

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Universal tolerance is the very soul of happiness to a populous and enlightened nation.—NAPOLEON.

Meredith's Last Letter.

GEORGE MEREDITH'S last letter may or may not be a matter of importance. It all depends on circumstances. But since the matter has been raised in the public press we may as well know the truth about it. And it happens to be a matter on which I can throw some light.

My attention was drawn early on Monday to an interview in the *Evening News* of the previous Saturday with Mr. Watts-Dunton on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Mr. Watts-Dunton was bound to talk about Swinburne, and that topic led to the letter that George Meredith wrote him a few days after Swinburne's death. That letter (I have a reason for reproducing it) was apparently shown to the interviewer—though it was not exactly a novelty, as it had been printed in the newspapers at the time—and it ran as follows in the *Evening News*:

"My Dear Theodore,

"The blow was heavy on me. I had such confidence in his power of recovery. The end has come! That brain of the vivid illumination is extinct.

"I can hardly realise it when I revolve the many times when, at the starting of an idea, the whole town was instantly ablaze with electric light. Song was his natural voice. He was the greatest of our lyrical poets—of the world, I could say, considering what a language he had to wield. But if I feel the loss of him as part of our life torn away, how keenly must the stroke fall on you—and at a time of prostration and illness! Happily, you have a wife for support and consolation. That helps to comfort me in my dire distress of mind on behalf of your stricken household, which I see beneath the shadow. I will hire a motor and be with you when I know that you are in better health, and we can talk."

By the way, there are inaccuracies in this reprint. "Prostration and illness" should be "prostration from illness," and the letter should end with "My respects to your wife"—as it appears on the last page of the *Letters of George Meredith*, just published under the editorship of his son. Perhaps it should be added, for ordinary readers, that Swinburne and Mr. Watts-Dunton had been living together in the same house for a great many years. This explains peculiarities in Meredith's letter.

That letter was dated "Box Hill, Dorking, April 18, 1909." Meredith died himself on the sixteenth of May. Mr. Watts-Dunton prides himself on receiving the last letter that Meredith ever wrote. He imparted that fact to the interviewer. But he could not have been sure of it from his own knowledge. That goes without saying. He must have been told so by a nearer authority. And that authority was in all probability Meredith's son, who makes the same statement in the book, where, after quoting his father's letter to Mr. Watts-Dunton, he adds the footnote: "This was George Meredith's last letter."

It was not George Meredith's last letter. His son had no business to make the statement. He knew it to be untrue. And this is the thing that I am most of all sorry to say.

Early on Monday morning I sent the following telegram to the *Evening News* from my residence at Westcliff-on-Sea:—

"*Evening News*, London.

"Watts-Dunton is mistaken. Meredith wrote me a letter (probably his last) on April 23. I have it still. Meredith, junr., has a copy."

I cannot find that this telegram was inserted. But I do not complain of that. I know the ways of common journalists too well, especially where Free-thinkers are concerned. They seem to regard us as a different species from themselves, and I sometimes think they are right. But if my telegram did not appear in Monday's *Evening News* the following paragraph did:—

"MEREDITH'S LAST LETTER.

"Referring to Mr. Watts-Dunton's statement made to an *Evening News* representative that he received the last letter Meredith ever wrote, a correspondent writes:

"As a matter of fact, what probably was the last written by Meredith is now in possession of Mr. G. W. Foote.

"On April 23, thirteen days after Swinburne's death, George Meredith sent a letter of appreciation to the President of the National Secular Society, at the same time making a contribution to the Society's funds. A copy of the letter is, or was, in the hands of George Meredith's son."

I am not aware who that correspondent is. He knows something, but he is not entirely accurate. Still, I thank him for his good intention.

When I supplied Mr. W. Meredith with copies of his father's letters to me I supplied him with all, including a letter dated April 23, 1909—ten days later than the "last letter" written to Mr. Watts-Dunton. That letter probably was his last. There are reasons for thinking so. It was written throughout with his own hand, he addressed the envelope himself, and I should not be surprised if he posted it himself. I think he may have had reasons for wishing that letter to be unchallengeable.

I had received a letter written in a strange hand containing a cheque, obviously in Meredith's writing, as "a contribution to the *Freethinker*." The money had not been solicited. It was a spontaneous gift on Meredith's part. But I am as little of a tuft-hunter as any man breathing, I had refrained for thirty years from so much as a public hint that George Meredith honored me with his correspondence, and I was not going to let him be caught in a public acknowledgment without a warning. He answered my note on this point as follows:—

"April 23, 1909,

"DEAR MR. FOOTE,—

Box Hill, Dorking.

"Gifts of money should be unsigned contributions. But, as a question of supporting your paper, my name is at your disposal.

Very truly,

GEORGE MEREDITH."

"Supporting your paper." Meredith gave his name, as well as his cheque, to that. The letter showed that he was still, as he had been all the time, a believer in my fight with the priests, which he called (the words are in one of the letters which Mr. W. Meredith does print) "the best of causes." Meredith placed that fact on record inconspicuously only three weeks before his death. I thought I understood then; I feel sure I understand now.

Meredith's later letters to me are not printed in the official collection. Can it be that the editor of

the second half of the collection (if it be true, as the *Times* suggests, that there were *two* editors) did not want it to be known that Meredith remained on the old terms with me to the end? Was it intended that the reader might suppose that Meredith had dropped me—and “the best of causes”? There must be *some* reason for such a suppression—and such a falsehood.

The following is one of the letters suppressed in the official collection:—

“Box Hill, Dorking,
February 24, 1908.

“DEAR MR. FOOTE,

“The enclosed imposes on your good nature an act to make amends for my heedlessness with papers that come to me. It is for the funds of the Secular Education movement—no more than a movement at present, but inspiring us with one of the certainties of the proximate future. In which latter point it does not resemble the object of your valiant fight, though that is destined for victory. But it demands a combination of ardor and patience rarely to be found. You will have the credit of it when the day ripens for biography.

“Accept my compliments, with the regret for troubling you.

GEORGE MEREDITH.”

I regard that letter as particularly valuable. It is so explicit. The compliment to me is a small matter compared with Meredith's attitude on the questions involved.

A final word. There is a postscript to Meredith's “last letter” to me. It refers to a hot article I had written in the *Freethinker* on Mr. Watts-Dunton's betrayal of Swinburne, in letting a clergyman mutter his Church's shibboleths over the dead body of the poet of “The Hymn of Man.” “Watts-Dunton, as I have to suppose,” Meredith wrote, “was ill and feeble at the time of the funeral.” I can well understand that Mr. Watts-Dunton would like to regard Meredith's letter of April 13, 1909, as “the last he ever wrote.”

G. W. FOOTE.

The Reign of Hypocrisy.

A COUPLE of religious Congresses have just been brought to a conclusion. In each of these, although its members were widely divided on many points, they were agreed upon at least one. From Archbishop downward, all talked as though the future of the nation rested with them, and as though there could be no question that the peaceful and happy solution of all our troubles depended upon the acceptance of Christian teaching. And one would also gather the impression that outside these Congresses the public waited anxiously for a lead from these clerical lights who were its accepted intellectual leaders. This attitude was evidently maintained by some of the speakers with difficulty. By others, long practice or natural conceit lent a note of earnestness to their speeches. But the saving grace of all was the absence of an adequate sense of humor. The Baptists, for example, saw nothing peculiar in passing a resolution claiming Disestablishment in the name of religious equality, and immediately passing another which involved the establishment of State religion in the schools in the name of freedom. Nor did the Church of England speakers see anything incongruous in putting themselves forward as champions of the freedom of women, although believers in a book that proclaims her subjection and members of a Church that excludes her from its ministry.

Such gatherings are protected by their frequency. We neither laugh nor weep at things with which we are familiar. The anguish occasioned by the destruction of the *Titanic* was no greater than that which occurs in thousands of homes every year of our lives. To arouse grief or mirth there must be present an element of the unexpected and the unusual. And people are so used to the posings of the clergy that they have not only ceased to be surprised, but many accept them at their own valuation—which is one of the secrets of constant advertisement. Keep on assuring the public, or a public, that you are a great

man, and in time a reputation will be established. Some may smile, but some will believe. Their belief will encourage your complacency, and your complacency will strengthen their belief. Whether it is of an individual or of an organisation, the truth is equally clear. Recognition of this has established the fortune of many a manufacturer of pills, and made the reputation of many a preacher of sermons. Religious papers assure their thousands of readers of the beneficent influence of these gatherings on the higher life of the nation. The same thing is repeated from thousands of pulpits. And although no one knows how or where the influence manifests itself, a conviction is produced that it is there.

These gatherings of clergymen are not, be it remembered, gatherings of mere citizens met to discuss subjects of general interest. Were they such, they could be accepted, and dismissed, as being neither better nor worse than hundreds of similar Conferences. They are meetings of men who claim to have a quite peculiar and authoritative voice in the direction of affairs. Were it otherwise the question might be more frequently asked as to what are the qualifications of these men to leadership. They are not more able than other men. It is an almost admitted truth that the mental quality of the clergy is deplorably low, and that the tendency is for it to become lower with each generation. They are not better informed than other people. No one consults them on ordinary subjects. In economics, in sociology, in art, in literature, no one claims that, as clergymen, they are better able to give an opinion than any other person of ordinary education. Their claim to leadership is based solely upon a belief in a number of doctrines and dogmas that very few believe in, and of which many are quite ashamed.

If the clergy themselves really believed those doctrines that lie at the foundation of their order, and which furnish the authority for their teaching, the position would be more tolerable. But this is not the case. They believe as little as does the educated layman in the supernatural character of their “call” to service. They knew that the men through whom the “call” has come have previously discussed the matter in a coldly calculating business spirit. If a Church of England man, the “call” will depend upon the friends he has in high places. If a Nonconformist, it is a question of whether he will secure a good audience, raise the value of the subscriptions—in a word, whether it will be a good business investment for the chapel that invites him. The chapel “call” is a mere attempt to engage the services of a more successful agent than the one they possess. It is a game of humbug with both; but one of the rules of the game is that each player shall pretend that the humbug is not there. Civilization has robbed the medicine man of the real and only justification for his office; but, as it has not deprived the office of its emoluments and privileges, he is still content to wear its livery.

Officially, the clergy of all denominations have certain specified doctrines to preach. How many preach them? Some of them openly discard these doctrines. They say that modern thought has placed these teachings in an entirely new light, and must no longer be forced upon people. Agreed; but they are still part and parcel of Christianity. That has not altered. There has been no new revelation cancelling the old one. That remains, and is embodied in the trust deeds which maintain the buildings in which the clergy preach. Some time ago an attack was made on Mr. R. J. Campbell by a leading Nonconformist because he drew a salary while denouncing the doctrine provided in the trust deed of the City Temple. The reply made to this was, not that the charge was false, but that other preachers were in the same position, and that if all acted straightforwardly in the matter more than half the pulpits in England would be vacant. Both the charge and the reply were true. But the reply did not destroy the accusation; it merely extended it over a wider area. It simply said that one preacher ought not to be singled out for attack

because the majority of them were equally guilty. Then why not attack the lot? Karl Marx's saying that "The English Established Church will more readily tolerate an attack on thirty-eight of its thirty-nine Articles than on one thirty-ninth of its income," has a very wide application.

I have, from time to time, said some hard things about such preachers as Dr. Dixon, Dr. Len Broughton, and Dr. Campbell Morgan. They are crude, and in the best sense of the words, they are ignorant and uncultured. But one must do them the justice of saying that their Christianity is nearer the genuine article than much of the preaching that one comes across. It is, indeed, one of the worst, and yet one of the truest, things that may be said about current Christianity that, while it lacks the strength to attract the right kind of men, it demoralises the best of those who enlist in its service. The main efforts of these go to evade genuine Christian doctrines rather than to preach them. Nineteenths of modern sermons consist of either a string of harmless humanitarian platitudes or specious attempts to explain away doctrines that ought either to be boldly accepted or straightforwardly rejected. To anyone but a clergyman, it should appear quite plain that, if there is no genuine historic foundation for the Biblical stories, if God did not reveal himself to the Jews in a way that he did not reveal himself to other people, if the miracles of the Bible were only mistaken interpretations of natural events, then there remains no more reason for calling the Bible inspired than there is for claiming inspiration for any other volume. As it is, the lives of a large number of clergymen seem to be spent in an endeavor to discover by how many tricks of speech and subtleties of interpretation they can continue to preach a set of doctrines which they have accepted without examination and retain without genuine criticism.

The educated layman is as much ashamed of genuine Christianity as is the thoughtful preacher. In actual life he no more attempts to regulate his life by the Bible than by the *Iliad*. He no more believes in the miracles of the Bible than he believes in the man in the moon; and he would as soon think of trying to walk across the Atlantic as he would of turning one cheek when the other was smitten, or trusting to meekness to secure him the inheritance of the earth. People are so ashamed of genuine Christian doctrines that they object to hear them stated. Nothing, in fact, is so common as to hear the Freethinker accused of caricaturing or misrepresenting Christianity. He takes the doctrines as orthodoxy has delivered them; he quotes from the Bible and from the official confessions of faith, and the "advanced" Christian retorts that he is old-fashioned, out of date; he is caricaturing Christian belief, and the Christianity he is attacking is as dead as the Dodo. Of course, it may be admitted that orthodox doctrines do misrepresent the real beliefs of educated Christians, but they are the only authoritative Christianity the world has, and if Christians are sufficiently developed to be ashamed of them, it is a thousand pities that they lack the moral courage to drop the name, as they have already discarded all that the name already stands for.

It is a depressing situation. People cannot be honest to each other so long as they are not honest to themselves. And this cannot be so long as they attempt to square the religious opinions of semi-savages with current scientific knowledge. The inevitable outcome of this policy is a perfect orgy of hypocrisy, a veritable carnival of cant. We talk of our progress and our civilisation, and at the same time convert our life into a living lie by attempting to perpetuate a religion that can never be more than savagery covered with a cloak of civilised words. One body of men solemnly discuss whether we are to believe in miracles or not. Another Congress as solemnly debates whether we ought to accept a belief in the Virgin Birth, in the Resurrection, or the Divinity of Jesus. Such questions were really

decided long ago. We know that miracles do not occur—even those who discuss their credibility know it. We know that supernatural births and god-men and raisings from the dead belong to the region of myth. No one actually believes these things. If a test case were devised and applied it would be found that these beliefs are already defunct. What is alive is a belief in their existence. It is the pricking of this bubble that the clergy dread most.

C. COHEN.

The Passing of Theology.

BY theology we understand the alleged "science of God," or the system of supernaturalism, which is the stock-in-trade of all Christian Churches. It was theology that brought the Church into existence, and it is on theology that she subsists. Theology pays handsome salaries to many thousands of men and women. Now, however, it has fallen upon evil days, and its future is seriously jeopardised. This is an undeniable fact, and the theologians themselves are at last fully aware of it. At the recent meeting of the Baptist Union, the subject of one able and pertinent speech was "The Passing of Conviction." The orator was the Rev. W. Vaughan King, B.A., of Northampton, who defined conviction in a way peculiar to himself. If correctly reported in the *Baptist Times and Freeman* for October 4, Mr. King told his hearers that "conviction was a sense of the spiritual in life—a vivid realisation of God, immortality, and duty." This implies that theological beliefs are valueless if one is not convinced of their truth. Mr. King contended that theology is not a human discovery, but a Divine revelation. Man did not find the master truths about God and immortality; it was they that found man. "Those truths were brought to men," the speaker confidently asserted. They were not matters of opinion but of conviction. "A man makes his opinions," he added; "convictions make the man." This sounds very plausible; but is it not a fact that a man forms the convictions by which he is afterwards governed, or, in other words, are not convictions opinions firmly held? However, let criticism wait until the speaker's case is fully stated. "Conviction," he said, "was God gripping the soul, and the soul gripping God." Therefore, religion is a necessity, and "because religion is a necessity the Church has a longer life than the skating-rink." Religion is interwoven with the very texture of man's being.

And yet, despite the contention that the alleged truths of religion have been brought to us, have found us, and are part and parcel of our very nature, despite the boast that religion is a necessity without which man would perish, the sad truth is that man and religion are rapidly parting company, that the truths about God and immortality are steadily fading away, or, in Mr. King's words, that conviction is passing. Did it not dawn upon Mr. King that in admitting the decay of religion he was in reality disproving the truth of his definition of it? If religion was a necessity to man he could not possibly live without it; but as a matter of fact multitudes do live well enough without it. The speaker stated that "conviction was God gripping the soul and the soul gripping God"; but did it never occur to him that in alluding to the passing of conviction as a fact he was virtually charging God with ceasing to grip the human soul? If God gripped first, it surely follows that man cannot get rid of him unless he lets go; and the idea of a God of love letting go of sinful man without saving him is preposterous. Consequently, if conviction is passing, it is a conclusive proof that all the talk about God gripping, or sending his Son to save, man is nothing but vain twaddle. The passing of religion is the most damning evidence against it. If it were true it would stand like a rock for ever. Does it not seem strange to Mr. King that God should fail to set the world right, and stranger still that a world Divinely

made, Divinely sustained, and Divinely governed should need setting right? Dr. Parker said many foolish things during his lifetime, but a sillier saying never fell from his lips than the one quoted by Mr. King, namely, that "God had no time to make nobodies." If God did not make the "nobodies," who are such a great host, who did? If God is not the creator of this woefully imperfect and wicked and miserable world, who is?

The truth is that theology is passing because the world is outgrowing it. Religious conviction is being rooted out because it has been found to be false. Indeed, Mr. King himself practically admitted that such is the case. He is thus reported:—

"Why had there been this passing of conviction? He gave three reasons—first the rise of culture that was new and too ready to throw back the old. He could say that no discovery possible to a physical laboratory could undermine spiritual things. Dr. Schafer right or wrong, the Ark of the Covenant stood where it did. Before they could undermine religion they had to give an explanation of the deeper things."

If accurately reported, that paragraph shows Mr. King's argument at its weakest and worst. The subject of his address was "The Passing of Conviction," but the purport of that extract is to declare that conviction cannot pass, that religion cannot be undermined, that the truths about God and immortality cannot be subverted. If the Ark of the Covenant stands where it did, if religion cannot be undermined, why talk of an impossibility as if it were an actuality? If Dr. Schafer is right, the Ark is doomed, because there is neither room nor work for God in the Universe which the Bible declares to be his handiwork and his supreme care. If Dr. Schafer is right, life is absolutely independent of all supernatural agency both in its origin and maintenance. Dr. Schafer said that "we can only be immortal through our descendants," death being in each case the end of life. If that is true, can any honest divine affirm, as Dr. Horton and Mr. R. J. Campbell did, that the religious situation remains unchanged? Only people utterly blinded by prejudice can talk such arrant nonsense. Nothing is easier on popular platforms than to descant irresponsibly, even eloquently, on what the preachers call "spiritual things," or "the deeper things"; but even the existence of such things is a matter of pure speculation. No one knows anything about them, not even that they are. "But," the theologian exclaims, "I enjoy sweetest communion with God and Christ every day." You may have an equally delightful converse with King Arthur and his wondrous knights, if you only fix your attention upon them, or with any other fictitious characters on the same terms. The sense of communion with the unseen, so far from establishing its objective reality, only proves the intensity of your belief in it. The appeal to religious experience as an evidence of the objective truth of religion, so frequently made, betrays the grossest ignorance of psychology on the part of those who make it.

Mr. King may sincerely believe that it is impossible to undermine religion, but he cannot shut his eyes to the fact that it is being undermined in the minds of thousands of people, and that in the majority of cases the undermining agent is science. He is very confident that Christianity has nothing to fear from thought; but the bulk of those who have renounced it have done so under the influence of thought. We know hundreds of avowed Atheists who became such as the direct result of daring to think for themselves. A well-educated man died recently in London who throughout his life positively refused to look at Freethought literature, or to listen to any argument against Christianity, because he feared it might result in compelling him to think himself out of his faith. Yes, Christianity has everything to fear from thought, and everything to hope from ignorance and thoughtlessness. "Young people," cried Mr. King, "add to your Decalogue that you use your brains"; but the only object to be served by using their brains was the production of

"a stronger, robuster type of Christian than is sometimes produced." To satisfy Mr. King, we must use our brains *reverently, believingly, piously*, in defence of the faith, not for the purpose of critically examining it and ascertaining whether it is based on truth or not. With Christians, the intellect is the servant of belief, not its judge.

Mr. King blamed our amazing material progress and the overweening belief in the power of Parliament also for the passing of conviction. The report may have done him an injustice; but the perusal of it does not make it at all clear in what way material prosperity and the belief in Parliament have any part in the killing of religion. Mr. King is made to say that "it is an essential part of his faith that every man should get a due share of the goods of God"; but surely if the goods are God's it ought to be God's concern to have them fairly distributed. Instead of showing how material progress and the belief in Parliament weaken conviction, this is what he is reported to have said:—

"When yours is mine and mine is yours, and the ducal house and the ducal park belonged to both of them, they would still cry for the spiritual and the intangible. The soul of man would still cry for more room; and when the legislator's wand had brought to them the racquet court and the jeweller's store, they would still need the equipment to meet the iceberg that came to every human life."

Here a totally unfair use is made of a well-known natural truth, namely, that the actual never comes quite up to the ideal in human life. Few, if any, people are perfectly satisfied with their attainments and performances at any point in their careers. This eminently natural feeling Mr. King interprets as a cry for God and immortality. This is a mistake into which clergymen are in the habit of falling. Speaking of immortality, Mr. R. J. Campbell says, in a recent sermon, that "we are all craving for that consummation"; that consciously or unconsciously we are all homesick, all crying out for the life that is life indeed." This is the pulpit style to perfection. It is true that most of us are "crying out for the life that is life indeed"; but it is not true that even most of us locate that life beyond the grave, while thousands are profoundly convinced that such location of it is very largely responsible for the present backward condition of society. The conviction that is passing is the very conviction insisted upon by Messrs. King and Campbell—the conviction that there is a God and a future life; and in proportion as this conviction passes another conviction emerges to take its place, the conviction that man is a child of the earth, and that all his aspirations and ambitions, all his desires and longings should be kept within the limits of the life that now is. This is the conviction justified and encouraged by science, the only conviction that makes for rational social progress. The passing of the theology means the coming of humanism, which is the only agency that can set the world right.

J. T. LLOYD.

"Miracles" at the Church Conference.

A NOTICEABLE, though in one sense by no means extraordinary, feature of the discussion on miracles at the Church Conference just ended was the confusion of thought exhibited by the "advanced thinkers," of whom Professor Sanday was hailed as a type by the President. Not that the Archbishop was much enamored of Dr. Sanday's views. Indeed, according to some accounts, he like Prebendary Webb-Peploe, rather appeared to scent danger in any minimising of the importance of the miracle stories without which Christianity has, and never had, any *raison d'être*. It would seem that on this subject there are grounds for a very pretty quarrel between the "parochial clergy" and the ecclesiastical dons who seem disposed, while disclaiming any idea of disbelief in the Christian creed, to make light of the Gospel miracles.

I learn from the *Guardian* that Professor Sanday wrote his paper five times, and that he claimed some credit for its conciseness. Concise it certainly was as compared with other papers read at the Conference. But he might have said all that he had to say in fewer words if only he had realised what "bosh" he was talking. As summarised by the *Daily News and Leader*, this was his argument:—

"Professor Sanday contended that there was conclusive evidence of the province of a higher cause in the world, but for himself he did not think that the activities of this cause were really abnormal, or in any true sense contrary to nature. He personally shrunk from what we were obliged to regard as abnormal. From our modern point of view there was not the slightest blame upon the ancients for setting down things that might be so described. They followed their ideas, and they could not do otherwise. The whole problem seemed to reduce itself to this—to find the exact point at which the supernatural ends and the really abnormal begins."

Now, in clerical circles, Professor Sanday has a great name. He has, I was recently told by a curate of my acquaintance, "a European reputation." And from my slight knowledge of this Oxford ecclesiastical don, I can quite believe that, in his own province, he is an expert. Set him to edit a *Variorum Testament*, and you shall find his work well done, so far as I am able to judge. But in this paper he shows that he is out of his proper sphere when he tries to reason on the question of miracles. Greater nonsense than the paper summarised above was never written. Professor Sanday knocks the ground from under his own feet in the most blissful unconsciousness of what he is doing. If the activities of his "higher cause" are in no true sense contrary to nature, it seems obvious that the "higher cause" is indistinguishable from nature. Thus, on his own showing, Professor Sanday's "higher cause" is just a figment of his pious imagination. Professor Sanday is not entitled to talk of a "problem." There is no problem apart from the assumption of "a higher cause"—an assumption which, as he has already shown, is groundless.

The real question the clergy have to answer—and it is one that no speaker at the Church Congress dared to face—is this: Where does nature end and "the supernatural" begin? Of nature we do know something. The basis of science is our knowledge of the fact that the universe is governed by natural law. That is, we know by repeated observation and experiment, that, just as $2 \times 2 = 4$, so like conditions give rise to like effects. Apart from this knowledge, astronomy, chemistry, engineering, and all the other sciences that have done so much to civilise the world, would be impossible. We know, then, that in the sequence of cause and effect there is no break—that is the basis of all our calculations, even in human affairs. But, if the universe is governed by natural law, what is meant by "the supernatural"? And if, as Professor Sanday put it, the activities of "the supernatural" are not abnormal, what does "miracle" mean?

The fact would seem to be that Professor Sanday "dunno w'ere 'e are," if I may use so vulgar a colloquialism. He states a truth without realising what he is saying when he talks about the ancients being blameless, from our modern point of view, in setting down things that might be described as abnormal. The truth is, of course, that to which attention has often been called in the *Freethinker*—in the pre-scientific stage of human culture belief in miracles is as inevitable as, at a later stage, it becomes impossible. This, however, is not what Professor Sanday meant. What he *did* mean he could not say, except that he is trying to find an expression that will "include and harmonise a number of movements of thought," and that "he hoped before long to be able to go a little further."

It is in the hope that they may help him on his way that I pen these remarks for Professor Sanday's consideration.

ANDREW LIDDLE.

One World at a Time.—II.

(Concluded from p. 646.)

THE girls listen to an explanation on the theory in cooking; then a menu is presented and explained. The choice of the dishes is a matter of discussion; all are chosen with a strict regard to economy. The price of each article composing the menu is placed on the blackboard, and when the reasons for the choice of each dish and the way of preparing it have been explained, the dinner is cooked by the girls and joyously eaten.

After dinner the time-saving and labor-saving method of properly washing dishes and cleaning up the kitchen is practically demonstrated, and at 7.45 o'clock the girls go home.

There are special Sunday classes. The weekly classes are like those of an ordinary school. The Monday program includes recreation and lessons in cutting out clothes and all articles for household use.

There is also a course in practical hygiene and elementary medicine. On Wednesday the day is most particularly reserved for little girls twelve or thirteen years of age, and much time is devoted to sewing and mending. Washing is also scientifically taught, and the girls are shown the advantages of using the many labor-saving devices which are slow to find favor among French people. A short period is weekly devoted to a course of elementary law. Girls are taught their rights, how to sign leases, the obligations of proprietors and tenants, of servants and employers, the principles of contracts, insurance and protective societies—everything women should know. Mrs. Tuck has gone over the programs carefully, and they have been revised and improved until they are now, it almost seems, perfect for every one.

French women enjoy a worldwide reputation for thrift in household management, and even, it has often been stated, can feed a family upon what an American household would throw away. Certainly Mlle. Perrier, directress of Mrs. Tuck's school, is a genius in composing cheap, tempting meals.

The benefits of such training are being felt all over Rueil. Mothers to whom the school at first seemed a waste of time are eagerly sending their girls and actually learning from their daughters useful things in domestic economy. During all the recent perturbation owing to the rise in the price of food the efforts of the School for Housewives were directed towards correcting certain fallacies in regard to food.

Little girls were taught that beans contained more nourishment than mutton chops. Enough beans to make the dish, including the butter and a little parsley, cost only fifteen cents, and nourished a family of six better than the six chops which cost sixty cents.

A poor working man who had six children sent his eldest daughter to the school, a bright little girl of thirteen. They had been having a terrible time at home trying to feed the large family on a dollar a day. The little girl learned at the Tuck school that the greatest amount of real nourishment existed in lentils which had been dried, re-soaked, and cooked. The father persuaded the mother to try substituting lentils for potatoes and meat.

The family thrived on the new food, and then the thrifty family went down to a wholesale house and bought a large sack of the lentils, which kept the family healthy and well all winter. So not only are girls being prepared for future homes of their own, but they are carrying precious instruction in home management into the existing homes, waking up the mothers and interesting the fathers.

Few girls know how to cut and fit clothes. In this model school cutting and fitting as well as sewing are carefully taught, and the utilisation of the grown-up people's garments for the children is demonstrated.

It must not be thought that only the children of the working people attend the Tuck school. Young women of good families are among the students, and have special days and courses, cooking lessons, when the menu is elaborato and not confined to, as in so many cooking schools, the making of puffed paste, chicken salad, and salted almonds.

For these girls' ideas of household direction, of the management of servants, have been added to all the other useful branches of domestic knowledge, and they are prepared for the rôle of wife and mother with infinite pains.

It is generally accepted that Mrs. Tuck's school is the best of its kind in France, and almost unique. The entire expense is borne by the Tucks, and it means not only the domestic education but a large proportion of the feeding of a number of the young feminine population of Rueil. Everything connected with the school is free.

While the hospital and the housewives school are the two most noteworthy works of Mr. and Mrs. Tuck, their charity

and willingness to help everyone worthy of it living around them is unlimited.

During the floods which devastated the country around them, Mr. and Mrs. Tuck threw open their houses to the suffering victims, of whom sixty were housed and fed for nearly six weeks, and provided with both clothes and money. In addition Mr. Tuck subscribed a large cash contribution to the city fund for flood sufferers.

It is not surprising that the testimonials of gratitude toward these remarkable chatelains are many.

The authorities of the town of Rueil have named a street for them, Avenue Tuck-Stell, and the French Government, after making Mr. Tuck a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, promoted him recently to the higher grade of Officer of the Legion, and is only waiting for the occasion to make him Commander.

Among the most touching marks of gratitude sent Mr. and Mrs. Tuck was the following letter:—

"To Mr. and Mrs. Edward Tuck, Chateau de Vermont.
"Monsieur et Madame: The undersigned inhabitants of Rueil, sadly tried by the misfortune of the floods—obliged to leave their homes—and having responded to the generous offer and accepted the kindly hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Tuck, feel it their duty to respectfully transmit the expression of their profound gratitude."

This testimonial was signed by sixty-one persons. Philanthropy is practised all over the world, generosity is not lacking; but what draws particular attention to these American Tucks is their intelligence in the direction of their generosity, their personal guidance of two large undertakings, their careful study of conditions around them, and their effort made not simply to give, but in giving to fill a want, and it is this sense of personal interest in their welfare that has so deeply attached the population of Rueil to their benefactors.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Secular Education and Crime.

OPponents of the secular solution not infrequently declare that Secular Education necessarily leads to a great increase in crime and immorality. No evidence is offered in support of the assertion, for the adequate reason that none exists. France, we are told, presents an awful example of the results of a "godless education," and Queensland has with gladness reverted to a definitely religious system.

In Queensland the religious sects have, as the result of a carefully engineered propaganda, temporarily secured the suspension of the old system. This does not prove even that the old system has failed; certainly not that it had led to crime or disorder. What it does prove is that the religious bodies were successful in making the State pay for the religious teaching of their children, and that they themselves are eased of the burden.

The case of France is brought forward in order to terrify the British people into believing that Secular Education would lead to a great increase in immorality and crime, which, it is alleged, exist in France under a system of Secular Education, to a greater degree than in the countries where religious instruction is given. Such a comparison is both futile and unfair. The only just method is to compare France, not with other countries where other conditions prevail, but with herself, and take the period when her children received religious instruction as part of their daily education, and compare it with the present time, when the teaching is strictly secular. If this method is adopted, the following striking results are obtained. Up to the year 1886 the children in the French schools received systematic religious instruction, after which date the policy of Secular Education began to be adopted. There was, however, no definite cleavage between the two systems, as a great number of clerical schools continued to exist in various parts of the country after the secular system had been established. It is impossible, therefore, to speak with certainty upon the new system during the earlier years of its adoption. But some clear facts emerge. Between the years 1830 and 1880, offences committed against the law had risen from 50,000 to 150,000. Making full allowance for the increase in the population and for any possible increase in police activity, these figures indicate that crime was markedly on the increase during the period when religion was taught in the State schools.

Advocates of the secular solution do not for a moment suggest that religious teaching is responsible for increased crime; but they are bound to point out the indisputable fact that since 1886, when secular schools were first established

in France, although there has been an increase in population there has been a steady decrease of crime.

Conclusive evidence in support of this statement is found in the following figures relating to the prison population of the French Republic, published in *Republique Francaise Annairees Statistiques*, 1905, 1906, and 1907 (*Imprimerie National*), and quoted by Webb's Supplementary Edition of *Mulhall's Dictionary of Statistics, 1911*:—

Year.	Central and Agricultural Prisons.		Houses of Arrest, etc.		Reformatories.		Total Both Sexes.
	Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.	Boys.	Girls.	
On Dec. 31.							
1897	8,430	1,010	15,640	2,790	4,900	1,020	33,790
1900	6,800	800	14,400	2,470	3,830	770	29,440
1903	5,570	610	13,160	1,970	2,900	470	24,550
1906	5,130	500	12,750	1,830	2,660	620	23,430

The total number of persons received in the above prisons and establishments during the course of the year averaged 406,000 during 1897-1901, and 368,000 during 1902-6, while the aggregate number of days of confinement averaged 11,775,000 per year during 1897-1901, and 9,106,000 during 1902-6. The proportion of illegitimate births to 10,000 of the population, which in 1896 was 19.8, fell in 1905 to 18.2.

How can it be maintained, in the face of these figures, that Secular Education in France has led to an increase in crime and immorality? Crime exists in France, but the educational system of the country is not responsible for it. Crime also exists in England, where State-provided religious teaching is given, with few exceptions, to every child attending a public elementary school; but no advocate of Secular Education thinks of making the religious teaching responsible for it.

The figures relating to Australia are also illuminating, especially if the adjoining States of Victoria and New South Wales are compared. In Victoria, for instance, which alone among the Australian States has a purely secular system, we find that crime is decreasing in much greater proportion than in the other States. In New South Wales formal religious instruction is given in the schools for one hour each day, either by a clergyman or by a substitute whom he appoints; yet its roll of crime is not less, but much greater, than that of Victoria.

From the official statistics of the Government, we find the arrests and summonses were as follows:—

	IN 1908.	VICTORIA.	N. S. WALES.
Offences against the person ...	1,793	...	3,629
" " property ...	3,894	...	6,765
Drunkenness ...	13,102	...	27,976
Total number of offences ...	60,604	...	73,164

The relative proportion of various offences to the number of the population in the two States is very striking. For every 100,000 of the population it is as follows:—

	VICTORIA.	N. S. WALES.
Offences against the person ...	141	229
" " property ...	308	427
Drunkenness ...	1,036	1,766

Equally significant is the record of the moral progress of Victoria, during a period of eighteen years, under a system of Secular Education in the schools:—

	FOR THE YEAR 1890.	1905.	1908.
Offences against the person ...	4,091	1,932	1,793
" " property ...	5,036	4,032	3,894
Drunkenness ...	18,501	14,458	13,102

During this period, while crime so largely decreased, the population increased from 1,140,405 in the year 1890 to 1,258,140 in the year 1908.

The advocates of Secular Education do not claim that it is proved that this striking reduction in crime is due to the educational system of Victoria; yet it may well be that, because the cause of sectarian disputes over religious teaching in the schools is removed, the mind of the people is concentrated on giving the most efficient education to the children, with a beneficent effect upon the morality of the

State. In any case, those who assert that Secular Education involves an increase in either crime or immorality are confronted with the official statistics of Victoria, which prove the contrary.

Those who know the Colonies best are under no delusions concerning Secular Education. A Primitive Methodist minister, writing to the Secretary of the League, states that he resided in different parts of Queensland for fourteen years,—

"where the objects of your League had been obtained, and I am not aware that the social or moral life of the people suffered. There was a total absence of religious bickering and strife, and a far more mutual and generous recognition among religious sects than I have seen in this country."

And Sir Robert Stout, K.C., M.G., Chief Justice of New Zealand, where Secular Education prevails, said in 1909:—

"I see more practical heathendom in London in one day than I should in a New Zealand back block in a year."

Lady Stout, the wife of Sir Robert Stout, in an article in the *London Standard* of January 9, 1912, has further dealt with this question. She states:—

"The Education Act was introduced by the late Hon. Mr. Rolleston, a loyal Churchman, and has had the effect, according to the Chief Justice, whose knowledge of the subject is first-hand, of decreasing crime. The original statistics show that the proportion of crime to 10,000 of the population in 1890 was 38.61.....and had fallen in 1908 to 31.84, although during these years there was a great increase of population from the United Kingdom, which supplies the greater number of our criminals."

Lady Stout then points out that the percentage of crime is more than twice as great among immigrants as among the native-born. Yet the immigrants come mainly from the United Kingdom, where State religious education obtains, while the native-born are educated under the secular system. "Surely proof positive that Secular Education decreases crime, as well as softens animosity." And Lady Stout adds: "The illegitimate birth-rate has decreased, and it has always been low, although the marriage-rate is much higher than formerly."

Surely, with these facts before us, the most timid may welcome the secular solution in our English schools without alarm for the morality of the country.

—Issued by the *Secular Education League*.

Acid Drops.

"Taking Sides" was the title of a fair-minded article in the *Daily Mirror*. Yet there was one bad flaw in it. The writer assumed that "the Turk's creed bids him seek converts at the point of the sword." This is a vulgar prejudice instilled into the minds of young people in this country by professional bigots. It is not derived from reading the *Kuran* or any other Mohammedan literature. In the last sentence of the article the writer commits the blunder of declaring that those who preach sympathy with a Christian nation simply because it is fighting a Heathen nation "preach less the teaching of Christ than that of Mohammed." This is another vulgar prejudice. Mohammed did not preach war on account of religion. Christ, on the other hand, was not entirely peaceable. He preached intolerance towards the Samaritans, and he is stated to be responsible for that dreadful text, "Those mine enemies that would not I should reign over them bring them hither and slay them before me."

The *Daily Mail* laughs at the Montenegrins claiming "God" on their side. There would have been nothing to laugh at if Great Britain had done it. Circumstances alter cases.

"Feed my sheep." And who are the sheep? Clergymen, lay preachers, and other persons filling jobs in and about the Church. They will smile when they read that Miss Abigail Hampton, aged sixty-seven, of Netherton, near Dudley, has left all her money and property to the Church. Her estate is valued at the tidy figure of £18,000. Nice pickings for the chosen.

Reynolds' refers to the names given to children baptised in church—such as Bernard Shaw and Winston Churchill. We've seen worse than that. We recollect Oliver Cromwell being fined for being drunk and disorderly, and Julius Caesar sentenced to a months' imprisonment for assault. Our contemporary refers to the recent complaint of the clergy in the Bristol diocese about the laxity in regard to god-fathers and god-mothers. Where the clergy are strict, persons are

brought in to act in that capacity for a pot of beer. Let us hope it is good beer.

A sentimental old lady would insist on kissing Mark Twain's hand. "How God must love you!" she said. Turning to his secretary as the old lady went out, Mark whispered, "I guess she hasn't heard of our strained relations." Mark was a Freethinker.

Canon Lord William Cecil is much concerned over the evangelising of China. Missionaries are needed there for the benefit of the Chinese, of course. The position is this: Unless the Chinese become Christians foreign enterprise "may seek to make money too rapidly out of an ignorant and submissive race." We do not doubt that the attempt might be made; but who will make it? Obviously the exploiters will be Christians. How, then, will the Chinese becoming Christians prevent other Christians trying to rob them? If it cannot make the people honest who are already Christian, what is the outlook for China when it becomes Christian? Perhaps Lord Cecil thinks that the adage "Honor among thieves" will then operate. Lord William Cecil added that he feared our industrial system transplanted into another country where the "atmosphere and environment of Christianity" might become a danger to China. One would imagine that "our industrial system" works with absolute beneficence with a Christian atmosphere and environment. We can imagine an educated Chinaman's smile if he read Lord William's remarks and compared them with the English records of sweating and starvation, of strikes and lockouts, of long hours and low wages. But the speech was, of course, for home consumption; and the speaker, presumably, knew his audience.

On August 14 last the Bishop of the Falkland Isles issued a letter through the press asking for £100,000 for the benefit of his diocese. He also threatened to resign unless the money was forthcoming. Doubtless the Bishop had visions of rich men and women kneeling before him, proffering substantial cheques and begging him to retain his post. Instead of this, the public told the Bishop to go back to his diocese, or to the Devil, or to any other destination he preferred. Anyway, the Bishop now writes that the fund has not been increased "to any extent"; and he is going back to his diocese a sadder, perhaps a wiser, certainly not a richer, man. Evidently there are limits to the gullibility of the British public. Or, perhaps, the appeal was not properly worded. He should have dwelt upon the commercial possibilities that would be opened up by the proper evangelisation of his diocese. Perhaps a study of the methods of Lord William Cecil and those who are at present booming the needs of China might help.

Mr. Hubert Handley, the author of *The Fatal Opulence of Bishops*, writes to the *Guardian* suggesting that the incomes for Canterbury, London, Winchester, and Durham should be fixed at £3,000, thus providing money for the endowments of new bishoprics. We wonder how Mr. Handley thinks bishops can get along on so pitiful a sum as £3,000 a year. Some time ago the Bishop of London took the public into his confidence, and produced a balance-sheet showing that, after he had paid for clothing, food, rates, carriages, servants, travelling, and personal expenditure, he had hardly anything left out of a £10,000 income. How, then, could we expect him to do on less than a third of the sum? The suggestion is ridiculous, and we do not expect to hear of the bishops surrendering anything at all. They might run to an appeal for subscriptions, but that is as much as one ought to expect.

Some time back books of the character of Dr. Frazer's *Golden Bough* would have been passed in silence by religious journals, at least. Such studies are now too common to be safely ignored, although they are far from welcome. We note that Professor Denney, in reviewing the last volumes of Professor Frazer's monumental work, raises a quavering protest against associating such studies with the Christian religion. He says that when the writer tells his readers that "the ancient Mexicans, even before the arrival of the Christian missionaries, were fully acquainted with the theological doctrine of substantiation," he "adopts a style which is not only wounding to many people who are entitled to respect, but repellant to others who are as free from theological superstition as himself." Professor Denney gravely writes against "the bad taste" with which the author sets out his conclusion. And the critic concludes with the observation that "to identify the blindest and most nureflecting superstitions with the results of conscious and reflective thought" is not the way to make the history of ideas intelligible.

All that this amounts to is that Christians do not like Dr. Frazer's work; and we should be astonished if they did. What Professor Denney means by the products of "conscious and reflective thought" is the mass of Christian reasonings about Christian doctrines. But the doctrines in question did not originate with this reasoning. The reasons were elaborated to account for their existence. Dr. Frazer's great merit is that he helps the modern mind to understand the mental conditions that gave religious beliefs their beginnings. He shows us the connection between the dying and resurrected god of vegetation and Jesus Christ, how the latter was merely a later variant from the former. Professor Denney retorts that "There is no analogy at all between the phenomena of nature, however poetically represented, and historical events." Criticism could hardly take a more hopelessly stupid form than this. The dying and resurrected Jesus is only historical in the sense that belief in the story is an historical fact. But that anyone who knows the number of parallel cases that can be cited from the world of savage religious belief should doubt that there is a real analogy in the two cases would pass comprehension were this frame of mind, real or assumed, not so common. No unprejudiced reader who studies the facts can doubt that, however obscure some of the details may be, the Jesus legend belongs to the group of myths that find their beginnings in "the blindest and most unreflecting superstition" of the savage.

This is really the truth that gives point to the studies of Frazer, as it gives point to similar studies by others. There is no other way of understanding current religious beliefs save by going back to primitive peoples and studying the social and mental conditions that gave them birth. That there are people in our midst who can still regard an alleged supernatural birth and resurrection as actual historic events, and can still treat the doctrine of transubstantiation as having any origin than the "unreflective superstition" of savages, is proof that primitive modes of thinking are still with us. And Dr. Frazer would very probably remind his critic that the primitive or animistic type of mind need not be sought only among savages. It can be found in Regent-street as well as in Central Africa. It may flourish in a college hall or in a stately cathedral as well as in a savage medicine-man's hut. If there is one thing certainly demonstrated by modern anthropology it is that the true beginning of all genuine religious beliefs are to be found in the uninformed speculations of primitive savages. They have no other basis and no other justification. And naturally Christians do not like the exposure.

Flowers abound in the vicinity of Carleton, near Pontefract, but none are forthcoming for the harvest decorations for the parish church. This makes the vicar very satirical in his parish magazine. What is usually sent it as flowers, he says, is "chiefly garden rubbish and earwigs." People used to delight in decorating their churches. But "the old joy" with which people "used to decorate the House of God" has departed, and "that which remains when the spirit is gone is but a corpse, and corpses are best buried out of sight." Hear, hear!

With what beautiful consistency the Vicar of Burton-on-Trent follows his Divine Master and Lord! Jesus says, "Give to him that asketh thee." A man "was running after the Rev. H. B. Freeman," the other day, "pulling his coat tails, and asking for threepence." The dear vicar, his heart brimming over with Christian love, and with the impulse to obey his Savior, in the letter, gave the beggar, not the threepence asked for, but one month's imprisonment. How happy this man of God must feel now! He has performed an ideal act of obedience, and thereby done something substantial towards the salvation of a poor human derelict?

Why do preachers and religious writers persist in telling lies? The first article in the *British Congregationalist* for October 3 bristles with palpable falsehoods. To say that Jesus taught "the brotherhood of all men" is to state an untruth. The brotherhood of all men is not a New Testament doctrine. "Brotherhood" in the phraseology of the Apostles signified the society of believers. This writer contends that Jesus "kindled a fire which inevitably brought oppressions and tyrannies to nought." When? Where? Is not Christianity chock-full of oppressions and tyrannies at this hour? Are not the poor oppressed in Great Britain to-day? What on earth is the use of saying that all men are equal in the sight of God when it is undeniable that they never have been and never can be equal in the sight of one another? It is time such vain dreaming and idealising ceased, and a beginning were made in really and boldly

facing the facts. This is, however, the last thing those who live on the faith are likely to do.

Rev. H. H. Carlisle, pastor of Balham Congregational Church, has invited the Rev. Dr. Warschauer to conduct there a special "Mission to the Modern Mind." This description does credit to the modesty of both; to Mr. Carlisle for supposing that the Modern Mind will be found in his chapel, and to Dr. Warschauer for supposing that the proper missionary to the Modern Mind is himself. We wonder what the Modern Mind will be like when the Mission is over.

A little *brochure* advertisement of Dr. Warschauer's Mission to the Modern Mind has been distributed at the doors of houses in the Balham district. We learn from this publication that he is "peculiarly competent to meet the subtle agnosticism of to-day." He has improved a great deal, then, since that Caxton Hall debate, in which he lost his temper and insulted the audience in anything but a "subtle" manner.

The Bishop of Birmingham was unable to attend the police-court to present a petition against the Sunday opening of picture shows, but sent a letter instead. The Bishop admits that "there are agencies at work on the Lord's Day whose power for evil would be greatly lessened if the cinematograph entertainments were allowed." One would imagine that this being granted, the Bishop would be all in favor of their opening. Instead of that, he hopes "most earnestly that the permit will not be given." His sole objection is that profit might be made out of them. Well, why not? Why should a man not make profit out of an entertainment that is not only admittedly harmless, but which is said to be actually beneficial? The objection to such places is really not that they produce profit, but that they are open. The question of profit is only introduced because it is thought that without profit the picture palaces would close. So they might. And so, too, would Birmingham be without its Bishop if the money were not forthcoming for his salary.

Mr. Charles Gulliver, manager of the Palladium and other music-halls, says, apropos of the Sunday question:—

"I think particular attention should be drawn to the fact that cathedrals, churches, and chapels are open on Sunday, and that this is their chief day of revenue. They are in most cases also open every day of the week, and it is really just as logical to ask them to keep closed on Sunday as it is to keep a music-hall shut. The places have been built in both cases for public attendance."

The *Daily Telegraph* calls this "a novel point." It is not; we have been saying the same thing for years, and are glad to find others insisting. What the proprietors of picture palaces and music-halls ought to do is to call a public meeting for the purpose of closing church and chapel on the Sabbath. This would attract attention and expose the clerical game.

"The Clerics Again" was the title of a very outspoken article in a recent number of the *Daily Record* (Glasgow). Here is a pertinent passage:—

"Incalculable damage has been done to Christianity by the bigotry of Sabbatarians who blindly insist that Sunday must be given over to psalm singing and the like. This was all very well and very good when the Church embraced the whole community; but now it only includes a fraction."

A plain blow from the shoulder.

We bought a copy of George Meredith's *Letters*, as we announced last week, but within twenty-four hours we received a complimentary copy from the editor through the publishers. This was not technically a review copy, but was forwarded to Mr. Foote on account of some of Meredith's letters to him being included in the collection. We thought it only fair to say as much. Our readers will see that we have quite another complaint to make now.

The *Times* review of George Meredith's *Letters* ended with the following words:—

"It is something to say that one is taken into the intimacies of a mind so rich, so full, that one wonders where there is another mind so rich, outside Shakespeare, in English literature."

Yet it is this richest mind after Shakespeare's that never wavered in admiring the "brave fight" that we were making for Freethought from his first letter to us in 1878 to his last letter to us (and probably his last letter to anyone) on April 23, 1909. This is news indeed to the general public, and the newspapers are taking care that it is not spread too widely.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, October 20, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, Regent-street, London, W.: at 7.30, "Religion and Marriage." (With remarks on Mr. H. G. Wells's new novel).

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

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £224 11s. 7d. Received since:—T. E. Willis, 2s. 6d.; G. B. Taylor, £1; F. G., 10s. 6d.; O. T. D., 5s.; S. Tyson, 5s.; D. W. S., 2s. 6d.; C. J., £3.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 20, Glasgow; 27, Birmingham. November 3, Croydon; 10, Manchester; 17, West Ham; 24, Leicester. December 15, West Ham.

J. F. AUST.—You flatter us. But we have always put our best brains and energy into the service of Freethought.

R. S. P.—See paragraph. Thanks.

T. E. WILLIS.—Pleased to have your appreciation of what you are good enough to call our "valiant efforts against the almost overwhelming hordes of superstition."

J. B.—It is good to see Freethinkers getting a fair innings in the correspondence columns of the *Birmingham Post and Mail*; but it would perhaps be prudent not to make too much of the fact; you might only stir up bigotry against the papers.

F. G., subscribing to our Fighting Fund, says: "This is from, once, a narrow-minded, bigoted Welshman. I enjoy the *Freethinker*, and I admire you, and more."

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

H. SMALLWOOD.—The writer has a very superficial knowledge of his subject. He refers to Shelley's "unhappy relations with Harriet Westbrook, Mary Godwin, and others." There were no "others." We almost regret, at times, that the art of printing was ever invented.

J. W. GOTT.—See "Sugar Plums." Your hint as to the "Pioneer Pamphlets" shall be taken.

MAY COLEMAN.—Our subscribers' copies are very carefully checked every week before posting, but things will go astray in the post. We hope your weekly copy will arrive regularly again. You must miss it greatly in the circumstances, surrounded as you are by bigoted Christians.

E. B.—Much obliged for cuttings.

BERT RICHARDSON.—You are too far off—an insuperable difficulty. Thanks all the same.

JULIET AND JULIAN.—Glad to have your hopes for the "success of the great fight for liberty" in which you say we are engaged.

J. ELLISON.—Too late for this week. In our next. Glad to have your wife's good wishes with your own.

H. PANKHURST.—Very glad to hear that Miss Kough had a large and interested audience at Stratford on Sunday evening, and was in excellent form despite the train accident that made her late. We hope Mr. Rosetti will also have a good audience at the Workman's Hall this evening (Oct. 20).

A. MILLAR.—Pleased to see your letter in the local newspaper. We wish many Freethinkers would follow your example in this respect.

G. B. TAYLOR.—Sorry you missed the Bradlaugh Dinner by being summoned to take command of the ship the night before. We noticed your absence. But the only regular thing in a profession like yours is its irregularity. We are glad to say that everything went off well.

GERTRUDE MASON.—Glad to hear Messrs. Gott and Jackson had such successful meetings at Preston.

CLARA GUNNING.—The complete poetical works of James Thomson (no p in it) are published by B. Dobell, Charing-cross-road, London, in two volumes at 12s. 6d. A very good volume of selections, including the *City of Dreadful Night*, is published at 2s. 6d. Glad you were so pleased with our opening lecture at Queen's Hall.

JOSEPH BRYCE.—We do not keep letters answered in this column, except in very special cases. You must have overlooked the references in our columns as to the book, its price, and how to obtain it.

J. MARTIN.—We will deal with Cardinal Logue's utterance next week.

W. HEAFORD.—Pleased to hear you had a good audience after all in the evening.

W. McCLELLAN.—The policemen are quite welcome to take notes of Mr. Jackson's lectures. It may save them from doing worse.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*

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

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, £40 12s. 6d. Received since:—Alfred J. Fincken, £1 1s.; J. F. Aust, 5s.; T. E. Willis, 2s. 6d.; G. B. Taylor, 10s.; O. T. D., 5s.; George Simpson, 2s.; H. J. Earthy, 1s. 6d.; T. Sands, 10s.; Ernest, 2s.; Juliet and Julian, 5s.; R. L. Bedford, 1s.; H. R. Phillips, 2s. 9d.; C. J., 10s.

Sugar Plums.

This number of the *Freethinker* will be in the hands of some of our London readers in time to remind them of the "social" at Anderton's Hotel on Thursday evening (Oct. 17). Any further words at this stage would be useless.

Mr. Foote had another excellent audience at Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening. Unfortunately he was late—a thing that has very rarely happened in the whole course of his experience as a lecturer. And it was no fault of his even in this case. The breaking of a coupling on a London Tilbury & Southend train cost him an hour and a quarter of his time; and, as bad luck seldom comes alone, on arriving at Fenchurch-street Station at last, the cab rank, which is generally full of taxi's, did not contain a single one, nor was there a sign of one on the horizon. Happily, the Queen's Hall audience was a good-tempered one and waited with exemplary patience. Happily, also, Mr. A. B. Moss, who afterwards took the chair, was pressed into giving a powerful recitation, which more than helped to pass away the time. Mr. Foote's arrival was loudly cheered, his explanation was obviously sufficient, and his lecture on "The Pulpit and the Stage on Sunday" was followed with the closest attention, freely broken with laughter and applause. Mr. Victor Roger, who came to take the chair, ceded the position to Mr. Moss. Both are ideal chairmen, Mr. Moss being, in addition, a very able lecturer.

Mr. Lloyd lectures twice to-day (Oct. 20) at the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow. The local "saints" should see that he has large audiences. Mr. Lloyd will do all the rest.

Birmingham "saints" will not hear Mr. Foote this autumn as usual, but they may have the pleasure of hearing Mr. Cohen in the great Town Hall to-day (Oct. 20). His subjects, at 3 and 7 o'clock, are very interesting, and should attract large audiences. We hope the local "saints" will do their utmost to make the lectures a success, for even a good audience looks rather lost in that great building. We may add that tea, at a small charge, will be provided between the lectures for visitors from a distance.

Mr. W. Heaford delivered two lectures for the Manchester Branch on Sunday. We very much regret that he did not have the assistance of the *Freethinker*. The postcard lecture-notice happened to come to grief between the publishing office on the ground floor and the composing room three floors further up. Had our attention been drawn to Mr. Heaford's visit to Manchester, we should have been glad to give it a paragraph in this column. Everything went the wrong way.

(Continued on p. 669.)

The Problem of Life.

IN his capacity as President of the British Association, Professor Schafer has delivered a memorable address. To say the least of it, the Professor's luminous exposition of the biological view of the Origin and Meaning of Life will do much to clear the air. His address is in every way satisfactory, save in one important particular. The President stumbled somewhat over the word "soul," by which he apparently means "mind." This eminent physiologist evidently considers that it is still advisable to throw an occasional pinch of incense on the altar of superstition. As Professor Ray Lankester has neatly put it:—

"Probably with a view to avoiding prejudiced discussion, he does not identify 'life' with what is called 'soul.' I do. I regard one as the logical outcome of the other. I am prepared to hold that what is meant by 'soul' has developed as part of life."

To those acquainted with the results of recent laboratory work, Professor Schafer's outspoken address will cause little surprise. As a matter of fact, there is nothing singular or strange in his views. The splendid article on "Life," from the pen of Dr. P. Chalmers Mitchell, in the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, largely anticipated Professor Schafer's presidential pronouncement.

In the days when the theory of organic evolution was gradually winning its way among the thoughtful and educated classes, evolutionists were solemnly warned that Darwin's Law failed to account for the origin of life even if it explained the origin of species. In those far distant days unscientific, and a few scientific, men were in the habit of declaring that the chasm which separated the lifeless from the living could never be bridged unless by some omnipotent hand. And now history again waggishly repeats itself, and an organ of light and leading which shall be nameless gravely states:—

"That when you know the constituents of anything you may be able to make that thing, and it is conceivable that some scientist in his laboratory may succeed in constructing synthetic protoplasm, just as some have claimed to construct synthetic rubber. But it is a long way from synthetic rubber to an india-rubber tree; and it is still further from a speck of artificial protoplasm, even if anyone had yet succeeded in making it, which is by no means the case, to a man, or a mollusc, or even a microbe."

All the solemn nonsense of the passage just quoted apart, Professor Bütschli has succeeded in producing artificial protoplasm. It resembles living protoplasm even in its movements, but it has no power of recuperation, and after a short time equilibrium is restored and its resemblances to living matter cease. It is, however, on the lines laid down by Bütschli that organic chemists are likely in the near future to manufacture a simple form of life.

Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, Hooker, and Haeckel all held that the evolution of life from lifeless matter in the early ages of the world is a logical corollary from the doctrine of descent. They were of opinion that the beginnings of life were in all probability ultra-microscopic, and that from these invisible forms such unicellular organisms as amœbæ were gradually developed. By a process of chemical synthesis primitive protoplasm was evolved, and this is precisely the process which organic chemists are striving to imitate. From primitive protoplasmic specks, then, all subsequent forms of living matter have been evolved. But according to orthodox biology the natural conditions essential to the spontaneous generation of living matter have long since passed away. And the prevalence of this conclusion is almost entirely owing to the alleged inability of all modern experimenters to generate life apart from antecedent life. That this cut-and-dried judgment has its justification cannot be denied.

Many years ago, Pouchet in France, and Charlton Bastian in England, sterilised a large number of decoctions and infusions of organic matter by

subjecting them to very high temperatures. Nevertheless, as their preparations cooled, living matter made its appearance in their experimental tubes. The results thus obtained were afterwards subjected to a rigorous examination by Pasteur and Tyndall. These eminent chemists apparently proved that only in those experiments in which the infusions had been imperfectly sterilised, or into which germs of life from the surrounding media had entered fractured tubes, did any form of life ever manifest itself. These results seemed so absolutely conclusive that biologists in general regarded the subject—in any case, from that particular point of view—as settled.

But Dr. Bastian's confidence in the truth of his conclusions was never impaired, and he took an early opportunity of retiring from his chair at University College, London, in order to devote the evening of his days to further investigation of the problem. He has since conducted a vast number of experiments and has published several fresh works on the subject. In his *Studies in Heterogenesis* his main results are to be found, and this elaborate volume contains nearly one thousand micro-photographs of his living products. But so impatient are biologists that when Dr. Bastian on one occasion requested two eminent scientists to examine some of his preparations, they positively refused to walk a few paces in order to look at them. We cannot tell whether Bastian's conclusions are sound or unsound, or whether his experimental work has been adequately safeguarded from error. There seems ample warranty for the remark of the *Times* leader writer (Sept. 5) that the matter requires serious re-investigation in the interests of truth.

Still, one is inclined to agree with Professor Schafer when he expresses the opinion that the extremely artificial conditions generated in preparations such as Bastian's sadly militate against the success of his experiments. Moreover, there is much in favor of Professor Schafer's further contention that no conclusive argument has ever been advanced in support of the hypothesis that the initial origin of living particles was confined to some early epoch of the earth's history. He favors the view that organic matter may have arisen at many different periods, and even more, that it may be arising still. Like a true philosopher, he calls for closer scrutiny of natural changes in non-living bodies which are taking place at every moment of our lives. It certainly seems an amazing circumstance that the lowliest forms of living substance should have persisted in an unchanged state throughout the immeasurably long periods which have witnessed the evolution of the entire world of life from simple forms of organic matter which, in some instances, are alleged to have undergone no evolution whatever. And this is what every biologist who assumes that life arose from non-living matter at one particular period of the earth's history, and at no other, is logically bound to concede. It cannot be denied that it is more in accordance with evolutionary philosophy to believe that unicellular life has continued to arise from inorganic matter from the dawn of life to the present hour. In any case, the vegetable kingdom as a whole is ceaselessly being built up out of non-living substances.

Many distinctions between organic and inorganic nature which were, until recently, accepted as absolute, are now known to be non-existent. If it were possible to prove any absolute differences in the constitution of living and lifeless matter—chemically considered—a shadowy foundation for the vitalistic theory might be admitted. The chemical constituents of organic matter are notoriously abundant. These elements are oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon, and with these phosphorus is almost certain to be combined. All the elements essential to life everywhere abound either in gaseous, liquid, or solid inorganic matter. The wonder and the mystery of life really reside in the complex architectural arrangement of the chemical particles which compose it. Nor can the process of reproduction any longer be regarded as a

feature which is special to organic nature. Inorganic substances, such as mercury, will follow the same process of simple division which constitutes the reproductive act of the simplest forms of life.

The more closely the phenomena of inorganic nature are studied, the less evidence we find for the agency of the supernatural influences of which Professor Schafer speaks so lightly. Even the highly involved processes of nuclear segmentation (karyokinesis), which appear to be necessary to hereditary transmission in animals and plants, have been detected in matter which is unquestionably lifeless.

To the power of reproduction possessed by non-living matter must be added that of growth. Crystals which are destitute of certain chemical elements essential to life nevertheless grow and reproduce their kind when placed within reach of the necessary nourishment. Leduc has demonstrated the growth of artificial gelatinous substances which strikingly suggest the growth of living things. And Loeb has proved experimentally that the fertilisation of the sea-urchin's egg, and the subsequent development of the entire animal may be brought about by the use of a simple chemical re-agent, or through a mechanical or electrical stimulus.

"Specific chemical substances secreted by certain organs, whose very existence had only been recognised of late years, played a part in the physiology of animals which appeared to be only second in importance to that of the nervous system itself. These substances (known as hormones) were formed in certain organs and carried by the blood to other parts of the body, whose cells they excite to activity. So important were certain of them that the maintenance of life might be impossible if they were absent. These substances were comparatively simple in their composition, and one at least had been manufactured in the chemical laboratory."

Many of the substances, said Professor Schafer, were produced by special secretory glands. Deficiency in the secretion of the thyroid gland led to a form of idiocy; excessive secretion resulted in nervous excitement. A leading authority on the subject of secretions, M. Gley, has said: "The origin and exercise of the highest faculties of man are governed by the purely chemical action of a product of secretion. Let the psychologists ponder these facts!"

That Materialism which has died so many times, and which has been so frequently interred in its last resting-place, has seemingly burst its cerements and risen from its untimely grave to push its detractors from their stools. That arch Materialist, Moleschott—whom even Huxley mildly deprecated—is quoted by Professor Schafer with unblushing approval. "Ohne Phosphor kein Gedanke" (without phosphorus no thought), said Moleschott. "Ohne Phosphor kein Leben" (without phosphorus no life) is equally true, says Professor Schafer. As already observed, this brave address contains but one concession to orthodox weakness, and the day seems near when men of science will refuse to stoop to any concession at all.

At the conclusion of his address, Professor Schafer dealt in a delightful manner with the question of longevity. After brushing aside "as devoid of foundation the idea of direct supernatural intervention in the production of life," the Professor naturally reviewed its after-history from a strictly rational standpoint. The opening of individual existence, its passage onwards through infancy, youth, manhood, towards death and decay, are all equally natural. He attached little value to Metchnikoff's theories concerning the prolongation of human life. As a matter of observed fact, the cells, apart from which no form of life is possible, are compelled to grow old and cease to function. Like any other specialised vehicle of energy, the cells of which the machinery is built up, have their day and cease to be.

"In man himself [declared Professor Schafer] the average length of life would probably be greater than the three score and ten years allotted to him by the Psalmist if we could eliminate the results of disease and accident.....If the terms of life given in the purely

mythological part of the Old Testament were credible, man would, in the early stages of his history, have possessed a remarkable power of resisting death and disease. But, although many here present were brought up to believe in their literal veracity, such records are no longer accepted even by the most orthodox theologians, and the 900 odd years with which Adam and his immediate descendants are credited, culminating in the 969 of Methuselah, have been relegated, with the account of the Creation and the Deluge, to their proper position in literature. When we come to the Hebrew patriarchs, we notice a considerable diminution to have taken place in what the insurance offices term 'the expectation of life.' Abraham is described as having lived to 175 years, Joseph and Joshua to 110, Moses to 120; even at that age 'his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated.'"

It is also noted that the duration of life became more normal in the age of the Kings of Israel. It is more than probable that the stories which we so frequently hear of centenarians and their wonderful doings would break down under investigation. The writer of this article, in any case, declines to credit these stories in the absence of the birth certificates of these "old, aged people."

Professor Schafer did well in mentioning the fact that religious beliefs have failed to reconcile the human race to dark inevitable death. In his peroration, he said:—

"Let us at least hope that, in the manner depicted by Dürer in his well-known etching, the sunshine which science irradiates may eventually put to flight the melancholy which hovers, bat-like, over the termination of our lives, and which even the anticipation of a future happier existence has not hitherto succeeded in dispelling."

T. F. PALMER.

Bible Society Balderdash.

"VARIETY is the spice of life" says the proverb, and the Annual Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, published under the curious title of "More Golden than Gold," covers so various a field that it appeals to the taste of the jaded Freethinker, bored to distraction by the multifarious appeals from the innumerable Churches of Christendom. The editor of the Report is a clever journalist, and he relieves the monotony of his continuous appeal for the cash of his readers by introducing quotations from all kinds of writers, some of whom one hardly expects to find in a work of this kind. A Freethinker like Matthew Arnold is dragged in by the heels to bolster the causes of superstition, and that popular novelist Mr. Anthony Hope is also laid under contribution. Apt quotations are made from Keats, Hood, Ruskin, Dr. Johnson, and other writers, with the unerring skill of the patent medicine advertisers, who attract readers to their pills to cure earthquakes by all the resources of literary artifice.

As an example of the up-to-date method of conveying information, one may refer to the statement that in 1909 the Society sent out 2,260 cases of Scriptures, weighing 272 tons; in 1910, 2,845 cases, weighing 333 tons; and in 1911, 3,644 cases, weighing 415 tons. The largest shipment in a single day consisted of 93 cases, whose total weight was 11 tons 9 cwt. This is a decidedly commercial method of estimating the output of "God's Word"; but one must remember that the Report is intended to invite subscriptions. Indeed, near the end of the book the reader is courteously informed that the German Emperor and the Viceroy of India are among the donors, whilst other contributors include the boys of Harrow School, and £8 from some "Chinese Presbyterians." Schoolboys appear to be devoted subscribers, for we read that 56 boys of an American orphanage left one week's meat for the benefit of the Society. Whether the authorities at headquarters had the food made up into sausages is not mentioned. Two old-age pensioners sent ten shillings for the "Socearty," a touching tribute of

illiteracy, which warmed the heart of the scholarly editor.

These are but a few specimens of the gems to be found in this work. That the appeal is worth issuing is evident, for the Report shows that the receipts last year reached the enormous total of £258,508 16s. 4d. The cost and production of the Bibles amounted to £125,173, and distribution, administration, and organisation (blessed words) cost £149,966.

These figures should make any Freethinker pause and reflect that Freethought propaganda has to make headway not only against gross ignorance, but against a most heavily endowed system of superstition. The British and Foreign Bible Society is but one of many similar institutions which have magnificent incomes. Hardly a week passes but one or the other of these organisations receives legacies. Against all this Freethought is most severely handicapped. Its publishers are daily in danger of prosecutions under ancient Acts of Parliament; its publications are boycotted, and but few booksellers have courage to stock them. In spite of it all, we are making headway. If Freethinkers would but systematically support their own institutions there would soon be a great alteration, and the struggle would be carried on under far more favorable conditions. What is needed is continuous support, for spasmodic supplies embarrass rather than help. If every Freethinker contributed a small sum regularly for propagandist purposes, more literature could be issued and put into circulation. Every Freethought pamphlet is a silent ambassador for reason against superstition. In fighting this battle we are opposing the twin deities, "God" and "Mammon"; and the latter is by far the more formidable antagonist.

MIMNERMUS.

Tales of Our Times.

BY A CYNIC.

I.

EVER since the days of his novitiate, when he was about sixteen years of age, had the old monk lived in the monastery. Daily for more than forty years had he participated in the solemn rites of the Mass. Daily had he said the offices till he knew his Breviary by heart, and could quite easily have dispensed with the book. His fastings and prayers, his confessions and penances, had been innumerable. And through it all no shadow of doubt had troubled his simple mind; till at last it came in very sudden and tragic a manner.

It was in the monastery chapel one night, during the singing of compline, that it came. Kneeling in the shadowy choir, his eyes fixed on the little starlike glow ever shining before the reserved sacrament on the high altar, the thought rushed into his mind like a blinding flash of lightning, *What if it be all a delusion?*

The thought stunned him as with an actual physical shock. He gasped like a drowning man, and clutched the book-rest with his lean trembling hands as his head sank on them.

Compline came to an end, and the monks passed silently out of the chapel; but he still knelt there like a man in a swoon. Presently he lifted his head and groaned, "Merciful God, what if it be all a delusion? Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison!"

And then he began to think. Not only of his own possibly wasted life did he think, but of the possibly wasted lives of all the human beings throughout all the ages who had ever devoted themselves to religion. If it were all a delusion, great God, what a tragic delusion it would be! What a mockery of humanity! He thought of the countless fanatics who had uselessly died for it, glorying in their useless deaths; of the countless willing martyrs who had suffered for it; of the countless persecuted ones who had been tortured and slain by it. He thought of all the wars which had been waged in its name, and of all their victims. He thought of all the false and futile hopes of eternal happiness; of all the needless, agonising fears of eternal misery which mankind has experienced through the belief in immortality. He thought of the innumerable prayers that humanity sends up daily to the possibly empty and unheeding heavens—of the thousands of useless Masses at the thousands of unhallowed altars—of the eternal murmur

of chant and hymn, of anthem and litany, echoing vainly through all the temples of the earth.

For several hours the old monk knelt there, till at last, cold, weary, and half crazed with his doubts and fears, he crept out of the chapel and went to his cheerless cell.

He had hoped that the morning might restore him to a calmer state of mind, but he was disappointed. The strange dread haunted him that all life's deepest hopes and beliefs, all that had really made up life itself to him, might be nothing more than a delusive dream, and for some days he lived in black despair. On his confessional day he opened his heart to his confessor with groans and tears. The confessor, a younger man than himself, of course took the orthodox view. "It is a suggestion of the Evil One, good father," he said. "Resist it to the death. Fast and pray unceasingly; and may God in his mercy help you to prevail."

The old monk fasted and prayed for a week. Every night, from compline till midnight, he kept vigil in the chapel, kneeling before the high altar under the faint ray of the solitary lamp perpetually shining before the host. "Oh God, give me a sign," he prayed in agony. "Oh, Jesu Christ, Oh Holy Mother, vouchsafe me but one small sign from heaven that this cup of anguish may pass from me." He gazed at the altar for hours in eager hope. Sometimes his deranged senses seemed to detect a faint light about the pyx in which the host was deposited, but the hallucination never developed beyond that. Had his disordered intellect been a little more disordered, had his fastings and vigils gone on a little longer, perhaps he would have seen some wondrous vision celestial, and thus his tortured soul would have found peace; but it was not to be.

One morning the monks found him dead in his cell, with a vial which had contained opium by his side. They also found a sealed letter addressed to his confessor. It ran: "Blame me not, my father. This agony is more than I can bear. I *must* know the truth, and this is my only way."

Of course there had to be an inquest, and the coroner brought in the usual verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity." And this time, at any rate, the coroner was right.

II.

A flutter of excitement is now and then caused in the theological world by the announcement of some archaeological discovery among Egyptian or Syrian ruins which is supposed, in some vague way, to confirm the declarations of Holy Writ. But these pious feelings of satisfaction, whenever God's Holy Word may plausibly be supposed to receive some slight support from the records of fallible man, sink into insignificance when compared with the religious excitement which took place over Professor Chiselton Flint's remarkable Yucatan discoveries.

As is well known, Professor Chiselton Flint, the famous archaeologist, had for some years been carrying on excavations among the ancient cities of Central America, and he some time ago announced his discovery of a clue to the translation of the strange inscriptions found there, which no one had hitherto been able to decipher. Among the many interesting facts which have thus come to our knowledge is the startling discovery that an account of Creation broadly similar to that ascribed to Moses, but containing far more detail, was current among those mysterious and long-forgotten people. And what is still more remarkable is the fact that, unlike the Mosaic account, the Yucatan account of Creation, so far as Professor Chiselton Flint has deciphered it, appears to be in perfect agreement with the latest results of science. Only a few scattered portions of this Yucatan Book of Genesis have so far been given to the world, and the following brief extract is a fair specimen of them:—

97. So God made an end of creating all the minute living things which are hidden from the eyes of men, but which cause diseases and death among them. And God saw that they were good.

98. And God blessed the minute living things and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, that ye may be ready to cause diseases and death among men and the higher animals when I shall have created them in the fulness of time.

99. And God said, Let us now make parasitic animals. So God made all manner of worms and creeping things that creep and feed within the bodies of animals higher and nobler than themselves. And behold these are the generations of the parasitic worms which God made.

100. A worm that liveth when young in the bodies of mice, and then passeth into the bodies of cats which eat the mice.

101. A worm that liveth when young in the bodies of hares and rabbits, and then passeth in like manner into the bodies of dogs.

102. A worm that liveth when young in the brains of sheep, and another that liveth when young in the brains of men, and thereafter pass on into the bodies of dogs.

103. Two kinds of worms that live when young the one in the bodies of swine and the other in the bodies of cattle, and then pass on into the bodies of men.

104. Likewise did God make a manner of worm which abideth in the livers of sheep, and causeth them to rot.

105. Likewise did God make many kinds of worms with thorny heads, whereby they may cling fast within the bowels of all manner of beasts of the fields, of fowls of the air, and of fishes of the sea.

106. And God looked upon all the worms which he had made, and behold they were very good. And God blessed them, saying, Though unto many of you I have given neither mouths nor stomachs, nevertheless for the present I will feed you with mine own hand, so be of good courage and fear not, but be fruitful and multiply, so that ye may be ready to cause diseases and death among men and the higher animals when I shall have created them in the fulness of time.

As showing the wonderful agreement between the Yucatan Genesis and modern science, the following note on the above extract by a famous zoologist (unfortunately it came too late for Huxley) may be of interest:—

"Verse 97 obviously refers to the Pathogenic Bacteria. Verses 100 to 103, inclusive, refer to the order Taeniada or Cestoid Worms, and even the species referred to can be identified with a fair amount of probability. Verse 100 evidently alludes to *Taenia Crassicolis*, whose intermediate bearers and final hosts are mice and cats respectively. Verse 101 may refer to *T. Serrata*. Verse 102 to *T. Coenurus* and *T. Echinococcus*. Verse 103 to *T. Solium* and *T. Mediocanellata*. Verse 104 probably refers to the Flake Worm, *Distoma Hepaticum*, and verse 105 to the *Acanthocephala*, of which there are numerous species."

It is not surprising that this "proof of the world-wide currency of the inspired narrative of Creation," as the theologians chose to consider it, and its marvellous anticipations of the discoveries of science, caused much satisfaction in religious circles. But this satisfaction was somewhat damped when Professor Chiseldon Flint recently announced a theory he had been led to form regarding the religious beliefs of these ancient people, and which each succeeding archaeological discovery has only tended to confirm. This is to the effect that the people who have left these wonderful remains were nothing else than highly civilised and cultured Devil worshippers, and that the word which he has hitherto been translating "God" should properly be rendered "Arch Fiend" or "Supreme Evil Principle."

Gold Dust from Ingersoll.

Custom meets us at the cradle and leaves us only at the tomb.

Nothing is so egoistic as ignorance.

The infidels of one age have been the aureole saints of the next.

The altar and the throne have leaned against and supported each other.

Liberty is the air of the soul, the sunshine of life.

Credulity is not a virtue, and investigation is not a crime.

The idea of immortality is like the rainbow—hope shining upon the tears of grief.

All progress in legislation for centuries consisted in repealing laws.

Education is the most radical thing in the world.

There are in nature neither rewards nor punishments; there are consequences.

Our first questions are answered by ignorance and our last by superstition.

Epithets are the arguments of malice.

In the name of universal benevolence Christians have hated their fellow men.

Arguments cannot be answered with insults.

Many people think they have got religion when they are troubled with dyspepsia. An absolute specific for that disease would be the hardest blow the Church has received.

The Church has reduced Spain to a guitar, Italy to a hand-organ, and Ireland to exile.

Keep your word with your child the same as you would with your banker.

Nothing is so prolific, nothing can lay and hatch so many eggs, as a good, healthy religious lie.

When a thing gets too idiotic in the pulpit, it is handed down to the Sunday-school. When it is too absurd for the children we give it to the missionaries.

We cannot say whether death is a wall or a door.

SUGAR PLUMS.—Continued.

Mr. Foote has given the Secular Society, Ltd., leave to publish—without any payment whatever to him—a new edition of his *Bible Handbook*. This book has always sold well, and is still in constant demand. The Society is therefore venturing to publish this new edition at sixpence—and a higher price bound in cloth. The price is astonishingly low, and the sale is expected just to cover the cost. It is a gallant propagandist effort.

Bible and Beer, number one of the "Pioneer Pamphlets," is in brisk demand. *Deity and Design*, by Mr. Cohen, is in the press, and will be on sale at our publishing office in a few days. This will be followed quite promptly by a new edition of Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses*, which has been put into print again, as such a brilliant lecture ought not to be unobtainable. Mr. Foote's *Christianity and Progress*—also long out of print—is to come next, and will be followed by Mr. Mann's *Modern Materialism*. Other ventures in this series of pamphlets will be announced shortly. We want to see them circulated widely amongst the general public. "Saints" ought to buy a dozen or more and give them away to likely persons they meet in the daily intercourse of life. Missionary work of this kind will greatly promote the spread of Freethought.

People seem to have been thinking that Mr. J. W. Gott has thrown up his clothes business as well as his publishing in accepting the post of organiser and literature seller to the Northern Propaganda. This is a mistake. Mr. Gott is ready and anxious to execute orders on the lines of his advertisement in our columns. Purchasers may always depend on getting good value for their money.

Mr. Gott reports, on behalf of himself and Mr. Jackson, splendid meetings on Sunday at Bolton, with a large sale for both the *Freethinker* and the new "Pioneer Pamphlet," *Bible and Beer*. There is sure to be a great sale for the pamphlet, Mr. Gott says, if it is put prominently before the public. He has hardly shown it to anyone who has not bought a copy. The Bolton Branch is still enrolling new members and holding meetings nearly every night. A series of indoor meetings is being arranged for during the winter, and London lecturers will be in great request. Preston was tried last week. It had a dreadful reputation for straightforward, over-the-bridge-you-go, bigotry; but it must have changed lately, or Mr. Jackson must have grown diabolically persuasive, for Mr. Gott describes "the natives" as "the nicest lot of people we have yet met anywhere." The new Branch numbers twenty members already, thanks largely to the efforts of Mr. A. Potts. The Branch is also happy in having as a member Miss Gertrude Mason, 34 Baird-street. She is acting as secretary *pro tem*, and is throwing a lot of energy into the work. She is well known in the town as a fine vocalist. At Preston also indoor lectures are to be organised during the winter. They hope to hear Mr. Foote, but that cannot be this year, anyhow. But there are others. For the Freethought platform was always famous for fine speakers.

The large Public Hall, Croydon, has been engaged for Sunday evening lectures in November, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd. Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Moss, and Miss Kough fill up the program.

A further step has been taken in the movement protesting against the action of the L.C.C. in relation to public meetings in the London Parks. On October 15 a meeting of representatives from the Gasworkers Union, the Independent Labor Party, the British Socialist Party, the Dockers Union, the London Trades Council, and the National Secular Society, took place. Mr. G. W. Foote was elected chairman, and after some discussion the following resolutions were adopted:—

1. That a deputation be appointed to wait on the Parks Committee, after receiving the necessary permission.
2. That Mr. B. Cooper (London Trades Council) be the spokesman on behalf of the deputation.
3. That Mr. G. W. Foote (N. S. S.), Mr. Lee (B. S. P.), and Mr. B. Cooper (L. T. C.) prepare a circular stating the objects of the deputation, and that each member of the Parks Committee be furnished with a copy.

A correspondent at New Zealand writes:—

"I have fortunately been presented with some old back numbers of the *Freethinker*, and find them to be the greatest entertainment I possess. Although they were more or less in pieces, I have carefully bound them up in handy reading form, and spend many calm and pleasant hours reading good healthy common sense."

Our correspondent wants a catalogue of Freethought books, and wishes to become a *Freethinker* subscriber.

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.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, Regent-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Religion and Marriage." (With remarks on Mr. H. G. Wells's new novel.)

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmen's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, R. H. Rosetti, "The Gospels: When, Where, and by Whom Written?"

OUTDOOR.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Davidson, "The Real Father of Lies."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): C. Cohen, 3, "Christianity and the Labor Problem"; 7, "The Logic of Life."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): J. T. Lloyd, 12 noon, "New Light on the Origin of Life"; 6.30, "The Alleged Conversion of Science."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Sidney Wollen, "From Whence Comest Thou?"

OUTDOOR.

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE: Thos. A. Jackson—Burnley (Market Ground): October 20, at 11, "The Philosophy of Secularism"; at 3, "The Bible and Beer"; at 6.30, "Will Christ Save Us?" Padiham (Town Centre): 21, at 7.30, "The Bible and Beer." Nelson (Chapel-street): 22, at 7.30, "The Salvation Army." Colne (Cumberland-street): 23, at 7.30, "The Bible and Beer"; 24, at 7.30, "The Philosophy of Secularism." Skipton (Sheep-street): 25, at 7.30, "The Bible and Beer." Leeds (Town Hall Square): 26, at 7.30, "The Bible and Beer."

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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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