, taking them as a class, the clergy of all denominations are, as Meredith

called them, "sappers of our strength." By summoning us to abnegate ourselves and entrust our destinies to supernatural agents, they are guilty of endeavoring to induce us to dissipate our strength through alien and useless channels, so that we shall have none left to further our interests and secure our welfare as denizens of the earth. Our duty, therefore, is to dissociate ourselves from these ghostly advisers, give them their polite but firm congè, and devote ourselves to the glorious mission of cultivating our bodily and mental strength, and consecrating it to the service of earth. As the Buddha said to his disciples, so let us say to ourselves and to one another continually, that self-reliance, trust in self in harmonious relations with all other selves, is a primary and essential condition of individual and social well-being, convinced that they who seek to lure us away from this scientific and fundamental truth are "sappers of our strength" and enemies of society.

J. T. LLOYD.

"Curse God and Die."

THIS was the advice given by his wife to Job when he was in the midst of his troubles, and it is pregnant with a mighty truth for us to-day. It matters not what profession or trade or occupation or social sphere a man may be in, if he goes the length of even ignoring or denying the authority of, far less cursing, God he will to all intents and purposes *die*. That is to say, he will be a negligible quantity in the world, an unconsidered unit, a nonentity.

Job was wiser than his wife. Notwithstanding all his troubles, he knew that the supernatural would ultimately hold sway with his adversaries. He knew human nature better than she did. His contemporaries would eventually recognise the hand of God in his affairs when the turn came from adversity to prosperity. God is good to his own. He does not forget his Booths and Torreys and Jowetts and Hortons, though he may subject them to temporary chastisement. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." But the chastening is only *temporary*. The men of God, the ambassadors whom he sends into the world to proclaim his message to humanity, always in the end come out top dogs.

The Christian always cherishes the conviction that he will get the better of those who disagree with him. He nurses an implacable hatred against his opponents even when the waves of adversity are going over his head, because, of course, his trust is in the living God—the God of Battles—the Lord of Hosts. So his great aim and object is to secure the temporal power, the co operation of the civil authorities to impose his views on the great mass of the people. And it must be admitted that he has shown considerable ingenuity in these directions.

There is no tyranny like the tyranny of supernaturalism. The unknown is always feared by ignorant people; and when supernatural authority is represented by kings and emperors and governments, the masses fall upon their faces and cry: "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

The most satisfactory feature of the present age to thinking people is the decay of clericalism, which has done so much, in association with tyrants and oppressors, to keep the great masses of the peoples of all countries in subjection and ignorance. The power of the priest and parson is every day becoming weaker and weaker. As we become more enlightened, we are the less obsessed by the dogmas and superstitions which are the stock-in-trade of the priestly crew. Religionists cannot now, with any courage, insist upon the dogmas of thirty years ago. They take refuge in a "New Theology." They speak of "natural religion." They clothe their belief with such a name as "philosophic idealism." Science goes calmly and inexorably on her course, compelling the Churches to depart from this and the other essential. The Churches are no longer in a position to speak with authority, because a greater and

increasing number of persons are thinking for themselves. We have no longer Christian apostles, but merely Christian apologists. A religion that has to be so much apologised for is surely not of much worth.

It is not necessary for any one of us to curse God to die. To deny him, or even confess that we know nothing about him, is enough. British society still loves a lord, a king, and a God; and it will take a very long time to convince men that they individually have a naturally inherent right to stand up in respect of their own manhood and claim individual independence of thought, speech, and action.

The thinking man loves freedom. The unthinking man is always a parasite and submissive to authority. From the latter we can never look for a "divine discontent." He licks the boot that kicks him. The difference between the believer and the unbeliever is just the difference between the slave and the freeman. When Abraham Lincoln was contending for freedom and the maintenance of the Union in America, he emphasised the principle for which Thomas Paine had done battle: namely, that the Constitution of the United States, in essence, meant that all men were equal.

Gods and kings and overlords have always been bullies and tyrants. But there are a great number of the people who do not yet realise the fact that "They toil not neither they do they spin." The workers in all lands produce the wealth of the earth, and bring their tributes to the feet of bullying and ungrateful masters, who seem to imagine they have an indisputable right to control and exploit the labors of the common people. And the clerics, because it pays them, support and commend this system of slavery.

The kings and overlords who rule us are, of course, the vice-regents of God, and to curse one is to curse the other. When we do curse one or the other, we in effect die. We can command no influence; we sacrifice all prospects of worldly success; and we deprive ourselves of all hope of promotion in our particular profession or trade. But it shall not always be so. Supernaturalism is losing its grip. And in some early age to come a man will be accepted on his personal merits and value without reference to his belief. Meanwhile, the old saying of Job's wife in most cases holds good, and a man may be assured that if he curses God he will die—to all intents and purposes.

SIMPLE SANDY.

A MALEVOLENT VERSIFIER.

Infidel! who with thy finite wisdom,
Would'st grasp things infinite, and dost become
A scoffer of God's holiest mysteries;
Behold this rock, then tremble and rejoice—
Tremble! for, He who formed these mighty rocks
Could in His justice crush thee where thou art;
Rejoice! that still His mercy spares thee.

21st March, 1831.

J. PHIPPS.

The above lines are cut deeply in the face of one of the "High Rocks" near Tunbridge Wells. The workings of the pietist's brain are staggering. Here the innocent tripper is adjured to "rejoice" and be grateful because God, in his justice, could crush him where he stands, but doesn't, as his mercy leads him to spare the infidel visitor!—E. B.

SOUNDED LIKE HIM.

They tell a story out my way about a Kansan who, in the old days when Mark Hanna was prominent, went to church, took his seat in a rear pew, and went to sleep. When he woke up, he awoke with a start, and he must have thought himself at a political meeting.

The minister had just thundered, "To him that hath shall be given and to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

"Who said that?" asked the bewildered politician, who had just awakened.

The minister stopped, looked at the sleepy interrupter, and then said laconically, "Mark."

"Well," said the politician, "it sounds like Hanna."—Victor Murdock, "Judge."

Acid Drops.

There is an old stage trick which generally has a great success if properly played, but it needs a full house and the possibility of much excitement. There is a delay in lifting the curtain, and the audience shows signs of impatience; there is more delay, and the audience grows still more impatient; at length the curtain *must* be raised or the house will be torn down; and when it is raised the popular actor, the hero of the play, stands ready to take his big reception and begin the drama. So all's well that ends well, and all the better for threatening to end otherwise. We repeat, it is an old trick, and it serves also for performances that do not take place in ordinary theatres. This year's liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius took place at Naples. The glass phial containing the saint's coagulated blood was carried to the high altar, the cathedral was crowded, the congregation knelt in prayer, but it was two hours before the old saint's gory relic would condescend to liquefy and turn a brilliant red. By that time impatience had passed into anger, but the miracle was performed just in the nick of time, and the long delay only served to heighten the excitement. The cheers and shouts of the credulous mob were worth hearing: worth a priest's hearing, we mean. And all is gay now in Naples. The war is going to end soon, and the threatened eruption of Vesuvius has been postponed *sine die*.

The phial containing St. Januarius's clotted blood will never be submitted to a scientific test. Every sensible man knows that the liquefaction is a chemical trick—done by the priests. They can work it or not, just as they please. They threatened that it shouldn't take place when Garibaldi took Naples. At any other time he would have laughed at them. But he didn't want any religious trouble just then, especially with the Catholic multitude. He therefore told the priests, in his own way, that the miracle would *have* to happen,—and it came off all right.

Dr. E. Cobham Brewer—a reverend gentleman who was really an Agnostic, and wrote Freethought articles over the signature of "Julian"—states in his *Dictionary of Miracles* that the same incident occurred in the days of Napoleon. "When Murat was King of Naples," Dr. Brewer says, "the blood would not liquefy; whereupon the Frenchmen planted two cannons opposite St. Gennaro, and told the bishop he would blow the church to pieces unless he performed the 'miracle.' The bishop protested it could not be done; but, seeing that Murat was in earnest, he produced the liquefaction as usual."

Saint Januarius is supposed to have been put to death on September 19, 309. No doubt his story is as authentic as that of most of the early Christian martyrs. His blood must be the most ancient on earth. It would be a great pity to lose it, but we suppose it is bound to vanish when the world gets wiser.

The Rev. Dr. Horton is determined, at whatever cost, to set the world right on the subject of the origin of life. A few months ago he assured his public that all great scientists are believers in God and the spiritual interpretation of the universe. The majority of present-day scientists are not great, because they are not supernatural believers. "In view of the extraordinary proceedings at the British Association," we are informed by a special advertisement, this omniscient man of God was going to preach at Lyndhurst-road last Sunday evening on "Our Heavenly Origin." Professor Schafer must in future hide his diminished head, and be content to be known as "that rather noisy man" who at the Dundee meetings of the British Association indulged in empty but "noisy dogmatism." Now that the man who knows has spoken *ex cathedra*, all others must bow their heads and keep silence!

Mr. R. J. Campbell is more wary than his brother of Lyndhurst-road. Speaking on the same Sunday at the City Temple, he admitted that, after all, "Professor Schafer may be right." "I do not say that he is," he added, "I only suggest that he may be." The oracle of the City Temple is a notorious compromiser; his theology is conveniently very pliant; and he comforted his followers by declaring that, if Professor Schafer is right, "the situation from the religious standpoint is in no wise altered." Of course not; Christian ministers cannot afford to let God go; he is their stock-in-trade. He may be only a figurehead, like many a monarch; but the sky-pilot cannot possibly get on without him.

Mr. R. J. Campbell cannot leave the problem of evil alone, though on several occasions he has confessed his inability to

solve it. Now, however, being a spiritual man, he claims to be in possession of a higher, deeper, and broader knowledge of life than that to which the mere scientist is capable of attaining. He *knows* that life "is the forth-putting of the eternal divine substance under temporal conditions and limitations that it may declare its inmost quality." We have no hesitation in pronouncing this utterance, in words used by Dr. Chalmers Mitchell at the recent meetings of the British Association, "mere verbal nonsense." But to Mr. Campbell's metaphysical mind, it is highest wisdom, and in its light he is enabled to inform us that evil "is the negative which calls out the Divine affirmative, the resistance which enables the good to flame into sublimity." How illuminating, and how wonderfully complimentary to the "eternal Divine substance"! Had the "eternal Divine substance," in its infinite goodness, seen fit to "forth-put" Mr. Campbell a million years earlier, what a different world we would have been living in to-day!

To see Christian Apologetics at its very worst and absurdest we only need to consult the *British Congregationalist* for September 19, in which there is an article, entitled "The Crown of the Year," from the pen of the Rev. J. Ossian Davies. Mr. Davies is an evangelical sentimentalist, who does not understand the art of reasoning. He says that "men who never acknowledge the existence of God when the harvest is abundant, are the first to blame him when it is below the average." We have never met such men, and our inference is that, if they exist, they are lukewarm Christians inside the Churches. Atheists never dream of blaming God, of whom they know nothing; they only point out what a curious character the Christian God is, and how badly he treats the people who believe in him. The Atheist's logic is perfectly sound; it is Mr. Davies's logic that is out of plumb. This man of God alleges that his Lord never breaks his word, be appearances what they may, which is utterly false, if the Bible promises were ever made by him.

The queerest thing of all is the apology Mr. Davies offers for a bad harvest. It is so completely out of harmony with modern thought that we venture to reproduce it as a specimen of what people used to believe in times of ignorance and superstition:—

"Granted that the harvest, owing to floods and storms, is not quite up to the average, what then? Has not the Highest Intelligence the highest reasons for all his actions? God's physical providences are designed to have a bearing on man's moral character, for his great government is carried on for moral and religious ends. Physical calamities were sent as a punishment upon the iniquity of Israel; and if by permitting a few cornfields or hayfields to spoil, the Lord is disciplining his moral creatures and opening their eyes to see that the royal sceptre is in a Divine hand, then we have no right to complain. How much is man better than a cornfield?"

No, alas, superstition, in some of its lowest forms, is not dead yet. How much better is civilised man than the savage who worships the skull of his father?

It is clear, says the *Methodist Times*, that the ranks of those who are fighting for the maintenance of the English Sunday are now receiving strong reinforcements from the side of Labor. We do not know, and we should like proof of the statement before accepting it. Certain labor politicians may find that it suits their game to play up to the Sabbatarians; but if by Labor is meant the laboring classes, we may point out that the complaint of the Churches is that it is the laboring classes that are drawn away from church and chapel by Sunday entertainments. We do not believe that Labor is interested in preserving the English Sunday. The sooner that is dead and buried the better. What Labor is interested in is a day of rest—which is a different thing altogether. It is true that Sabbatarians, by confusing the two things, get support from those who would not otherwise give it; but that is in consequence of cunning on the one side and short-sightedness on the other. And the way to prevent people working more than six days per week is simple and obvious. A ten-hour day and a Saturday half-holiday were secured without the assistance of either Church or Chapel, and it would be strange indeed if working men cannot retain what they already have without religious assistance.

The *Era* has taken a poll of the actors and actresses in Great Britain on the question of the Sunday closing of theatres and music-halls, with the following result:—

For theatres and halls to be shut	2,834
For picture palaces to be shut	2,265
For theatres and halls to be open	128
For picture palaces to be open	678

The first two sets of figures are what might have been

expected. The third set is rather surprising. The fourth set is quite astonishing. It shows a considerable spread of common sense amongst actors and actresses. After all, however, it is not the opinion of professionals that will prevail in this matter, but the opinion of the great body of the British public.

Mrs. Wilks, a suffragette, won't pay her taxes, and Mr. Wilks is taken to prison for her non-payment. Is not this carrying vicarious atonement a good deal too far?

The following announcement was clipped from a morning newspaper:—

"Mrs. Brown Potter will, on Sunday, September 29, give the first of a series of lectures before the International Club for Psychical Research, on Hindu occultism. These lectures, it is announced, are the result of prolonged and serious study of the subject as systematised by the adepts of the Gosainthan Temple, situated 16,000 feet above the level of the sea in the Himalayas."

What on earth can it matter what Mrs. Brown Potter has to say on this subject? Mrs. Annie Besant already tells the world more than it wants to know about it. What special virtue, also, is there in the geographical altitude at which those Hindu monks supply their special brand of wisdom? Still, we dare say the lady will "catch on." Wasn't it Carlyle who declared that the population of England was forty millions—and few of them philosophers?

The modern Evangelist (some of them are actually mentioned in the same breath with the great John Wesley) is wonderfully keen in business, and complaints are beginning to be made by some of his victims. Rev. Dr. Gray, head of the Bible Institute at Chicago, in a speech before the National Conference of Evangelists on September 20, declared that the modern Evangelist was a mere money-grubber. This caused a heated discussion, but Dr. Gray was supported by the Rev. M. Taylor, of Indianapolis, who declared that successful Evangelists were no better than political "grafters, who were out for money, and saw that they got it before they delivered the goods."

The *Outlook* is an American religious journal, founded and for years edited by Henry Ward Beecher, and now conducted conjointly by Dr. Lyman Abbott and ex-President Roosevelt. The former is a highly respected Congregational minister who succeeded Beecher in the pastorate of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, while the latter is notorious for his profession of piety. Dr. Mark A. Matthews is a Presbyterian clergyman, who claims that his denomination "has a representative form of Church policy which has moulded nations and will yet mould the world, and doctrines to which all the ecclesiasticisms will some day surrender"; and in a recent Sunday morning sermon this much-to-be-envied man of God openly "attacked the editors of the *Outlook*, calling them a bunch of heretics." Then, arriving at a magnificent climax, he exclaimed: "If you young ministers continue to read the *Outlook*, you will have theological meningitis, sociological neuritis, and political gastritis." What an ineffable boon it will be to be able to say of the religion which produces such obnoxious characters that it is dead and buried. And the more orthodox a Christian is the more intolerant and hateful he proves to be.

Dear old "Nunquam" is in an indescribably sorry plight. That superior person who edits the *Christian Commonwealth* has taken to preaching to him; and the sermon reads like a comic farce. Here is a specimen: "The God you ignorantly (forgive us!) worship, *Him* declare we unto you." Stupendous is the arrogance of ignorance masquerading as knowledge. It is too late in the day now for such odious disguise to pass undetected.

A Glasgow pulpiteer is reported to have chosen texts, on a recent Sabbath, which greatly "illuminated the character of God, and drew aside the cloud-curtain that concealed the throne." How thankful we should be if we could see or hear those texts just once. Where are they to be found? We have studied the Bible carefully, and are quite sure they are not there. All we know is that God's character needs a lot of illuminating before it can be made visible at all; and as for the throne, if it exists, it has never once been occupied. We fear the Glasgow minister has been misrepresented.

The *New Age* seems to be laying itself out for quite a religious crusade against Atheism and Materialism. Mr. Cohen is dealing with its recent article on Professor Schafer's address and the social consequences of Materialism in our next issue. Meanwhile we may note that Mr. Belfort

Bax contributes to the *New Age* for September 19 a very pungent letter on what he rightly calls its demagogic bid "for the support of religious hypocrisy in the claptrap and illogical attempt to discredit Materialism as a philosophic doctrine." Mr. Bax also says that "It is the Atheist and the Materialist who have always been in the vanguard of the Socialist movement, as of all modern progress." To this the *New Age*, with a sublime disregard of the facts, retorts that "the Atheist and the Materialist have usually been in the rear or, still more often, on the other side," and says that the prominence of Atheists and Materialists in the Socialist movement accounts for its non-progress. This is sheer chapel rant, and we should like the *New Age* to offer proof—if it would condescend to anything so commonplace—of the first statement, which is plainly a statement of fact, and so open to decisive proof or disproof. So far as Socialism is concerned, without attempting to measure its progress, it is plain that the contributions of Atheists and Materialists to its existence have been vital. From Robert Owen to William Morris, to keep to this country, the outstanding names in the history of Socialism are those of Freethinkers. And in France, Germany, and Italy the record is still more decisive. We advise the *New Age* not to take hysteria for history, and declamation for philosophic generalisation.

Here is the Rev. Dr. Orchard's recipe for prayer:—

"Put yourself into some attitude of earnest repose, get upon your knees, or stand with outstretched arms, or even walk about your room or out of doors, and then speak your desires, yes, and your questionings, your fears, your expostulations. Do it often and regularly. I am confident of the result."

So are we. Do all this regularly and often, and, provided you commence your training with the conviction of getting a certain result, you will arrive at the conclusion—to use the religious jargon—that "you are in touch with God." But this is no more than an induced delusion. Let anyone as carefully nourish the conviction that he is troubled with a weak digestion, let him read all the symptoms that manifest themselves in such a case, let him commence a meal with a feeling of dread and finish in terror, let him do this often and regularly, and we, too, are confident of the result. Delusion takes many forms, and Dr. Orchard seems to us quite unable to discriminate between a description of the machinery of its production and a demonstration of the objective reality of its visions.

Mr. Harold Begbie objects to the usual description of Belfast as a religious city. He asks why is this city singled out "for the highest honor that can be bestowed upon the habitations of men." Whether it is the highest honor is a matter of opinion. For our part, we should consider it a very left-handed compliment indeed. Mr. Begbie's objection to Belfast being called a religious city is that people quarrel there, they are sweated there, there are slums there, and there is immorality. Above all, it "prosperes on the labor of children." Therefore it is not a religious city, and English people are "amazed to discover that Belfast is not a tolerable imitation of Zion."

Mr. Begbie gives the English credit for more simplicity than they possess. We undertake to say that there are not a hundred people in the British Isles who are amazed on discovering that sweating and child labor and slums and quarreling and immorality exist in Belfast. They would, indeed, be amazed if these things were non-existent in Belfast. They do not call Belfast a religious city because they believe none of these evils to exist there. They call it religious because it is religious. Christians of one sort or another have it all their own way. It is true the Christians are divided into two main groups, and it is true they fight. But their fighting does not prove them to be without religion. It proves they have too much of it. The chief inspiration of Orangeism—which is as brutal and as debased a thing as ever man harbored—is religion. Each party believes fervently in its own religion, and is as ready to talk nonsense to bolster it up as Mr. Begbie is to talk nonsense to bolster up his religion. Mr. Begbie's method of classification is simple, but silly. If a city is filled with everything that is admirable, it is religious; if with everything objectionable, it is without religion, and he hands it over to the Atheist. The old plan was to say that all unbelief led to evil. The later plan is to label everything that is good religious, and leave people to draw their own conclusions about the rest. Of the two plans, we prefer the earlier. It was more straightforward, and it was more courageous. The other plan is inspired by cowardice, and stinks of hypocrisy.

As was to be expected, the Catholics are not slow in making capital out of the Trades Union vote on Secular

Education; nor are they over-scrupulous in their statements concerning it. A writer in the *Catholic Times* for Sept. 20 says that the point to be remembered is, that "the majority of the votes at a Trades Union Congress have been registered against Secular Education." This may be a point for Catholics to state, but it is none the less untrue. The Congress was never asked to express an opinion for or against Secular Education. Delegates had been asked that question on several other occasions, and had overwhelmingly pronounced in favor of the policy of Secular Education. All they were asked was to refrain from discussing the subject in future. But the past votes of the Congress remain on record, and nothing but a deliberate reversal of those votes can expunge the record. Catholics knew that was not possible, and so induced some delegates to vote with them on the ground that if the vote were repeated year after year it would lead to secession. That is all there is in it.

Meanwhile, we invite the serious attention of Trades Unionists generally to this significant fact. The Secretary of the "National Conference of Catholic Trades Unionists" writes that they are admittedly fighting a Catholic battle. He says that their "Catholic orthodoxy is guaranteed by the approval of the Hierarchy," and calls on all Catholic Trades Unionists to "assist us to stem the tide of Secularism and Socialism." Had this kind of speech been made before the Congress, it is fairly certain that the vote to delete the topic of Secular Education would never have been carried. It remains to be seen whether the next Congress will submit to a policy that is engineered, behind the scenes, by the "Catholic Hierarchy," and help, unwittingly, to fight a Catholic battle against Secularism and Socialism.

The Yom Kippur services terminated on Saturday evening (Sept. 21) with the most impressive Jewish prayers and a blast on the holy Shofar (a ram's horn). The holy Shofar has been blown on some great occasions. It was blown in the Portuguese synagogue at Amsterdam when the assembled faithful of the House of Israel excommunicated the one modern man who stands highest amongst them as a representative of European thought. His name was (and is, for it is immortal) Baruch Spinoza. He had broken away from his father's creed, and he was driven out from his father's people. They cursed him with a long and dreadful malediction, and blew the ram's horn over it so to make sure that it "took"—as is now said of vaccination. Perhaps our readers would like to see, or hear, the way in which such cursing was done in those days. Here it is:—

"By the sentence of the angels, by the decree of the saints, we anathematise, cut off, curse, and execrate Baruch Spinoza, in the presence of these sacred books with the six hundred and thirteen precepts which are written therein, with the anathema wherewith Joshua anathematized Jericho; with the cursing wherewith Elisha cursed the children; and with all the cursings which are written in the Book of the Law; cursed be he by day, and cursed by night; cursed when he lyeth down, and cursed when he riseth up; cursed when he goeth out, and cursed when he cometh in; the Lord pardon him never; the wrath and fury of the Lord burn upon this man, and bring upon him all the curses which are written in the Book of the Law. The Lord blot out his name under heaven. The Lord set him apart for destruction from all the tribes of Israel, with all the curses of the firmament which are written in the Book of this Law. There shall no man speak to him, no man write to him, no man show him any kindness, no man stay under the same roof, no man come nigh him."

That was something like a curse,—and they meant it. The date was 1656. Some two hundred and fifty years have rolled by since. The curse which then was tragic would now be comic. And the good old ram's horn would be too absurd for words. What a change! Yes, the world *does* move. It goes round, and the rabbis have to go round with it.

Rev. W. H. Shaw has lost his case in the Cheltenham County Court. He dismissed his cook, Mrs. Clara Curtis, for refusing to attend family prayers. The butler was sent to fetch her, but she declined to go, saying "I'll not serve God in the dining-room and the devil in the kitchen." Thereupon she was summarily dismissed. But she claimed wages in lieu of notice, and the judge gave her the verdict, with costs, on the ground that it was not a lawful command that she had disobeyed. Parson Shaw must feel a lot smaller than he did.

Rev. Arthur Manners Chichester, Sandwich, Kent, left £3,435. "But that's not much," as Othello says of another matter. The next case is a bigger one. Rev. Arthur White, Exmouth, Devon, left £22,980. How will he get through the needle's eye with a hump like that?

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, September 29, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester; at 3, "What is Man?" at 6.30, "What is God?"

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

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £199 17s. 7d. Received since:—J. de B. (S. Africa), £10; Port Sunlight "Saints," 10s.; N. C. Himmel, 5s.; Wm. Broadbent, 10s.; John Summers, 5s.; Mrs. Summers, 2s. 6d.

JOHN BLAND says of his subscription to our Fighting Fund: "It is not much, but if every 'saint' does his or her best a great deal will be accomplished. I am only sorry I cannot give more, as you and the cause deserve every sympathy and assistance. Now is the time for every Freethinker to help to kill the reactionary policy of the London County Council."

R. H. ROSETTI.—As you were the lecturer and Miss Pankhurst acted as chairman, receiving a summons from the L. C. C. in consequence, we quite understand that you have a personal interest, as well as an interest of principle, in the forthcoming battle; not, of course, that the personal interest is any more than an accidental adjunct to the other.

S. HULME.—Full details of Mr. Foote's lectures at Manchester are published, according to our custom, in this week's *Freethinker*. Some of the details were published last week.

E. BURKE.—Pleased to see your able letter in the *Bowes Park Weekly News*. It has always been a wonder to us that Freethinkers like yourself, who are able to write, do not make more frequent use of their local press.

W. A. WILLIAMS.—We don't see why Free Libraries should have their papers free, but we are willing to send the *Freethinker* on those terms to meet the objection you refer to. Perhaps you will show this as your authority for the statement. Glad to hear that we have so many appreciative readers at Port Sunlight, and that you are specially enjoying the articles on Shelley.

W. H. HICKS.—You are right. We hope we shall win, but we must fight.

W. MILROY.—You did not give your son's initials; we had to acknowledge accordingly.

W. BROADBENT.—The matters are such as we had better write you upon personally. Perhaps you would make a point of seeing us after one of the lectures at Rusholme-road to-day (Sept. 29).

E. B.—Many thanks.

W. W. MOORE.—You will see particulars of Mr. Foote's lectures on this page of the *Freethinker*.

H. R. E.—The evidence of Shakespeare's Atheism cannot be presented in a sentence. Your Christian friend cannot be answered in that way.

W. STAWART.—We have no pillory for lecturers who don't keep engagements. Your complaint should be addressed to the N. S. S. Executive.

M. PANKHURST.—Thanks to the West Ham Branch for practical help in what you call the "fight for true liberty."

JOHN SUMMERS (AND WIFE), subscribing to the President's Fund, say "It's the noblest act we have engaged in. We were both at one time ardent supporters of the supernaturalist idea, but are to-day happy and enthusiastic Freethinkers. Accept our most hearty thanks for your almost 'superhuman' efforts for the emancipation of the human intellect." This correspondent says that *The Shadow of the Cathedral* can be bought at Smith's bookstalls at 1s.

B.—Shelley's Essay on Christianity was only an embryo piece of writing, and not even finished at that. Mrs. Shelley published it after his death. He would write differently now in the light of modern criticism.

AVON DALY.—Freethinkers are taking a gratifying interest in the Shelley articles.

F. RICH.—Will write you.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's first lectures this winter season will be delivered to-day (Sept. 29) at the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester. The afternoon lecture at three o'clock will be on "What is Man?" with special reference to Professor Schafer's presidential address to the British Association. The evening lecture at half-past six will be on "What is God?" with some reference to the "God" that Sir Edward Carson runs at Belfast.

London "saints" will turn to the advertisement in this week's *Freethinker* of the new course of Sunday evening lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall. The October subjects are all up-to-date, and such as should excite interest in liberal-minded outsiders as to how they may appear in the light of Freethought. Small printed announcements of these lectures can be obtained from Miss Vance, at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. They are of a suitable size for easy distribution in the ordinary friendly and social intercourse.

The next "social" under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive will take place on Thursday evening, October 17, at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street. Members of the N. S. S. have the privilege of introducing a friend. Non-members who are unable to get introduced in that way can apply for a free admission ticket to the N. S. S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at 2 Newcastle, street, E.C. These "socials" are considered very enjoyable functions.

The N. S. S. Annual Dinner is fixed for Tuesday evening, January 14, at the Holborn Restaurant. Full particulars will appear in due course.

Mr. J. W. Gott sends us another glowing account of the success of the Northern Tour. Night after night crowds assemble to hear the Gospel of Freethought, and Mr. Jackson's lectures find general "acceptation"—as they say in religious circles. In breaking new ground at Leigh they received a good deal of support from the local Socialists. The meetings at Accrington are bumpers, and after two or three hours the people seem ready to wait till after breakfast. One opponent at Nelson referred to the old days of G. J. Holyoake and Joseph Barker, and complained that people listen now to what they shut their ears to then. Sunday's meetings at Burnley survived the deliberate noise of the Salvation Army. Eighty copies of the *Freethinker*, besides other literature, were sold in the evening.

Matters are going on behind the scenes in relation to the London County Council's attack upon the immemorial right of taking up collections at *bona fide* meetings of *bona fide* Societies in London. We are not, however, in a position to make any public announcement at present. We must confine ourselves in this paragraph to calling upon Freethinkers to support our Fighting Fund, which will have to bulk much more largely to justify us in starting expensive litigation.

Miss Vance has succeeded in obtaining an N. S. S. badge which is a great improvement on the first one, and will not fade as that did. The enamel is permanent and the color is guaranteed to last. The price is sixpence. Miss Vance will be glad to receive an influx of orders.

An appreciative reader and good friend of this journal and its editor writes to us from South Africa:—

"I enclose herewith ten pounds (£10) as a contribution from my wife and myself to the President's Honorarium Fund. On account of the backward state of the Fund we send £10 instead of our usual £4 4s. Our united good wish goes with the money. It is a pity that the response to your appeal should prove so disappointing just when you are being drenched by a wave of reaction. I have been expecting this wave for some years, and am interested to find that you foresaw its coming twenty years ago. Even in South Africa signs are not wanting to show that we will feel its wash not less than Australia and the Americas."

This correspondent belongs to a Boer family and was educated in England. He was for his own people during the war, but when it was over he wished, as we did, that Boer and Briton might settle down together and cripple the priests and civilise the country. We are delighted at his wife's joining in this subscription.

Our Fighting Fund.

[The object of this Fund is to provide the sinews of war in the National Secular Society's fight against the London County Council, which is seeking to stop all collections at the Society's open-air meetings in London, and thus to abolish a practically immemorial right; this step being but one in a calculated policy which is clearly intended to suppress the right of free speech in all parks and other open spaces under the Council's control.]

Previously acknowledged, £18 18s. 6d. Received since:—Mr. and Mrs. G. Bazin, 5s.; R. H. Rosetti and H. Pankhurst, 4s.; John Bland, 2s. 6d.; L. Gjemre, £1; H. Lupton, 10s.; A. Vanderhout, 5s.; A. P., 2s. 6d.; Oliver Bartlett, 1s.; W. H. Hicks, £1 1s.; W. Milroy and Son, 10s.; Wm. Broadbent, 5s.; J. Barry, 5s.; A. W. Hutty, 2s.; West Ham Branch (Collection), 11s.; H. M. and E. Dymond, 5s.; E. and M. Pankhurst, 2s.; H. Saill, 5s.; B., 1s.; F. Rich, 3s.; W. Dodd, 10s.

The Supernatural.—III.

(Concluded from p. 604.)

"If any conclusion can fitly be drawn from a comparison of the religious notions of savages with the religious notions of civilised races, which are really alike only in being called by a common name, it is the conclusion that a process of contraction, thinning, and refinement, which has gone on so long and so steadily, will continue to go on with the advancing development of the human mind, until spirits are squeezed and refined out of existence."

"The history of supernaturalism in human belief, like the history of the individual, is its character. That history, when read with honest candor, is a condemnation; since it is, for the most part, a tragical story of the continued doings of the worst things, notwithstanding continually wasted aspirations after, and professions of, the best things."—H. MAUDSLEY, M.D., *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, 1887, pp. 363-373.

"Every rustic who delivers in the village alehouse his slow, infrequent sentences, may help to kill or keep alive the fatal superstitions which clog his race. Every hard-worked wife of an artisan may transmit to her children beliefs which shall knit society together, or rend it in pieces. No simplicity of mind, no obscurity of station, can escape the universal duty of questioning all that we believe."—PROFESSOR W. K. CLIFFORD, *Lectures and Essays*, 1886, p. 343.

"The negation of the Supernatural has become an absolute dogma for every cultured spirit."—RENAN, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 367.

MESSRS. GURNEY and Myers compiled five volumes, containing 702 cases of hallucinations, dreams, and visions experienced by people at the time of the distress, or death, of some distant friend or relative. These 702 cases represent the sifted material out of over 2,000 depositions; 350 of which were related to the authors at first hand, and were passed as satisfying their standards of evidence, the authors declaring that, "As far as written testimony goes, the reader will have the same opportunities as we have had for forming an opinion." Here, then, we have facts, backed by documentary evidence. But, alas! the authors "keep the word of promise to our ear and break it to our hope." For, as Mr. Ivor Tuckett points out:—

"There was not a *single* case in which documentary evidence corroborating the truth of the story was produced. And this, in spite of the fact that in at least twenty cases the narrator alleged that letters crossed, describing the experience and the corresponding actual event, or that some documentary proof had been issued at the time; while in quite a hundred cases the existence of some corroborative documentary evidence is implied. Further, in nine cases in which documentary evidence was still forthcoming, the story was weakened rather than strengthened, and in at least two cases the authors passed stories where the statement that a note of the experience had been made at the time turned out to be a falsehood or invention."*

In an appendix, Mr. Ivor Tuckett gives two instances where the documentary evidence has been preserved, which, so far from corroborating the stories, actually discredits them; and he concludes:—

"The moral to be drawn from all this is that, in the absence of documentary proof—and a single case in which the letters, said to have crossed, could be produced, with the official postmark and date, would be sufficient to prove the truth of this class of phenomena—stories of phantasms or wraiths rest on nothing better than uncorroborated oral evidence, with all the fallacies of unconscious exaggeration, invention, the natural human love of the marvellous, and defective memory attached thereto" (p. 99).

We cannot agree that a single letter would be sufficient to prove the truth of the appearance of these phantasms. As Professor Newcomb has pointed out:—

"Through inquiries made under the auspices of the Psychological Society, it would seem that about one person in every ten is more or less subject to hallucinations of some kind. Probably a large majority of people have occasional dreams so vivid that they might be classed under the same head. It follows that in Great Britain alone there must occur annually many millions of

cases in which people, during their waking or dreaming hours, see before them images of distant relatives or friends. If, as may well be the case, the chances are millions to one against the illusion coinciding with the death or distress of the person seen, we should still have, in all probability, many such cases in a year. Thus, when the eminent members of the Society instituted their inquiries for such cases, it might have been predicted in advance that, without any bias whatever, they would have been discovered by the hundred. But the concession of exactness is one of great improbability. Visions and dreams are in all ordinary cases dropped from the mind and speedily forgotten. But let one be connected in any way with a death or other moving event, and the memory, instead of being effaced, grows in the mind, month by month. The event associated with the vision may have occurred days or weeks before, or after it, but the general tendency will be to bring them into coincidence and weave them into a story, as we have seen in the case (of Judge Hornby) already quoted."*

But even if the death really did coincide with the appearance of the phantasm it would be nothing to marvel at, considering the number of hallucinations continually taking place. As Bacon remarked, men score only the hits and ignore the misses. When the vision coincides with the event the superstitious see the working of the supernatural; when nothing happens the vision or hallucination is forgotten.

One may pass through half his life without experiencing an illusion or hallucination, as was the case with the present writer. Our earliest recollection is of being put to bed in a room by myself, and of being horribly afraid of being left in the dark. I remember one night, after lying awake in terror, creeping down two long flights of stairs and sitting at the bottom, so as to be near human company.

As I grew older these terrors left me, and in my teens I would have walked miles for the chance to see a ghost or spectre, but never succeeded in catching a glimpse of these fearsome wild-fowl.

Until within two years ago I never had an hallucination; but at that time, while staying at the house of a well-known gentleman in London—it being between two and three in the morning, and lying between sleeping and waking, in a condition of "psychic twilight," a condition very favorable for hallucinations—I suddenly heard a "click," and thought someone was trying to enter by the window. Then a figure emerged from the darkness on the right-hand side of the room, and, gliding along, I saw its black outline silhouetted against the faintly luminous blind of the large central window. Passing between the foot of my bed and the window, the figure disappeared into the darkness on the left-hand side of the room. The figure was life-size, robed, of an intense black; but in place of a head, there were two geometrical curves somewhat distantly resembling a hawk's head. Directly this figure had vanished, another exactly similar figure appeared, and followed the first into the darkness, to be in turn followed by another, until six or eight of them had travelled across the room; then they ceased. I lay awake until daybreak, and then saw that there was no central window against which the figures could have been seen. There were two large windows and a centre space of wall between, occupied by a toilet-table. The luminous blind was an illusion, along with the figures.

This vision was no doubt caused by dining late—at eight o'clock—instead of mid-day, with the addition of black coffee and a liqueur; and being very sensitive to any kind of stimulant, this hallucination was the result.

Professor Newcomb has observed, very truly, that an event may be made to appear ever so wonderful and incomprehensible by merely leaving out some essential particulars, and yet without deviating from the truth. For instance, Dr. Hodgson asked him to investigate the case of a naval officer who had such a strong presentiment that his vessel would be lost on its next voyage that he requested

* *The Evidence for the Supernatural*, p. 98.

* Professor Simon Newcomb, "Modern Occultism," *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1909.

to be detached from her. This being refused, he left his post of duty, and was tried by court-martial for desertion; the vessel being duly wrecked off Cape Hatteras, most of those on board, including the captain, perishing. Professor Newcomb found the story substantially correct, so far as it went. He says:—

"But it omitted to state that the officer had exhibited symptoms of mental aberration before his presentment; that the latter was only one of a great number of wild fears which he had expressed to various parties, including his superior officer; and that several months elapsed after this before the ship sailed on her fateful voyage, she having in the meantime made several trips on the coast. When thus completed the story became altogether commonplace."*

Mr. Ivor Tuckett also deals with the evidence for telepathy, the power of one mind to communicate with another mind irrespective of distance. He tells a rather amusing story of the late Mr. Myers' credulity. It appears that Messrs. Gurney and Myers had been experimenting in telepathy with two persons named Smith and Blackburn, and they invited several scientific gentlemen—among them Dr. Crichton-Browne—to a test performance. After a few tests Dr. Crichton-Browne became convinced that Smith was not effectually blindfolded; so, obtaining permission, he placed cotton-wool over his eye-sockets, plugged his ears, and made all secure with a large handkerchief. After this, says Dr. Crichton-Browne, "Thought-transference was somehow interrupted," and he concludes:—

"The last scene of all, or passage-at-arms, I vividly recollect. Mr. Myers, standing in front of his fireplace, said: 'It must be allowed that this demonstration has been a total failure, and I attribute that to the offensive incredulity of Dr. Crichton-Browne.' To which I rejoined: 'I hope I always will show offensive incredulity when I find myself in the presence of patent imposture.'"[†]

And yet Messrs. Gurney and Myers are the twin pillars of modern spiritualism.

W. MANN.

The Facts of Science and the Illusions of Metaphysics.

AT one of the earliest meetings of the then newly founded Royal Society, a certain speculative member started a discussion of a highly metaphysical nature. In the course of a lengthy and somewhat acrimonious debate, various theories were advanced which purported to account for the alleged fact that when a fish is placed in a vessel containing water, pressed down and running over, the fish never displaces any of the water in question. Judging from the results which have attended similar instances of metaphysical acuteness in other departments of speculation, the metaphysical members, had they been left to their own devices, would have handed down their barren and profitless wrangle to their contemporary posterity, thus embracing a period of some two hundred and fifty years. But, fortunately for sanity and science, a profane and practical-minded fellow of the Society proceeded, there and then, to fill an aquarium with water, into which he promptly placed a gold-fish. And much to the astonishment of the practical Fellow aforesaid, and greatly to the consternation and amazement of his metaphysical friends, every observer of the experiment was provided with ocular demonstration of the fact that the fish displaced the precise amount of water which its body occupied.

This true story illustrates the wide differences which divide the methods pursued by the men of science from those pursued by the men of speculation. A German metaphysician, who had heard of a camel, although he had never seen one, once sat down and proceeded to evolve one of these animals from his inner consciousness, and very pleased he

was with his imaginary product, until he afterwards ascertained from personal observation of a living specimen of this interesting and useful vertebrate order, that his ideal creation in no way resembled the real quadruped. The outcome of "creative evolution" in this case, as in more recent instances, was reduced to absurdity when confronted with the grim reality which natural evolution had brought into being.

Surely, then, the methods which have developed our choice fruits and flowers from their uncultivated and uneatable ancestors, are very different from these. Surely, the processes which have transformed the barren heath into the waving cornfield; which have covered the habitable globe with teeming cities, railways, telegraphic communication, mills, factories, and workshops, can have no kinship with barren metaphysics. As a mere matter of fact, none of the multifarious comforts and conveniences of modern civilised existence is due to anything save the pursuit—either directly or indirectly—of the observational and experimental methods which distinguish the practical or theoretical seeker after knowledge.

Man's supremacy over the lower animals is largely due to his vastly increased capacity for gaining knowledge and power. Man stands apart as the tool-using animal. The ruder his implements, the slower his advance. His earliest weapons were, as Lucretius says, his fingers, teeth, and nails, with stones and fragments from the branching woods. In this, the Eolithic period, during which men-apes employed the rudest conceivable tools, there was very little progress. The next period, the Palæolithic, or Old Stone age, did not last so long as the Eolithic, but it was immeasurably longer than the New Stone age which succeeded it. And the great advances made during this latter period by the human race are abundantly evidenced by the vastly improved weapons for warfare, the chase, and domestic economy which characterise its remains. Obviously, this immense acceleration of progress was the result of man's increased power over nature, which his improved implements and wider range of experience enabled him to exercise. The researches of Tylor, Avebury, Westermarck, Keane, Spencer, Boyd Dawkins, Haddon, and others all lead to the conclusion that man's progress has ever depended upon his capacity to conquer nature.

In all probability, the civilisations of antiquity would have been more permanent had their scientific resources been greater. The Pyramids of Egypt, and the sculpture and architecture of Greece and Rome, prove to demonstration that in these departments modern men have nothing to teach those ancient peoples. But Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Greece, and Rome all lacked the railway, the steamship, and those other products of modern science and invention which enable vast masses of people in one part of the world to be fed with the food supplies of another.

In the science of government, the Romans excelled all their predecessors and most of their successors, and as a result their history covers a period of a thousand years. With the decline and fall of imperial Rome, theologians and metaphysicians dominated a decadent race. A slight mental revival occurred during the reign of Charlemagne in the ninth century. But the expected end of the world in the year 1000 paralysed all intellectual effort. When, however, the fateful year passed away without witnessing this world-wide catastrophe, men began to recover their equanimity. The first Crusade in 1096 plainly indicated that the Christian Church looked forward to a long reign on earth. The so-called scholastic philosophy slowly arose, and benumbed and benighted the human understanding for many long centuries. And there was this very sinister difference between the Christian schoolmen and the unfettered thinkers of Pagan antiquity—that the former were not allowed any liberty to examine, or in any way question the assumptions upon which their ingenuity was thrown

* *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1909.

† *Bedrock*, July, 1912; p. 198.

away. It was especially in its bearing on the Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin Birth, and even on the stupendous problem concerning the precise number of angels that could dance on the point of a needle that these purblind speculators concentrated their mental faculties. For more than four hundred years, the question of Realism *v.* Nominalism diverted many of the subtlest intellects that have ever existed from all practical or useful inquiry.

Roger Bacon (1214-1298) stood almost alone in his heroic attempt to restore the scientific spirit of Pagan antiquity. The influences of Saracen science in Mohammedan Spain then began to make themselves felt. The natural philosophy of Aristotle was by them introduced into Christian Europe. The geographical discoveries of the fifteenth century and the revival of learning in Italy in the sixteenth shook the metaphysical systems to their foundations, and science and culture were re-born. Roger Bacon's ten years' martyrdom in a loathsome dungeon; the bitter and vindictive persecution of Galileo and Copernicus; the burning alive of the undaunted Giordano Bruno, are a few out of the numberless memorials of the conflict of light-bearing science with her twin eternal enemies, theology and metaphysics. But so great is the fondness of frail humanity for illusions that mediæval metaphysics held possession of the University of Paris until the seventeenth century, and in priest-cursed Spain, until quite recently, it was the only "philosophy" that could be studied by her students.

The vagaries and futilities of scholasticism did not escape the piercing glance of Francis Bacon, and he restored the Aristotelian method of inductive reasoning to a recognised place in logic. Bacon emphasised the importance of reasoning from effect to cause; he laid stress upon the circumstance that, in order to discover truth, it is essential that we investigate natural phenomena themselves. If we wish to make assurance doubly sure, observation and experiment are absolutely indispensable. Bacon appears to have felt that—

"No life could be too sound
To observe a world so vast,
No patience too profound
To sort what's here amass'd;
How man may here best live no care too great
to explore.

"Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb;
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room;
Nor is that wind less rough that blows a good
man's barge."
—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

No one can deny that it is solely owing to the pursuit of observation and experiment that science rules the world to-day. The natural inquirer takes nothing for granted in the realm of fact. He accepts without further inquiry those *certitudes* only, which have been firmly established by his predecessors. He unhesitatingly rejects all explanations which run counter to observed phenomena. He tests and re-tests all his experiments with infinite exactitude. He even refuses to admit as established any extraordinary occurrence on the bare testimony of his senses alone. When the great Helmholtz was informed of some very astounding psychological phenomena, he appeared utterly incredulous. He was eagerly informed that highly credible witnesses had received ocular and tactual demonstration of their truth, and he was asked whether he was not prepared to trust the evidence of his own consciousness. Helmholtz answered that, before admitting the existence of such remarkable phenomena as these, it would be necessary to submit them to his testing apparatus. Even were his tests favorable to the acceptance of such phenomena as genuine, it would still be imperatively necessary to re-submit them to the observations and experiments of Tyndall and other capable and conscientious investigators.

Moreover, the real student of nature's workings has small patience with those who murmur because science has not yet succeeded in explaining every-

thing. The unrelenting fact remains that science has explained everything that ever has been explained. The scientific inquirer has even less patience with those who demand an immediate cut-and-dried solution of the riddles of the universe. Imperfect as science still is in many of her departments, she represents the results of the conscious and unconscious observations and experiments of the entire human race. Of course, her achievements would be greater than they are had her endeavors not been systematically thwarted by her inveterate enemies, metaphysics and theology. Science, then, is the outcome of the travail and toil of countless workers, most of whom rest in unknown and unhonored graves. Small wonder, then, that her votaries treat with scant courtesy those who, without possessing the merest modicum of knowledge of the innumerable data which constitute her palaces of truth, arrogantly tell us that science is bankrupt, and that we must turn from reality to imagination, and from reason to intuition.

In the good old times when superstition and metaphysics darkened the world—when there was scarcely one silver scientific lining to the sombre cloud—men's conceptions of organic nature were, from the standpoint of modern sanity, hardly distinguishable from lunacy. Criminal trials of bugs, lice, rats, locusts, and pigs were of common occurrence. Learned lawyers drew up lengthy Latin indictments against flies, fleas, and other vermin, and these creatures were then duly made over to the Church and solemnly excommunicated. Pigs and horses were judicially executed for blasphemy, profanity, and other misdemeanors against God and man. And this phase of human unreason persisted in Europe right down to recent times. Men and women were murdered by thousands for the wholly imaginary crimes of witchcraft and sorcery. The insane were chained in pestilent dungeons, and the devils responsible for their mental affliction were beaten out of them. Not one metaphysical protest was raised against these atrocities. In the face of almost insurmountable obstacles and dangers, the scientific philosopher has at last persuaded men that humane treatment is the only corrective of the mind diseased. It was reserved to science to point out to man his place in nature, and to indicate the true position of the lower animals in the scheme of life.

(To be concluded.) T. F. PALMER.

The Christian and the Jew.

IN consequence of their religious peculiarity, the Jews have always remained separated from other nations. While the Egyptians, Medes, Persians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans quickly mixed with one another under proper conditions, to form a united nation, the Jews always remained Jews, no matter how completely they acclimatised themselves to the country in external matters. Their religious laws related to all the actions of everyday life, even to the partaking of food, in consequence of which, they were not allowed to eat in the company of those of a different faith, or even to eat in their presence. Therefore, while in public life they became Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, *et al.*, in their hearts—as well as in their habits—they remained Jews. Their mode of life, as well as their view of the world, remained so peculiar that amalgamation with other nations was not possible. In Rome, Jews succeeded in filling important official positions; there were Jews of great influence and importance at the courts of the emperors, but they always remained Jews.

This trait of the people has persisted to the present day. The Jews are scattered throughout the world at the present time. Everywhere they adopt the customs and habits of the country in which they happen to be; they make their living wherever they are, they are successful in every sphere of life, but they always remain Jews. In multitudes they immigrated to America, and in a short time became American citizens. The following generation lift themselves from the dregs of the people to positions of respect and honor in all branches of human endeavor. But while Germans, Italians, and Irishmen strip off their national

peculiarities and become part of the American nation, the Jews always remain Jews.

The hatred which developed with the origin of Christianity between Jews and Christians, is deeply rooted in the character of both religions. Religion itself offered its adherents the alternates, either to hate or despise their fellow men or to doubt the divine origin of its doctrine.

Monotheism was the quintessence of Judaism. The Jewish religion differed from the faiths of all other nations in its doctrine of the "only, eternal God." The command, "I am the Lord thy God...Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," filled the Jews with the holiest reverence for their God and at the same time engendered in them the deepest contempt for everything that in any way opposed this command. How, then, could they be expected to accept a doctrine which added two deities to this only God, one of them a person from their own circle, the other a mythical, incomprehensible "Holy Ghost"?

Nevertheless, a great number of Jews were persuaded to acknowledge Christ as the long expected Messiah. A doctrine that corresponded to this was formulated, and the Jews came in hordes to join the new faith. In Jerusalem alone the Apostles found five thousand believers. In all the cities within and without the Jewish empire the Jews founded Christian congregations, so that Christianity had already become fairly widespread before the heathens were approached on the subject of the new doctrine. The first fifteen bishops of the city of Jerusalem were circumcised Jews. Christianity in its original form, was, therefore, only a modification of Judaism. Its adherents, according to Christ's own intentions, remained Jews, only with the difference that the believers saw in Christ the Messiah promised them by the prophets. All Jewish precepts, all their ceremonies and laws, were retained unchanged; in short, Christians were and remained Jews.

But then came that turning point in the history of Christianity, which was to create the unbridgable abyss between Jews and Christians. In their efforts to propagate Christianity as much as possible, the disciples decided to drop all those laws and ceremonies that might prevent the heathen from joining Christianity. Above all, circumcision and the dietary laws were abolished. But just these things were most sacred to the Jews. Absurd as circumcision was as a religious rite, the Jews firmly believed in the divine origin of this custom. What right, then, had those common fishermen to upset those old, sacred laws? Was not Christ himself a circumcised Jew? Christ had never said anything against the Jewish customs! On the contrary, he advised his disciples to guide themselves "by the words" of the scribes, much as he hated them for their unbelief.

From their viewpoint the Jews were right. If God himself had proclaimed the commands and laws, by what right could human beings abolish them? God had expressly commanded that the Jews should even have their slaves circumcised, and now this sacred institution was to be dropped altogether, merely to make it easy for the heathen to adopt the new doctrine. For what purpose had God given the many laws and precepts as to diet, sacrifices, and all other things, on Mount Sinai, if they were now to be set aside and disregarded? Was one to assume, all at once, that Moses had deceived the people? Was a fisherman to be endowed with more authority than Moses? While the abolition of the old rites made admission to Christianity easier for the heathen, it repelled the Jews, so that they, from this time forth, joined the new doctrine only very sparingly, and looked down upon the deserters from the old faith with hatred and contempt.

The hatred felt by the new Christian congregation for the Jews, was likewise founded on their religion. The essence of Christianity was the belief in the divinity of Christ. For whoever did not believe in him, it were better, as Christ said, that a millstone were hung about his neck and he be drowned. Therefore, the mere fact that the Jews remained loyal to their old faith and refused to acknowledge the divinity of Christ was bound to draw down upon them the bitterest hatred of the Christians. This hatred was intensified by the notion that the Jews had crucified the Messiah, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

This reproach, with which the Christians assail the Jews to the present day, is as unfounded as it is illogical. In the first place, the Romans crucified Jesus, not the Jews. The Jews were not even authorised to pronounce or execute the sentence of death. They accused Christ to the Roman Government of calling himself king, inciting the people to disobedience against the authorities, and insulting and abusing the highest officials, as well as the high priests, in the most shameful manner. These accusations were based on facts, and by reason of them Christ was sentenced to death on the cross by the Roman Government.

But aside from this, it is the most nonsensical contradiction imaginable, on the one hand to believe Christ a God, and on the other to claim that the Jews had killed him.

Can a God be killed? Christ, too, is supposed to have arisen again and to have dwelt on earth forty days. How, then, can one say that the Jews killed him? But, furthermore, none of this could have happened against the will of God. Nay, everything is even supposed to have been predestined. Christ is said to have been sent by God to earth, to expiate the sins of mankind by shedding his blood for them. Christ himself spoke about this to his disciples, and told them that his Heavenly Father had decided upon all this. And in the face of this, the Jews are to be reproached for having crucified him? Of all the enormous contradictions, this is the most gigantic one. Had Christ not been crucified there could be no Christianity.

Thus we see that religion, as such, instead of engendering love for one's neighbor, does the very opposite; that bitter hatred, the evil consequences of which are evident to the present day, is not rooted in the heart of humanity, but in Judaism and Christianity.—DR. WILLIAM HIRSCH, *Religion and Civilisation*.

The Crime Against Man.

THE great crime against man is the robbing him of his natural rights, enslaving his mind to a religious faith. This crime is committed against man when he is a child, before he can understand the enormity of the act. The victim of ecclesiastical authority is bound, gagged, and pressed into the service of the Church. The power which takes away man's liberty takes away his manhood—his dearest possession; takes away his right to exercise his reason, his common sense, and makes of him a slave, a crawling, cringing, cowardly thing, a being who walks the earth with fear and trembling, who doubts his senses and denies his convictions.

This crime against the mind, against man, is committed in its most flagrant form by the priest of the Roman Catholic Church. The priest makes the child a Roman Catholic by baptising him as an infant, and confirming him as a child, long before the period of maturity. Man is forced into Romanism before he is old enough to protest against the outrage. After he becomes old enough to see things in a right light he is prevented from doing so by the faith imposed upon him in his infancy and youth. Should a Roman Catholic renounce his faith, he is forever afterwards the object of hate and persecution.

The Roman Catholic priest pretends to hold the fate of human beings hereafter in his hands, and to possess the power to save or damn, as his religion determines, but a greater fraud was never practised upon mankind. The priest kills the intellect in its infancy, prevents mental independence by enforcing the slavery of the mind through fear. He tells the young that obedience to the teachings of the Church insures happiness hereafter, but that all who are outside of Roman Catholicism will go to hell.

Give to a man the power to damn men through all eternity and he can rob them of all they possess, not only of their earthly goods, but of their mental integrity.

It is time to save the mind from priestcraft, to prevent the crime of intellectual murder by which Roman Catholicism thrives.

The subjects which ought to be freely and openly discussed in the daily press are never even mentioned by our great newspapers. By their silence they are aiding and abetting the ecclesiastical tyranny which has its headquarters in Rome. Roman Catholicism works in the dark, in secret, and wins its victories by preventing discussion. It teaches behind closed doors; it excludes the public from its cloisters in the name of religion. It is never open, never honest. It says: What I teach is true, what I say is so, what I do is right. Its whole stock-in-trade is presumption and arrogance.

Romanism can quote no higher authority than a dead priest. The words of Peter or John or James were put in their mouths by Romish churchmen. Reason repudiates the whole dirty mess of Roman Catholicism.

The way to prevent the crime of Romanism is by education. We must take the child away from the priest. The State must say to the Church: Hands off the school. The object of education is to make manhood, independence, and good citizens, not Roman Catholics.

L. K. WASHBURN.

Truthseeker (New York).

'T WAS EVER THUS.

There was a frightful disturbance on the lower deck of the Ark. "See what's the matter, Ham," said the skipper. "It's all right now, dad," he said. "The bull moose was trying to butt the elephant overboard."

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, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Howell Smith, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, Miss Pankhurst and R. H. Rosetti, "Christianity as a Moralising Agent; or, Twenty Centuries of Failure."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, A. B. Moss, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, High-street): 11.30, W. Davidson, "Christianity on Crutches."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, A. B. Moss, a Lecture.

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

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Marshall, "Christian Devil-Dodging."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote, 3, "What is Man?" 6.30, "What is God?"

OUTDOOR.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE: Thos. A. Jackson—*Oldham* (Park Gates): September 29, at 11, "Piety and Piffle"; at 3, "The Wonders of Life"; at 6.30, "The Salvation Army and Its Work." *Ashton-under-Lyne* (Market Ground): 30, at 7.30, "The Faith of an Infidel." *Stockport* (Mersey-square): October 1, at 7.30, "The Philosophy of Secularism." *Hyde* (Market Square): 2, at 7.30, "Humanity's Debt to the Rebel." *Mossley* (Town Centre): 3, at 7.30, "The Devil and All His Works." *Leeds* (Town Hall Square): 4, at 7.30, "The Origin of Life." *Bradford* (Morley-street): 5, at 7.30, "The Christ Myth."

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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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