

# THE Freethinker

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*I have always noticed that the people who have the smallest souls make the most fuss about getting them saved.*—INGERSOLL.

## “Materialism” and Divorce.—II.

WE left Mr. Harold Begbie, at the conclusion of our previous article, protesting that if legislation were passed on the basis of the Majority Report of the Divorce Commission it would be “the greatest act of national apostasy in British history.” We had just room to remark how nonsensical and belated this was. Christ’s authority was set aside, and the great act of “national apostasy” was committed, when Jews were admitted to Parliament; and it was clinched, so to speak, when Atheists were admitted to Parliament, as they are under Bradlaugh’s Oaths to Parliament. Cardinal Newman pointed this out when he was asked to sign the memorial, which Cardinal Manning was eagerly promoting, against Bradlaugh’s admission to the House of Commons. He said that the only Oath he recognised was the Christian Oath, that this had been abolished when a mere Theistic Oath was substituted for it in order to allow Jews to enter Parliament, as Brahmans or Mohammedans might do, that he had no interest whatever in such an Oath, and that he declined to be troubled in any way about it. Bradlaugh might as well be in Parliament as Rothschild; an Atheist, from the Catholic point of view, should be just as welcome as a Jew.

Mr. Begbie rebukes and condemns. He does not argue. But this is eminently a case for argument. It is useless to cite the authority of Christ; for, in the first place, there is disagreement between Catholic and Protestant, and then again between Protestant and Protestant, as to what Christ really taught,—and, in the second place, Christ was never face to face with the peculiar evils of our more complex modern society. Mr. Begbie almost talks as if the present Commission were recommending the introduction of Divorce; but Divorce has long existed under English law, and all that the Commission recommends is an extension of Divorce in certain directions; and, as no new principle is involved, each recommendation should be judged simply upon its merits—that is, its prospect of increasing the happiness and dignity of all it concerns. Now it is admitted that great evils do exist under the present marriage law. Husbands and wives, for instance, are treated with gross inequality; the grounds of divorce are not the same for both; a husband may divorce his wife for a single act of adultery, whereas a wife cannot divorce her husband though he live a continuous life of adultery, unless that offence be accompanied by independent acts of cruelty—as if there were not cruelty enough in the adultery itself! Then again there are thousands of husbands and wives who are legally separated through magistrates’ orders; they live apart and often, if not generally, drift away from each other’s sight; and the result is, unless they are abnormally frigid or superhumanly virtuous, the formation of illegal attachments and the birth of illegitimate children. This perfectly natural result of the law of separation has become positively scandalous. Everybody sees it—Mr. Begbie ought to see it

—at any rate the Commissioners see it, and they were publicly appointed to consider the matter carefully and suggest wise and feasible remedies, which they have honestly done to the best of their abilities.

The Majority Report recommends, first of all, the establishment of equality between the sexes in regard to Divorce. Let us hear them on this point:—

“Apart from abstract justice the strongest reason for placing the sexes on an equality is that, where two standards exist, there is a tendency to accept the lower for both parties. The social and economic position of women has greatly changed in the last hundred and even in the last fifty years. The Married Woman’s Property Act, 1882, has given them a new status in regard to property; they engage freely in business and in the professions, and in municipal, educational, and Poor Law administration, and claim equality of treatment with men. In our opinion it is impossible to maintain a different standard of morality in the marriage relation, without creating the impression that justice is denied to women, an impression that must tend to lower the respect in which the marriage law is held by women.”

Thus does justice in England hobble after the state of things which obtained at Rome some seventeen hundred years ago. When the great Marcus Aurelius issued a fresh decree against adulterous wives he added this proviso, that the husband himself should have shown his wife an example of virtue, for it would be infamous that he should expect from her a fidelity which he did not himself maintain.

Separation, of course, is a kind of divorce; it is practically divorce without the right of re-marriage. Already, in the bulk of cases, it is poverty which compels people to rest satisfied with separation instead of divorce. They cannot pay for the legal procedure which leads to the larger freedom. This state of things is, as the Commissioners recognise, a great hardship to the poorer sections of the community. Accordingly they propose fresh machinery for the trial of divorce actions all over the country, and they propose to make divorce itself obtainable on all the more serious grounds on which separation orders are obtained now. Their conclusion is as follows:—

“We recommend as grounds for dissolving marriage:—

- (1) Adultery.
- (2) Wilful desertion for three years and upwards.
- (3) Cruelty.
- (4) Incurable Insanity, after five years’ confinement.
- (5) Habitual Drunkenness, found incurable after three years from first order.
- (6) Imprisonment under commuted death sentence.”

Surely this is very reasonable. Divorce exists already, and the Commissioners recommend its being granted on these six grounds, letting both sexes fare alike before the law of the land. “Six grounds!” Mr. Begbie cries—“Christ only allowed one ground. Shall we fly in the face of Christ?” Well, why not? What the State is, or should be, concerned with is the secular welfare of its subjects. Nothing less, and nothing more. In this matter religion ceases to be a public affair, and is left to private effort and private organisation, as the State takes control, one after the other, of all departments of social existence. The law of progress here will be the same as in national education.

If it be argued that making Divorce easier degrades the institution of marriage, the answer may be given

in the words of the Commissioners :—

"The fear of those who would treat the marriage tie as indissoluble, or would oppose any extension of the present grounds for divorce, is that the stability of the marriage tie in general would be adversely affected and that there would be a general lowering of the standard of morality. We believe that this fear is groundless, that it ignores the actual experiences of life, and that, if it were strictly acted on, it would perpetuate the evil results produced by the present state of the law. The remedy of divorce is at present, as we have shown, practically inaccessible to the poorer classes, and the evidence before the Commission shows that this state of things does not tend to develop due regard for marriage, but the reverse."

The Minority Report, stating the Church view, argues that Christian marriage should be cultivated by the State because sixty per cent. of the brides and bridegrooms are married with Christian ceremonies. But that percentage is a constantly diminishing one. Civil marriage, which began, of course, with one couple, is gaining every year, and a further 10 per cent. will destroy this pretty Church argument altogether.

There is only one ultimate way out of the religious difficulty. The Bishop of St. Albans suggested it in his evidence before the Commission. "Universal civil marriage, the religious bodies being free to lay down their own rules with regard to the bestowal of the Church's benediction." Such is one sensible Bishop's advice. And to this complexion they must come at last.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Intolerance in Church and State.

ONE of the stock arguments of orthodox Nonconformists used to be that the alliance of Church and State led inevitably to tyranny. It was argued that the Church learned to depend upon the weapon of secular force, instead of relying upon spiritual persuasion, and, in the long run, its spiritual life deteriorated. Another form of the same argument is used by all religionists when replying to charges of persecution. Those who bring such charges, they say, fail to discriminate between two entirely distinct things. It is true that Churches have persecuted, but the persecuting spirit does not belong, in origin, to religion. It is rather the element of secular force used in the interests of religion than an intolerance that springs from religion itself. Often for its own purposes the State has seen fit to patronise a particular religion, and the representatives of that religion have not usually been strong enough to withstand the temptation to use force against their adversaries. Hence the generalisation that a State Church is always a persecuting Church, with the corollary that religion, as such, has nothing to do with so secular a thing as persecution.

The generalisation is, at first glance, plausible; and to those who are not in the habit of disentangling the factors in a complex problem, it is very persuasive. Certainly State Churches have always persecuted, and with equal certainty they must have the support of the secular power to persecute. It is equally true that the abolition of a State Church might lead to greater toleration; if so, this would only be because the conditions that lead to Disestablishment themselves express a growing measure of toleration in the community at large. But there is no reason whatever for assuming that the Established Church is, on the whole, less tolerant than the Dissenting Churches. The presumption seems rather the other way about.

But the kernel of the argument is, that in any alliance of religion with the State it is the secular State that furnishes the element of persecution, and so far corrupts the purity of religion. And this argument is not only demonstrably untrue, it is a complete reversal of the truth. It is not denied that the State, as State, has persecuted. Nor is it denied that men may be intolerant irrespective of what their opinions may be. Mere emotional bias will easily lead some people to hate what they reject,

the more easily when the opinion rejected is thought to have a direct and important bearing on conduct. What is claimed is that (1) The great culture-ground of intolerance is religion; (2) That secular affairs as naturally breed tolerance; and (3) That the alliance of religion with the State has fostered persecution by the State, all the restraining influences coming from the secular half of the partnership.

To commence with, there is a peculiar psychological attitude of most people in relation to religious and secular affairs. In secular matters—politics, science, literature, or art—opinions may differ, feelings run high, and a degree of intolerance be exhibited; but the right to differ remains unquestioned—its legitimacy is tacitly conceded by all. Moreover, the settlement of opinion by discussion is recognised. In religious affairs it is the very right of difference that is challenged, and the legitimacy of discussion that is denied. And it is also important to note that this intolerance is exalted in religious affairs to the rank of a virtue. A man may be intolerant in politics or elsewhere, but he will usually have the grace to be ashamed of it. In most cases he will warmly resent the imputation. But in religion it is the other way about. Instead of counting intolerance as a vice, he regards it as a virtue. Refusal to discuss the validity of religious beliefs will be taken as proof of a highly developed spiritual nature, just as a wide toleration of diverging religious opinions will be taken as an indication of unbelief. Most people would resent men in the position of Mr. Asquith or Mr. Balfour refusing to sit down to dinner with those of an opposite political opinion. But how many are there who would see anything improper in the Archbishop of Canterbury declining to dine with avowed Atheists?

Looked at from the proper point of view, this brings us to the very heart of the subject. For the distinction noted is one that has been persistent throughout the whole of human history. More than that, it marks the distinctive characteristics of the secular and the religious halves of life. The whole tendency of religion is towards intolerance, and in such a way that to be tolerant marks a declining sense of the importance of religious belief. On the other hand, the tendency of secular affairs is towards toleration, people being driven to a mutual give-and-take attitude by the normal pressure of social life. And religion only relaxes its intolerance as secular considerations assume a controlling position.

So far as I am aware, there is no disinclination among groups of primitive people to discuss purely secular affairs. On the contrary, it seems the rule for these to be debated, and a final course of action settled as a result of the discussion. One would hardly expect the state of affairs to be different. In warfare or in carrying out peaceful pursuits so many of the circumstances are of a determinable character, and so clearly to be settled by an appeal to experience and judgment, that they represent a legitimate field for discussion. And discussion breeds toleration, since the very putting up of a subject for discussion implies the possibility of one being in error. And error here is of an innocent nature, carrying with it no other consequences than those that necessarily follow faulty judgment.

With religious belief the position from the outset is entirely different. There is little room here for discussion, and quite as little play for judgment. It is entirely a question of pleasing or displeasing the gods. To discuss the reasonableness of their requirements is in itself an act of disloyalty and danger. Just as certain survivals of the Stone Age argue today that a drought or an earthquake affects all because God is angry with some, so early societies regard the heretic as one who must be suppressed because he may bring danger to the tribe. He is the spiritual Jonah who must be thrown overboard to save the social vessel. It is this feeling that gives persecution its earliest social sanction, and which endows the persecutor with the quality of a social benefactor. The primitive medicine-man, like the contemporary clergyman, claims to be the guardian

of social welfare because he is keeping man on good terms with his deities. The pedigree of religious intolerance is thus clear. It is not something that is derived from the control of secular affairs. It is inherent in the nature of religious belief, and whatever proneness there may be in human nature to intolerance has been fostered and raised to the status of a virtue by religious sanction. This will also explain why, although intolerance may be manifested in many directions, it is only in connection with religion that people are not ashamed of it.

We have thus two tendencies in human affairs. On the one side, secular affairs, which normally make for a greater toleration of opinion, and is, so far, averse to persecution; on the other side, religious belief, which can only relinquish intolerance and persecution as society becomes convinced of its social unimportance. Instead of its being true that persecution is due to the intrusion of the State into the affairs of the Church—Christian or non-Christian—the truth is that the State has always been encouraged to persecute by the Church, which has provided the one element upon which persecution could persist. I know all that may be said concerning the persecutions set on foot by governments and by vested interests in general. And while much that may be said on this head is indisputable, there are obvious limits beyond which persecution cannot go. A government cannot destroy its subjects, or, if it does, the government itself disappears. And the most thorough scheme of exploitation must ultimately leave its victims enough on which to live. The standard of living may be depressed, but the possibility of living must be allowed. And there are numerous considerations that induce both governmental despotism and financial exploitation to refrain from pushing its powers to the extreme limit.

It may safely be said that no government, actuated solely by secular considerations, would have committed the suicidal act that Spain did when it drove out the Moors and the Jews. Indeed, for over a hundred years, the landed aristocracy of Spain and the king actually resisted expulsion because of the secular consequences that would ensue. It was the driving power of religious belief that finally brought about the expulsions. Religion alone could preach that it was better for the monarch to rule over a desert than over a nation of Jews and unbelievers. And the same thing was repeated at a later date in France over the expulsions of the Huguenots. Here, again, the Crown for some time resented the suggestions of the Church, and for the same reason. In both these cases, and in that of the emigrations from England also, the departure of thousands of peaceful and industrious citizens would have been neither enforced nor encouraged in the absence of the element of religion. And it is still further significant that in many cases where rulers or governments have desired to persecute an opinion, this has usually been done in the guise of a religious crusade. So far it is true that the State has used religion for its own purposes; but while this may explain special persecutions, it leaves unexplained the important fact that, given the sanction of religion, intolerance and persecution assume the rank of social virtues. Still further must it be noted that in our own social life it is only in relation to the Crown that intolerance is manifested as something to be proud of. People resent the imputation of disloyalty to the King, as they do the imputation of Atheism. And it is here highly significant that the kingdom presents us with an office that carries us back to the primitive priest, and which has always surrounded itself with an atmosphere of religion.

As a matter of both fact and theory, it is incorrect to attribute the persistence of intolerance to the influence of the State on the Church. It is really the other way about. It is the State that has been the restraining influence, and which remains the restraining influence to-day. Even in the quarrels of sects, the State has frequently to play the part of a policeman, and insist that observance of social

order is superior to questions of theological rectitude. And it needs little study to show that in every European State it has been the growth of purely secular forces that is responsible for the greater degree of toleration expressed by religious people. Without their being aware of it, their sense of the value of religion, and their certainty of its truth has been weakened. Their minds have become more accessible to the play of forces that lead us to apply a practicable secular rule of life instead of an impossible theological one. And a growing sense of the nature and importance of social affairs cannot but lead to a weakening of that religious conviction which is the real perpetuator of intolerance of mind and uncharitableness of disposition.

C. COHEN.

### Thomas Henry Huxley.

IN the year 1901 Professor W. Newton Clarke, D.D., delivered an address before the Oberlin Theological Seminary and before the Alumni of Colgate University, entitled "Huxley and Phillips Brooks," which afterwards appeared in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, and is now in circulation in this country as a booklet, published by Mr. H. R. Allenson. Unlike the generality of theologians, Dr. Clarke speaks of Huxley in terms of highest praise. In his estimation, the scientist was "a man of sturdy will, of cheerful temperament, of sparkling wit and various humor, of broad interests," whose "intellectual attitude was simply and steadily that of an honest man," and who was "a firm believer in morals as the highest human interest." As is well known, Dr. Clarke was a theologian of great eminence, and his greatest work, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, has exerted a tremendous influence upon the theological world. In the booklet now before us he honestly endeavors, to the utmost of his ability, to be fair to Huxley, though unable to hide the fact that his heart is with the celebrated Bishop of Massachusetts. It must be frankly admitted that Brooks was a great man, who sincerely loved and desired to serve his fellow-beings. The two men met more than once in London—once as guests of James Russell Lowell; but they were not drawn to each other. The scientist talked, but the Bishop was silent. Dr. Clarke expresses the opinion that "perhaps Brooks could have understood Huxley better than Huxley could have understood Brooks," but no evidence is adduced in confirmation of the opinion.

The two men were contemporaries, Huxley being the senior by ten years, though Brooks predeceased him by three years; but the object served by bringing them together is to emphasise the contrast between them, and in that contrast to find an argument for the superiority of Brooks. The purpose of this article is, while recognising the contrast, to found on it an argument for the superiority of Huxley. Dr. Clarke makes the mistake of calling Huxley a naturalist, which proves that he had not read his *Life and Essays* very carefully. As a matter of fact, Huxley had a constitutional aversion to the naturalist's work, such as collecting and species work. It was as a biologist that he won his pre-eminence. When Darwin's *Origin of Species* came out, he was a vigorous anti-evolutionist, and for a long time he could not bring himself to acceptance of the theory, though afterwards he did more than all others put together to convince the scientific world of its truth. And yet, even to the end of his life, the evidences did not quite satisfy him. It was this great characteristic that landed him in Atheism, or, as he euphemistically preferred to call it, Agnosticism. It is wholly immaterial what label a man wears, or whether he dons any label whatever, as long as we know where exactly he stands. Huxley disowned Materialism, though admittedly treating life in terms of matter, and hotly resented the charge of Atheism, while candidly confessing that from the Christian point of view he was undoubtedly an Atheist. The point on which there can be no

shadow of doubt is that he lived a highly beautiful and useful life without any help whatsoever from religion. Of the truth of religion he could not discover a single scrap of evidence. This is how Professor Clarke puts it:—

"The story of Huxley's Agnosticism is simply the story of his honesty. To his own great loss, 'not proven' was his verdict concerning God and the soul, eternity and religion. To him, of course, not proven meant not available."

Now, to Phillips Brooks, God and the soul, eternity and religion were the supreme realities. He lived in closest touch with them, and his business in life was to make them equally real to others. "In the realm that to Huxley was non-existent, Brooks lived and moved and had his being." Here is the pith of his creed:—

"I knew all about God before you told me," said little, blind, deaf, dumb Helen Keller to me one day, 'only I did not know his name.' It was a perfect expression of the innateness of the Divine idea in the human mind, of the belonging of the human soul to God.....Religion comes directly from the soul of God laid immediately upon and pressing itself into the soul of everyone of his children. It is the gift of the total nature of God to the total nature of man. Therefore it can utter itself only through the total human life, which is the personal life."

Unquestionably, the Bishop fully enjoyed the Christian life. He had seasons of sublime ecstasy, of enrapturing fellowship with the unseen God, of soul-intimacy with the ascended Christ; and he was serenely confident of the actual existence of the spiritual world. "God meant Christ, and Christ meant God; and under either name he had before him the reality which he felt to be the glory of this world and of all worlds."

Such was the contrast between Huxley and Phillips Brooks, and such is always the contrast between the Agnostic and the Christian. Dr. Clarke states truly that "when such a contrast as this appears we are compelled to say that one of the two men must have been right, and the other wrong," either that Huxley was living without his birthright, or that Brooks had no right to be; and eventually he expresses the conviction that "it certainly seems more probable that Huxley was living without his birthright than that Brooks and all his kind are really and properly impossible." Whence this probability springs we are not informed; nor does the author make the slightest attempt to prove that it even exists. Instead of that he tries to explain why Huxley was an Agnostic; and the only explanation he can offer is the silliest imaginable, namely, that Huxley was an Agnostic because he was "a student of life below man," while Brooks was a Christian believer because he was a student of life in man and above man. What is a man's birthright? The natural development and unfettered use of his intelligence, the right to think for himself and to acquire knowledge by diligently interrogating Nature. This birthright is stolen from every child trained to believe without evidence and to accept as true statements absolutely unsusceptible of verification. The essential difference between Huxley and Brooks was that the former investigated the known world in a thoroughly scientific fashion, while the latter believed in an unseen and unknown world, and then indulged in empty dreams about it. Every believer makes everything out of nothing; a feat which, according to the Shorter Catechism, God performed in the beginning. God and the soul, eternity and religion, are fantastic existences; and, consequently, they are never any other than objects of belief. That is the reason why Dr. Clarke could not reason concerning them, why he never attempted any formal demonstration of their reality. He could only believe and dogmatise. Who in his senses can "think of knowledge and faith towards God as a birthright"? Knowledge of God is non-existent, and naturally cannot be a birthright. Nor is belief in God a birthright, but, rather, an encumbrance, or foreign element, forced upon children before they have learned the art of thinking. Dr. Clarke exhorts his

readers to "insist upon the right of the soul to know its God"; but in that exhortation he gratuitously *assumes* the existence of the soul and of God. No one can prove that there is a soul to know, or a God to be known.

It is a fundamental error to imagine that Atheists are made by a persistent study of life below man. Life is a unity from structureless moneron to highly organised man. Nature herself is a unity from bottom to top; and of anything beyond or above Nature there is positively no trace. Nature is of such a character that a God of Nature is unthinkable. It was the essential unthinkableness of the Deity that turned such men as Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall into Agnostics; and it is the popular realisation of that unthinkableness that causes the steady decay of religion so profoundly deplored by the leaders of the Churches. Dr. Clarke says:—

"The world of man must have a God, and only the world of a good God would contain man. By the methods of the non-personal cosmic order, Huxley was quite sure that no God could be found. By the methods of the personal life Brooks was sure that he had found God and had the right to glory in him."

The world of man is rapidly learning to get on well enough without God; and we are sure that if a good God existed both the non-personal cosmic order and the world of man would be radically different from what they are. The contemplation of either would compel a good God to hide his head for very shame, or drive him mad. Huxley knew fully as much about man as Bishop Phillips Brooks, and incalculably more about Nature generally; and it was this knowledge that made it impossible for him to believe in God. The theologians believe in a good God in spite of the existence of a universe that is not good, with the result that they are obliged to devote their whole time to the endless task of clearing his character. Theodicies are as numerous as blackberries, and not one of them is worth the paper on which it is printed. Dr. Clarke's booklet contains one lovely truism that must be quoted: "If all men thought as Huxley thought, no man could ever live as Brooks lived." What a brilliant discovery! It is comforting to know that the world is slowly getting to think as Huxley and his comrades thought, and that the number of those who live as the Bishop lived is continually decreasing. We maintain that both Huxley's thought and life were of immeasurably greater value to the world than those of any theologian that ever lived.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Passing of Jesus.—III.

(Continued from p. 763.)

"The marvellous is the grand resource of sacerdotal imposture; nothing is so strongly believed as that which is incredible. Bishop Synesius said miracles were cheap for a people at any price, as without miracles they could not be kept religiously in order. The entire life of Christ has been composed in that spirit. Its fabricators have connected fictitious events, not only with known places, as did the ancient poets in their fables concerning Hercules, Bacchus, Osiris, and other personifications; but also to known names and a known epoch, such as the age of Augustus, of Tiberius, of Pontius Pilate, etc.; which proves not the real existence of Christ, but merely that the sacerdotal fiction was invented after that epoch."—DREWS, *Origin of the Christian Religion*, pp. 32-33; Southwell's edition.

"Christ takes just the same position in the religious-social brotherhoods which are named after him as Attis has in the Phrygian, Adonis in the Syrian, Osiris in the Egyptian, Dionysus, Hercules, Hermes, Asclepius, etc., in the Greek cult-associations. He is but another form of these club-gods or patrons of communities, and the cult devoted to him shows in essentials the same forms as those devoted to the divinities above named.....It was at bottom merely an alteration of the name, not of the matter, when the High Priest of Attis blended his role with that of the High Priest of Christ, and the Christ-cult spread itself from this new point far over the other parts of the Roman Empire."—

PROFESSOR A. DREWS, *The Christ Myth*; 1910; p. 264.

WITH the central position of Professor Smith's *Eccle Deus* we are far from agreeing. In his chapters, the "Content of the Gospel," "The Secret of Primitive

Christianity," and "The Active Principle of Christianity," he contends that primitive Christianity was in its earliest manifestation "a *Protest against Idolatry*; it was a *Crusade for Monotheism*" (the italics are his own). We are told that everywhere where Jesus or his disciples are represented as casting out demons, we should understand by demons the Pagan gods. This seems to us too much like the explanations of the orthodox theologians. Then, the Professor asks, why "was this Jesus-cult originally secret, and expressed in such guarded parabolic terms as made it unintelligible to the multitude?" (p. 45); and replies: It was to avoid persecution by the Pagans, whose gods they denied. But, if there is any truth in the Gospels, the Gospel was first taught to the Jews, and the Jews were Monotheists already, and therefore there was nothing to fear on that account. The author anticipates this objection without successfully meeting it. He says: "'What?' says an objector, 'were not the Jews already the strictest Monotheists?' Certainly they *thought* so; but some enthusiastic Christians would not admit it, as we have learned from the Apology of Aristides" (p. 71).

But the citation he makes from Aristides by no means bears out his contention. It is as follows:—

"The Jews then say that God is one, creator of all and almighty; and that it is not proper for us that anything else should be worshiped, but this God only. And in this they appear to be much nearer to the truth than all the peoples, in that they worship God more exceedingly, and not his works."

But he goes on to complain that, while "they suppose in their minds that they are serving God," "in the methods of their actions their service is to angels, and not to God, in that they observe Sabbaths and new moons, and the Passover, and the great fast, and the fast, and circumcision, and cleanness of meats, which things not even thus have they perfectly observed."

This was a case of the pot calling the kettle black, with a vengeance. Did not the Christians observe the Sabbath and believe in the same angel hosts recorded in the Old Testament? And although they discarded the Passover and the great Jewish fast, they instituted a fast of their own at Easter, and added the ritual of Baptism and the Communion in place of circumcision.

It was really the Christians who discarded Monotheism. It is true they took over the God of Israel, with his retinue of white angels, and Satan and his retinue of black angels. But they added another God in the person of Jesus, to say nothing of the mysterious Holy Ghost, in the course of time adding a Goddess in the form of the Virgin Mary. Moreover, they turned all the Pagan gods into evil spirits, and so introduced a whole multitude of devils into the Christian Pantheon.\*

There was no quarrel between Jews and Christians as to Monotheism. How could there be when the Christians took the Hebrew Bible over in its entirety? The trouble began when the Christians declared that Jesus was the long-looked-for Messiah foretold by the Jewish prophets; at the same time declaring him to be the son of, and equal to, the Jewish Deity.

Neither was the quarrel with the Pagans on the score of Monotheism. There was no necessity for the Christians to fear anything on that point, for the greatest teachers of Greece and Rome taught Monotheism openly, without concealment.†

The reason why the first Christians performed their rites in secret was because they were "a

\* As Mr. Conybeare says: "We are apt to suppose that conversion to the religion of Christ signified and brought with it a disbelief in the gods of Paganism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The convert continued to believe in the gods as firmly as before; the only difference was that he now came to regard them not as benevolent beings, but as malevolent ones" (*Monuments of Early Christianity*; 1896; pp. 9-10).

† Renan expressly declares: "No fixed law then forbade, in the time of the apostles, the profession of Monotheistic religion" (*The Apostles*, p. 187).

mystery," like the Pagan mysteries which abounded at that time.

As the Christian scholar, Mr. F. C. Conybeare, has observed, the Jewish religion was open and public:—

"The Christians, on the other hand, wrapped up their rites in mystery. They met by night, and were pledged not to reveal the secrets of their religion. A long catechumenate was necessary in order to baptism, and one who was not initiated could no more witness their rites or join in their worship than an Englishman can at the present day enter a Hindoo temple."\*

The reason why the early Christians worshiped in secret places, in caves and catacombs, was, not to avoid persecution, but to obtain secrecy. Moreover, there was a special sanctity attaching to caves; the Mysteries of Mithra were held in a cave wherever practicable, and Christianity is deeply indebted to Mithraism for many of its rites and ceremonies.

It was the very secrecy practised by the early Christians which brought them into conflict with the Roman authorities. Rome allowed perfect religious freedom to all her subjects, provided they did not interfere with other religions; but secret associations were illegal. The Roman statesmen and rulers looked with the deepest suspicion—and not without reason—upon secret midnight gatherings, whether for political or religious purposes.†

Moreover, the Christians were charged with practising the most flagrant immorality and debauchery at their meetings; to which charge they replied that it was not them but the heretic Christians who were guilty; the so-called heretics, in their turn, denying the impeachment, and charging the orthodox with these abominable practices. Naturally the authorities, when they found both parties—between whose fine points of difference they could not distinguish—accusing one another of such practices, were inclined to believe both parties guilty, and treated them accordingly.

Another reason for their persecution was the bigoted intolerance of the Christians towards all other religions. As Renan remarks:—

"Before a temple or an idol they breathed hard, as if to repulse an impure thing, or made the sign of the Cross. It was not rare to see a Christian stop before a statue of Jupiter or Apollo, and say to it as he struck it with his staff: 'Ah well, you see, your god does not avenge you!' The temptation was strong in such a case to arrest the sacrilegious one and to crucify him, saying, 'And does your god avenge you?'"‡

And when, further, the Romans learned that the Christians taught that the existing order of things was shortly to pass away; that they looked forward to the destruction of the glorious Roman Empire; that they lived in hourly expectation of the second coming of Christ and his angels, and that in the meantime they refused to exercise their duties to the State as a soldier or a citizen, they were still more exasperated. To cite Mr. Conybeare again:—

"The teaching of early Christianity was thus altogether subversive of ancient society. So it would be of modern society, and any one set of people who should literally carry it out in their conduct would very soon come into conflict with established law and morality, and would certainly descend sooner or later into beggary or destitution.....Into such conflict the early Christians fell. They were regarded, and rightly, as enemies of the human race. If it is possible to endorse any judgment of the past, we may endorse this one of the authorities of the Roman Empire."§

We are now in a position to judge the proposition that Monotheism was the secret of early Christianity;

\* Conybeare, *Monuments of Early Christianity*; 1896; p. 286.

† Renan says the Roman policy concerning confraternities was promulgated 186 B.C., to deal with the Bacchanalian orgies, and further observes that the Roman State "did not allow of any association within the State for objects outside of it. This last point is essential, seeing that it really was at the root of all the persecutions" (*The Apostles*, pp. 187-188).

‡ Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 35. Mr. Conybeare says: "The obvious way of scotching a foul demon was to smash his idols; and we find that an enormous number of martyrs earned their crown in this manner, especially in the third century" (*Monuments of Early Christianity*, p. 13).

§ *Monuments of Early Christianity*, pp. 286-7.

that it was for Monotheism the Christians were persecuted. It is simply not true; and how a man like Professor Smith came to advance such a shallow proposition is one of those things which "no fellab can understand," as Lord Dundreary would have said. For the Jews were professed Monotheists. It was permitted by the Romans, who, indeed, protected the Jews in the profession of their religion where they conformed to the Roman law in civil matters. It was openly taught by the Roman philosophers and moralists of the time. There was not the slightest necessity for secrecy or concealment on that score.

The great defect of *Ecce Deus* is the author's studious avoidance of all discussion of the Pagan cults and mysteries from which Christianity was compounded. Indeed, he declares that "The main bulk of the refutation goes against the theories of such as Robertson, Kalthoff, and Jensen, with whom the writer has never united forces, from whom he has persistently held his own thought independent and distinct" (p. 8). And we suppose he would include Frazer, Winkler, and Boscawen along with these scholars so lightly placed upon one side; but he will find that these writers cannot be dismissed by the wave of a pen. Further on the Professor admits that "In the development of the drama of salvation there were many mythologic elements that lay at hand"; but he adds, "it would be a mistake (in my opinion) to ascribe to these more or less passive elements an originative or actively formative power" (pp. 66-67). This power he derives from the Monotheistic idea.

Apart from this error, Professor Smith's work contains much of value to the student of Christian origins. Part III., dealing with Schmiedel's "nine pillars" of historical proof for the existence of Jesus, which he leaves standing after wrecking the rest of the building, is well worth reading. Under Professor Smith's sturdy attack the "nine pillars" go down like ninepins.

The same may be said of Part IV., dealing with Josephus and Tacitus; Part VI., dealing with Nazareth; and Part VII., dealing with Judas.

With our own idea of the Jesus problem we will deal in our next.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

### Literary Gossip.

Amongst the swarm of books about books there is Messrs. Jack's "The People's Books"—little pocket volumes of a hundred pages or so, bound in cloth, and published at sixpence. One of the latest additions to this series is *A History of English Literature* by Arthur Compton-Rickett, M.A., LL.D. It would be ridiculous to criticise this volume with any closeness, for the limited space would not allow any writer to do justice to himself in relation to the subject. But there are two points to which we may draw attention. James Thomson ("B.V.") is mentioned (p. 96), and the *City of Dreadful Night* is said to "show the influence of the sceptical tendencies of the day upon a sensitive and morbid mind." Nonsense, Mr. Compton-Rickett, nonsense! There was nothing morbid in Thomson's mind. Its singular sanity makes his literary criticisms so valuable. So much for that point. The other point is this. Mr. Compton-Rickett pays the customary uncritical and extravagant tribute to the Bible; that is, to the *English Bible*, which finally means the Authorised Version; and that, of course, from a literary rather than a religious point of view. Mr. Compton-Rickett says:—

"The Authorised Version of the Bible, which appeared early in the seventeenth century, was to mould and color the literature of the succeeding centuries.....The effect of the Authorised Version was to intensify enormously the influence of the Bible on the prose of the time. The greatness of English prose dates from the translation of the Bible."

There is not a word of historical truth in this eulogy. It is an echo of the cant which has become orthodox and inevitable on this subject. The English of the Bible is a speciality, devoted entirely to translations of the Old and New Testaments from the days of Wycklif to those of King James. No such English, nor anything like it, was ever written or spoken outside the Bible. We defy anyone to adduce a scrap of evidence to the contrary. The style of

the very translators of the Authorised Version, who worked seven years upon it, was not influenced by its style in the slightest degree. Read a chapter of their translation, and then their own introductory prose. The two styles are as different as any two styles could be. The translators' style is pure seventeenth century; learned, long-sentenced with a tendency to involutions, and heavily Latinised. It was long afterwards that seventeenth century English became simplified—under John Dryden, whose prose, at any rate, was strongly affected by the French influences that came in with the Restoration.

\* \* \*

That "the greatness of English prose dates from the translation of the Bible"—if "the Bible" means the Authorised Version—is a most ridiculous assertion. Swinburne considered that the noblest English prose is, perhaps, to be found in North's translation of Plutarch, which was first published in 1579—no less than thirty-two years before the date (1611) of King James's Bible—in time to furnish Shakespeare with the material of his Roman plays. Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*; Raleigh's *History of the World*, with its incomparable great passage on Death; Bacon's *Essays and Advancement of Learning*; all these, not to lengthen the list, preceded the Authorised Version of the Bible. The Anglican Church itself produced in Hooker a writer of magnificent and magisterial prose; and the finest part of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* was written by 1592. Ben Jonson's prose is, if we say so, not too highly praised by Swinburne, and Shakespeare's own prose is worthy of his finest blank verse.

\* \* \*

It is a curious thing that during the seven years that the translators were engaged upon the Authorised Version the greatest of all English literature was appearing in the form of Shakespeare's tragedies, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. It looks like one of Nature's ironies. While supernaturalism was getting its Book of Religion finally revised (at least in English), Naturalism was producing the loftiest of all work in the Book of Humanity—through the same language. It is really wonderful, and would be staggering if one did not "defy augury."

\* \* \*

Mr. Compton-Rickett treats Bolingbroke very slightly—probably because he was a Freethinker. "He had a nimble wit and a facile pen," the critic says, "but was fundamentally insincere, and his flashy talent was not considerable enough to impart vitality to his writing." We suspect that "vitality" in this sentence really means "longevity." Bolingbroke's political writing had plenty of vitality. Burke's "Who reads Bolingbroke now?" was the cry of an angry partisan, who knew better in his cooler moments. Matthew Arnold said that Bolingbroke was "a great writer." He was a better judge than Mr. Compton-Rickett.

\* \* \*

Naturally there is no mention of Thomas Paine in Mr. Compton-Rickett's little book. Burke has a paragraph to himself, and as much was due to Paine. It is the fashion nowadays to treat Paine as "the ribald author" of the *Age of Reason*. But he was nothing of the kind. He was a great writer. Cobbett knew it, Hazlitt knew it, and Landor knew it. It hardly matters that Mr. Compton-Rickett doesn't know it. Lord Morley admits that Paine's *Rights of Man* was a worthy answer to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution*. The latter work and the *Letters on a Regicide Peace* display Burke at his highest in the character of Carlyle's "resplendent and far-seeing rhetorician"—and something more than that. Mr. Compton-Rickett does not mention them, but calls the *Sublime and Beautiful* and *Present Discontents* as Burke's "most important contributions to literature." At which astonishing criticism one can only shrug one's shoulders and raise one's eyebrows. G. W. F.

### PRAYERS v. CRACKERS.

Only a few days ago, a Chinese spoke to me bitterly about a paragraph in an English paper which ridiculed the Chinese of Hong Kong and its neighborhood for endeavoring to frighten away the plague-devil by letting off crackers and squibs. He said that he had yet to learn that the prayers of the Christians had been more efficacious than the fireworks of the heathen in stopping the disease. It was a fact that the fireworks contained sulphur and other chemicals, the explosive fumes of which were disinfectant and fatal to germs, and, as prayers contained no sulphur, he should pin his faith to crackers!—*Times of India*.

## Acid Drops.

The following paragraph is from last week's *Athenæum*:—

"We learn from the *Journal des Arts* that the war in the Balkans has given rise to special stamps relating to recent events. The stamps for the four federated States are unique, we believe, in the history of philately. In form, composition, and ornamentation they are alike for each State, except that the centre vignette depicts a special town—Sophia, Belgrade, Cetinje, or Athens. Above these four towns floats a luminous cloud, and a cross in flaming colors bears the inscription 'In hoc signo vinces.' The idea of the design was furnished by the Director of the Numismatic Museum at Athens."

This is direct proof of the spirit of Christian fanaticism which animates the Balkan States in their war against Turkey. "In hoc signo vinces"—By this sign conquer—were the words on the Cross which figured in the false and ridiculous story of Constantine's famous "vision." It was to assure Constantine of his victory over Maxentius in the approaching battle at the Milvian Bridge that this sign appeared in the sky. It was said to have been seen by Constantine's whole army, and that would have given it the widest publicity. Yet no reference to it can be traced at the time. Eusebius, the much-discovering Eusebius, says he heard the story from the lips of Constantine twenty-five years afterwards. All recollection of it seems to have died out in the interval; in other words, it was one of those incidents that are invented for the purpose of edification.

The Rev. Percy Dearmer asks, in *Everyman*, for "Constantinople for Christendom"—which, by the way, it does not appear likely to get. Mr. Dearmer has usually professed a keen interest in social matters, but it is evident that where religious prejudices are concerned he is just a parson and no more. For a thousand years, he writes, the retention of Constantinople by the Mohammedan "has marred the glory of Christendom." He also says that King Ferdinand was quite right, "It is a war between the Cross and the Crescent," and so naturally considers it a disgrace that the "finest city in Europe" shall "remain the capital of the Mohammedan world." It is almost useless arguing against hysterical ravings of this kind. With such people the only decisive question is whether the aggrandisement of their own religion will be furthered. It is only interesting as a reminder that the intolerant Christian spirit is still alive in our midst, and only needs an opportunity to express itself. To-day it is expressed against the Turk. To-morrow it may be expressed against others nearer home. For it is pretty safe to say that those who feel that Christendom as a whole is disgraced because a particular city remains with a non-Christian power would not be slow to feel that a country is disgraced because non-Christians hold political office or are even permitted to express their opinions.

Mr. Dearmer hypocritically adds: "We all like the Turk. What is wrong with him is his religion—its cruelty, its intolerance, its obscurantism, and its fatalism." Well, other people have said the same of Christians and their religion, and with truth. Islamism is not more cruel or more obscurantist or more intolerant than Christianity. Christianity's record of massacre is immensely greater than that of Mohammedanism. Mr. Dearmer might recall the fact that while for centuries Christian savages were butchering each other all over Europe, there was at least comparative peace in the Mohammedan world, and a culture far greater and better than anything that existed elsewhere. And there is a far greater measure of encouragement to good government in the Koran than there is in the Bible. When Mr. Dearmer talks of obscurantism and intolerance he should recollect the number of people burnt or otherwise killed, imprisoned, or punished in some other manner for heresy. He should think of Spain, a country brought to the dust through its passing from Mohammedan to Christian control; of Russia, with its systematic murder of reformers and official degradation of the people. Prayers in so-called Christian countries is not Christian progress. There never has been any such thing. It is progress achieved by the rebels against Christianity, and in the teeth of Christian opposition.

Of course, the truth is that whenever religion really gets the upper hand it is bad for a country, whether that religion be of the Christian or any other brand. And few of our publicists seem to be alive to the fact that one element in preventing the Turkish people wiping out many governmental abuses has been the Christian Powers themselves. For years the great Powers practically prevented the Young Turkish Party getting the reforms needed. And when a

move was made, and by more peaceful methods than revolutions are consummated in Christian countries, the first move of a Christian Power was to steal Turkish territory, and so play into the hands of Turkish reactionists by discountenancing the party of reform. But for a much longer period it has been the greed and rascality of these same Christian Powers that gave the reactionists their real power. Christian interference set the lower class Mohammedan and Christian population at each other's throats. Christian duplicity and plots fostered political discontent, and then stood in the way of political reform. Above all, it was this same cry of the Cross against the Crescent that enabled rulers like the deposed Sultan to link the religious motives together, and so raise the fear of endangering religion by encouraging advanced ideas. The truth is that the European Christian Powers have not desired really good government in Turkey, and by underhand methods have done what they could to encourage the reverse.

More "Providence." The recent typhoon killed some 15,000 inhabitants of the Philippine Islands. New York and Chicago preachers will please note. A suitable text for their sermons upon it would be "His tender mercies are over all his works."

Amongst the "Sayings of the Week" in the *Observer* is this: "This is a good world for us because God has given us the great privilege of making it better." Dean Inge, who is responsible for this pious utterance, thinks no small beer of himself. His function in life is, apparently, to improve the Almighty's handiwork. "God and Me" or "Me and God"—which ever way he puts it.

Another poor Jesusite! Rev. William Lang, Cheltenham, left £11,823. He is not troubled with cold weather now—if there is any truth in the New Testament.

Cambridge Senate, by 435 votes to 326, has opened the divinity degrees to students other than clergymen of the Church of England. Nonconformists rank with Anglicans henceforth. The nonsense called theology, and the professorships for teaching it, will be available to both. This is what is called "religious equality."

Rev. Harold Greenwood, formerly vicar of St. Thomas's, Sunderland, has been ordered in the Divorce Court to pay £1,500 damages to Mr. A. P. Grimshaw, with whose wife he had committed adultery. There is no moral—except that the second and third sexes should be kept as far apart as possible. Was it not the Rev. Sidney Smith who said there were three sexes—men, women, and clergymen?

The *Methodist Times* laments the general decline of income for foreign missionary work. As a consequence of this decline it will be necessary to dismiss a number of paid missionaries at various foreign stations. But it is not the British missionary that will be withdrawn. As the *Methodist Times* says, "The British missionary will not be withdrawn, but the services of his most efficient converts will be dispensed with." Just so; whatever cash is going will be spent on the white soul-saver. The black soul-saver—who we are told is really more effective as a missionary than the other—may go to the Devil, so far as financial help from home is concerned. One gets the true inwardness of the missionary movement revealed in little incidents of this kind.

In another direction missionaries are attempting to deal with the financial strain. For example, there is the Papuan Industries Company, formed for the express purpose of exploiting native labor. We say exploiting because, while the dividend payable to shareholders is limited, there is no limit whatever to the profit that the company may make. The surplus over the regulated dividend is to be spent in missionary labor, not to be shared among the laborers or to be spent in otherwise improving their position. This is, of course, commercialism pure and simple; and we do not see how the natives are likely to benefit much more under that plan than if the profits went into the pockets of shareholders. Mr. Walker, the managing director of the company, says that the industries the company have in hand are veritable gold mines; so we may assume that the natives are not overburdened by anything in the shape of wages. And by the time the natives are industrialised and commercialised, and made to work all day to get less comfort than they formerly enjoyed by their modes of living, we shall be presented with another evidence of the spread of Christian civilisation.

Mr. Filson Young's contribution to the "Things That Matter" column in a recent number (Nov. 28) of the *Pall Mall Gazette* contained some outspoken criticism of the Bishop of Southampton's remarks on the failure of missionary enterprise to Christianise India. The majority of people are more tolerant than they used to be, Mr. Young said, and "enlightened enough to see the fatality, if not the impertinence, of trying to impose a new religion on people who are quite content with their own more ancient faith." Finally:—

"After a hundred years of work, said the Bishop, the native Christian adherents to the Anglican communion are less than half a million. Plain persons would see in that fact an indication that it was perhaps time to stop, and to utilise all this fine but misdirected effort to the help and enlightenment of some of our benighted Christians at home."

Exactly!

The Rev. Dr. Haigh is leaving on a visit to Japan, to study what he calls "a very singular problem." Some time ago, he says, "it seemed as if the prospects of Christ's religion were full of promise. More recently there seems to have been an arrest of progress." We do not believe there has been anything of the kind. At the time these stories were circulated we said they had no foundation in fact. The tales were told, and doubtless some of the keener subscribers have been looking for the promised results; and now an equally fantastic series of tales will be provided to account for continued rejection of Christianity by the Japanese. It is not really a question of arrest of progress; it is a matter of no progress having been made that is worth talking about.

The *Congregationalist* is greatly concerned over the slackness of the Government in satisfying Nonconformists over the education question. The editor says that "The question of education has always struck us, from a national point of view, as being of paramount practical importance," and asks, therefore, for an early settlement in the interests of the nation. This is sheer cant. The nation, as far as the question of education is concerned, would not benefit to the value of a single halfpenny if the Government passed a Bill that completely satisfied Nonconformity. The value of the education given would remain what it was. The Nonconformist grievance is only national in the sense that Nonconformists are all over the country. But to say that the Nonconformists are concerned for a genuinely national settlement is, we repeat, sheer cant. This is a sectarian grievance, and they are aiming, as Churchmen are aiming, at securing a sectarian victory. Whether they succeed—for a time—we do not know. But of one thing we are tolerably certain, and that is that no Education Act will be passed during 1913.

The *Record* announces that the Islington clerical meeting is keeping well in view the subject of Industrial Unrest. The secretary has made arrangements with "special regard for the interests of both sides in industrial disputes." Thus, the editor of the *Saturday Review* is opening the discussion from the point of view of the employers, while the Rev. Guy Rogers will represent the workmen. This is, of course, quite safe. But we wonder whether it was quite an impossibility to get a genuine working man to open the discussion from the point of view of the employees? It is all part of the solemn and eternal game of bluff.

There is a *Dictionary of English Literature* in "Everyman's Library." It is not badly done, and is a wonderful shillingsworth. But the brief notice of James Thomson ("B. V.") is contemptible. We are told that "his views resulted in depression, which led to dipsomania, and he died in poverty and misery." Now the truth is exactly the reverse of this. Thomson inherited constitutional melancholy, and this drove him to drink. His "views" had nothing to do with the matter. He disdainfully repudiated the idea that his philosophical pessimism was but the expression of his personal misfortunes.

The Ayr School Board has had the matter of religious teaching before it. The Chairman moved the acceptance of the syllabus of religious instruction. This was seconded by the Rev. W. P. Gillieson, who had to confess that "the reason why the examination had been changed to wholly oral work was that some of the clergy had found it irksome to correct some of the written papers." This confession was greeted with "laughter." Mr. Allan, who spoke as a very liberal-minded Christian, if not as a Freethinker, moved that the clergy should not be allowed to examine at all. He was for leaving as little as possible to the clergy, and as much as possible to the teachers. The former were too

old-fashioned. They taught children what they had afterwards to unlearn. Unfortunately the School Board vote was 6 to 2 against common sense.

We are glad to find our own remarks on the Bishop of London reappearing in a public place like the Clerkenwell County Court. Dr. Ingram's comments on the falling birth-rate were quoted by counsel in a case there, when Judge Cluer remarked: "What has the Bishop to do with it? He is not married. Example is better than precept." It is high time that Father Vaughan—another celibate promoter of population—should be treated in the same way by some public functionary. If accident would only take him into Mr. Cluer's court!

The Bishop of London says that "Those who put a penny or a threepenny-bit in the church plate when they can well afford half-a-crown have no sense of honor at all." His lordship overlooks the fact that if the donor could afford a half-crown the beneficiary might not deserve it. What the Bishop of London hasn't got is a sense of humor. It would save him from making a fool of himself so frequently.

Some of our readers may remember Browning's "Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King." But it was a lost cause. There is a Kentish parson who stands up in the same way for his God. And that is a lost cause too. We see a report of a lecture by the Rev. A. H. T. Clarke in the *Kentish Gazette*. It is headed "Collapse of Evolution." So that's the parson's burden—is it? Collapse of Evolution! The scientific world doesn't seem to have heard of it yet. We shall hear of the Collapse of Mont Blanc next. But perhaps the scientific world won't hear of that either. It is the eye of faith that sees the greatest wonders.

Morality may be defined as the law of mutual respect for the general and private equal rights of men, for the purpose of securing general human happiness. Everything that injures or undermines this happiness and this respect is evil—everything that advances them is good. In accordance with this definition, evil consists only in degeneracy or the encroachment of human and private egotism upon this general happiness and the interests of the fellow-man. What is beneficial to the community or to the fellow-man is in general good, and the notion of good becomes converted into its opposite only by the individual improperly placing the notion of that which is beneficial or advantageous to himself above the notion which is beneficial to the community or to another person of equal rights with himself. The greatest sinners, therefore, are those who place their own I higher than the interests and the laws of the common weal, and endeavor to satisfy it at the cost and to the injury of those possessing equal rights. This egotism in itself is indeed not objectionable, and really forms the final and highest spring of all our actions, whether good or bad. Moreover, we shall never be able to get rid of the egotism of human nature, and, therefore, all that we have to do is to turn it into the right path or to render it rational and humane, by seeking to bring its satisfaction into accordance with the good of all, and with the interest of the community.—*Dr. Ludwig Buchner.*

The immortality of the soul has become more harmful than useful to the progress of humanity. For, supposing immortality to be a fact, it seems hardly worth while to establish equality and justice in this world—that will be done in the hereafter. Our object must be to act as if there were no future life, whether there is one or not. To tell people that there is no future life is to render them a service, for that means to inspire them to do something in this life. To tell them that there is a life hereafter is to lull them into sleep and perhaps make them give up everything to run after a will-o'-the-wisp. I should like to abolish morals, which have come to be something entirely negative: "Do not steal," etc. A man who would be moral after that fashion would be the most colorless, the saddest, the least beautiful of beings. The most moral man would be cold and lifeless. The moral man is the noble man, who, putting aside trifling and vulgar rules, exhales beautiful thoughts through all his pores. The most important thing is that he elevates his thoughts and rises above the pale horizon which bounds the vulgar life—that he is noble and beautiful in mind. The immoral is he who sees only the end, who, though faithful perhaps in the performance of his lesser duties, has neither inspiration nor love.—*Ernest Renan.*



## Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, December 8, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, Regent-street, London, W. : at 7.30, "The Virgin Mother of God."

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

## To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 15, West Ham. PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—Previously acknowledged, £257 8s. 1d. Received since:—H. Boll, 5s.; Josephine Kuetgens, £2; W. J. Coudoy, 7s. 6d.; John Hyde, 5s.; W. Tipper, 4s. 6d.

C. MARTIN.—Mr. Foote's *Christianity and Progress*, the new edition of which will shortly be published amongst the "Pioneer Pamphlets," would probably give you all that you could find in a pamphlet. Draper's *Conflict Between Religion and Science* is a useful book.

S. SWEET.—Mr. Foote's lecture on "Did Jesus Ever Live?" has not been printed.

JOSEPHINE KUETGENS, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "I wish to assure you that my husband's as well as my admiration for you and your great work is undiminished, and that we enjoy reading the *Freethinker* as much as ever."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for useful cuttings.

M. MCGORD.—Interesting in its way, and well written, but it would look too egotistical in our own columns.

JOHN HYDE.—Pleased to have your favorable report of Messrs. Gott and Jackson's visit to Stockport.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad the debate between Messrs. Alderson and Willis drew a large audience in spite of the wretched weather. The letter referred to did not arrive till Tuesday.

JOSEPHINE HURCUM.—As far as we are aware, No.

FANNY TOCKNELL (S. Africa).—Glad you were so pleased with the Shelley articles.

R. WOOD.—See paragraph. Thanks.

V. M. HARDY.—The verses are well enough where they are. We cannot see our way to transferring to our own pages. Pleased to hear of your efforts to promote Freethought.

(Mrs.) L. MORGAN (Canada).—The *Freethinker* shall be continued as desired.

E. B.—Much obliged for cuttings.

E. G. BLYTHE.—Your statement that you wrote the "Him" and "His" relating to Jesus with capital letters because "it is the common custom of the time" seems to us mere nonsense,—for you were writing as a professed Atheist to an undoubtedly Atheistic journal. We see nothing else in your letter that really calls for insertion or comment.

A. D. CORRICK.—The Shakespeare "grace" you heard us give—"May good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both"—is from *Macbeth*, Act iii., sc. 4.

W. TIPPER.—Glad to see you so bright and cheerful at seventy-seven. We hope to be no less so if we live so long.

M. SHUTTLETON.—Sorry the rain spoiled the Manchester meetings on Sunday, but glad that those who attended were highly pleased with Mr. Jackson's lectures. We note your view that Mr. Gott is "a marvel" at selling literature.

D. HIERENE.—It is indeed surprising that Welsh working-men can stand the clericals and their business at any price.

W. H. HARRIS.—Too late, of course, for this week.

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.

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. This Fund is being raised by the Editor of the *Freethinker* by request of the N. S. S. Executive. Subscriptions should therefore be sent direct to G. W. Foote, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to him.]

Previously acknowledged, £72 8s. 9d. Received since:—T. Stringer, 2s. 6d.; W. J. Coudoy, 7s. 6d.; J. Halliwell, 1s.

## Sugar Plums.

The terrible downpour of rain thinned the audience at Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening, but as Mr. Roger, the chairman, said, the fact that so many people came from all parts of London in such weather was a compliment to the lecturer. Mr. Foote did not appear to be depressed. He held the audience for more than an hour while he spoke on "Where is the Moral Governor of the Universe?"

Mr. Foote's subject at Queen's Hall to-night (Dec. 8) is "The Virgin Mother of God." This should attract a large attendance.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd pays what we believe is his first visit to Bolton to-day (Dec. 8), lecturing at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. at the Paragon Picture Palace, Bradshaw-gate, on subjects that should attract good meetings. We hope the local "saints" will do their best to fill the hall on both occasions, and give Mr. Lloyd the hearty welcome his merits and services entitle him to.

Mr. W. Heaford lectures for the Birmingham Branch this evening (Dec. 8) at the King's Hall, Corporation-street, his subject being one on which he is a specialist—"Ferrer's Recent Vindication: the Aftermath of Martyrdom." We hope to hear of a large audience.

Our valued contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, reproduces our article on "George Meredith's Last Letter." Many of its readers will find the article interesting, for Meredith had, we believe, a wider public in America than he commanded in England.

The *Positivist Review* for December contains a good, if belated, notice of Mr. Cohen's *Determinism or Free Will?* The final sentence may be quoted: "The work may be heartily recommended as a thoroughly sound and very able exposition of the Determinist, that is to say, the scientific position in this matter."

The *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* publishes a letter from a Stockton-on-Tees correspondent commenting on the Rev. Dr. Harrison's tribute to the ability, eloquence, and courage of the late Charles Bradlaugh. It will please many an admirer of "Iconoclast" on the Tyneside.

This is not exactly a Sugar Plum, but we have nowhere else to put it. A report has just reached us that the Glasgow Secular Hall is burnt down. We hope the report is inaccurate, but it comes from a source that reduces the hope to very small proportions. Should the report be true we fear the misfortune will have a prejudicial effect on Freethought propaganda in Glasgow for some time to come. Suitable halls are not frequent, and where they exist they are not always available.

The new edition of the *Bible Handbook* is steadily progressing through the press and will soon be ready for publication. This volume has been out of print for a good while, but the demand for it has been going on all the time. It is one of the best selling things that Mr. Foote ever produced. Curiously enough, however, it has brought him very little in the shape of profit. The 1900 edition was issued by the Freethought Publishing Company "on its own" by Mr. Foote's permission, and the 1912 edition is to be issued by the Secular Society, Ltd. Mr. Foote's gain consists in seeing the volume widely circulated.

## Lessons from the Madrid Protest for Ferrer.

THE methods of Christianity are—to quote the language of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman in connection with the Boer War—the methods of barbarism. With the child it works the oracle by means of terrorism—it dangles the devil and vomits the flames of hell before the youthful mind, and thus coerces where it cannot convince. With the adult it varies its coercive policy according to times and circumstances, and adapts its methods of persuasion to the means of repression and terrorism of which, by the providence of God and the superstition of man, it is able to dispose.

In England to-day God Almighty is considered sufficiently vindicated by a ten shilling fine; in Russia Christianity vindicates its heavenly mission either by massacring the Jews or by sending its learned and renowned critics, like our friend Niemojewski, to twelve months' imprisonment in Warsaw; whilst in Spain it tries to keep the people at the lowest level of culture of any nation outside Russia by assassinating a man like Ferrer, who sought to establish a system of secular education in which God and things supernal were wisely left out of account.

It is not without significance that all these crimes against liberty of conscience and freedom of thought produce two distinct types of mind—the one, antipathetic to the victims of religious bigotry in all ages; and the other, so far sympathetic with these victims as to feel a sort of intellectual or spiritual kinship with them. For instance, the missives of calumny perennially flung by the Catholic controversialist, or by his base counterpart, the Protestant Christian Evidence anti-infidel fanatic, against Giordano Bruno fall so thick and fast around the funeral pyre of the Nolan martyr as almost to extinguish the flames that burnt the lesson of Christian love into his flesh and bones. The type that tortured and burnt Bruno in 1600 still persists in our midst to-day in the unrepentant and consistently vindictive bigot who, in the twentieth century, apologises for the crimes of the past or re-edits them in a mitigated form for the "soul-cure" of the modern Freethinker.

Modern Christian bigotry has been shamed out of the use of the rack and the stake (saving, of course, the typical cases of Russia and Spain, which in these matters of prison administration are scarcely within the comity of civilised nations), the limits of deviation in matters of religious persecution now oscillating between a ridiculous fine on the one hand and a horrible assassination at Montjuich on the other. But even where, as in Austria, the Christian bigots do not proceed to murder their Ferrers, as in Spain, their policy remains a policy sympathetic with Ferrer's murderers and antipathetic towards his vindicators. For instance, in March last year, our colleague, Dr. Bartosek, the learned leader of the Czech Freethinkers at Prague, was prosecuted by the authorities for daring to mention Ferrer's name at a public gathering convened by the Freethinkers at the great Bohemian city so intimately associated with the memory of the martyred Jerome. I now learn that the Austrian interdict on the name of Ferrer still continues. On November 1 of this year, Dr. Bartosek went to Vienna to address a meeting to commemorate the third anniversary of Ferrer's death, but as soon as the chairman mentioned Ferrer's name the commissary of police intervened, and declared that the meeting would be broken up by the authorities if the martyr's name was again uttered by the speakers. Similarly, at Zara (in Dalmatia), also on the occasion of the third anniversary of Ferrer's martyrdom, the police broke into the dwellings of nearly all the members of the local Freethought Society, and imprisoned any Freethinkers at whose houses were found photographs of Ferrer and leaflets glorifying the work of the Spanish educationalist. But, in spite of all this, the Ferrer cult and the Freethought that Ferrer loved are

spreading widely in Austria, and this precisely because of the stupidity of vindictive piety which has converted Ferrer into a symbol of intellectual liberty in every country and inscribed his name in letters of blood on the standard of revolt against the effete rule of religion.

The universality of the sentiment of international comradeship awakened by the Ferrer case was notably illustrated by the superb demonstration that took place at Madrid on November 10. The purpose of the demonstration was to claim the revision of Ferrer's trial, now imperatively needed as the logical sequela to the Decree of December 29 last, which restored Ferrer's property to his heirs on the ground that no proofs had been discovered of Ferrer's complicity with the incendiarism and destruction of property which occurred during the insurrection of July, 1909. An attempt was made in the Cortes to prevent the Madrid meeting being held, and it must be counted as one of the most honorable and courageous acts of the late Spanish Premier, José Canalejas, that a few days before his lamented assassination he refused to put his interdict upon the gathering. For this act of political wisdom the Catholic press bitterly attacked him.

Our admirable press in England, so faithfully served with journalistic tit-bits when any stupid calumny is afloat about Ferrer, had, of course, nothing to say about the great and representative revisionist meeting on Sunday, November 10. And yet here was a huge and enthusiastic meeting of protest in favor of the innocence of a man of world-wide fame, whose ghost has destroyed two Spanish ministries and driven into exile the last King of Portugal. One of the greatest novelists and Freethinkers of modern times, Pérez Galdós, sent his greetings to the meeting, over which he was only prevented from presiding by reasons of failing health. The great scientist, Ernst Haeckel, writing as the Honorary President of the German Monist League, sent a warm letter of sympathy which, of course, was read to the meeting. Letters of adhesion were received from many hundreds of sympathisers in every part of the world. *El Pais* (Madrid) of November 11, which devotes twelve columns to its account of the proceedings, points out that the highest notabilities of Europe and America sent sympathetic letters to the learned Dr. Luis Simarro, who organised the demonstration. From France letters of adhesion were received from no less than 60 Radical and Socialist deputies, without mentioning other political groups, and more than 250 French magistrates and town councillors wrote in the same sense. From Portugal, whose new Republic rose, as it were, out of Ferrer's blood, adhesions were sent from 278 societies, consisting of Masonic Lodges, Associations of Civil Marriages, etc., Freethought Societies, Municipal Societies, Municipal Councils, etc. Forty-seven French Socialist groups and newspapers were also represented, as also were various intellectual societies in England, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Greece, Belgium, China, Mexico, the Argentine, Cuba, and the Philippines. *El Pais* claims that the Freemasons of every country of the world were represented at this great outburst of international homage to the memory of Ferrer. I am afraid that English Freemasonry, except as regards the lodges connected with the Grand Orient, must be considered as outside the charmed circle of sympathisers with an intellectual movement of such transcendental importance. No man in the world is less accessible to ideas of mental liberty, or less imbued with the spirit of international solidarity, than the convivial and conventional Freemasons of this tight little island. As against these negligible defections, we may cite the sympathetic letters of adhesion from Dr. Augustus Forel, of Zurich; and from M. Emile Vandervelde, who wrote expressly in the name of the Socialist party in Belgium. Letters came from the celebrated French astronomer, Professor Laisant; from my dear old friend, Alfred Naquet, full of years, wisdom, and enthusiasm; from M. Jean Jaurès; from the national executive committees

of the Socialist parties of Germany, France, Italy, and Portugal; from the Spanish Jews settled, after long generations of exile, in the different countries of the Balkans; and from our Roumanian friends. The N. S. S. and R. P. A. swelled the number of sympathisers.

In addition to all these communications, adhesions were received from Maxim Gorki; from M. François Pressensé, on behalf of the 40,000 members of the French Ligue des Droits de l'Homme; and adhesions came from the Grand Orient of France and its lodges; whilst the adhesion of the German Socialist party was expressed in a letter of Herr Scheidemann, late Vice-President of the Reichstag.

The meeting was held at the Gran Via Theatre, and, as regards its huge proportions, the splendor of the occasion, the distinction which marked the orators, and the world-wide homage of sympathisers, may justly be regarded as one of the most imposing Freethought demonstrations in modern times. As *El Pais* points out, the meeting was a two-fold triumph—a triumph for the sleepless spirit of Ferrer and a triumph for Dr. Simarro, whose monumental book, *El Proceso Ferrer*, proclaims him as the greatest living authority, the Zola, of the Ferrer question. On that famous Sunday, Simarro, who is not a professional orator but Spain's most eminent medical authority on mental psychology, delivered a superb speech, which was the subject of ovations that have not been excelled, we are told, since the days of Salmerón and Castelar. The consoling and encouraging lesson that we may draw from this protest, the last to date of a long line of unexampled protests of the same kind, is that the "methods of barbarism," whether in England, Russia, or Spain, do not "pay" in this twentieth century, and that there is, fortunately, a strong force of cultivated public opinion that will insist that the persecution of Freethought and the imprisonment of Freethinkers shall be a bad investment for Christianity. It is consoling to know, as Senor Soriano pointed out at the meeting, that the figure of Ferrer since his death disturbs the happiness of his murderers, because for the last three years the politics of Spain are constantly revolving around the mangled body of the martyr. The days are gone for ever when you could take your Brunos, burn their bodies amidst the popular plaudits, scatter their ashes to the four winds, and remain in insolent security for three hundred years. Ferrer's triumphant vindication in every civilised land during the last three years has graven that lesson for ever on the conscience of mankind.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

### Mark Twain's Freethought.

"How many and many a weary day,  
When sad enough were we, 'Mark's way'  
(Unlike the Laureate's Mark's)  
Has made us laugh until we cried,  
And, sinking back exhausted, sighed  
Like Gargery, 'Wot larx!'"

—ANDREW LANG.

THE function of the humorist is frequently underestimated. With the exception of Rabelais, Cervantes, Molière, and Dickens, who is liked better for his pathos than his fun, humorous writers are held to be only second-rate literary artists. Matter-of-fact readers will not take them seriously. Perhaps it is their own fault for electing to provide fun for thankless folk. Mark Twain was unquestionably a great humorist, and, in his way, somewhat of a philosopher and Freethinker. Owing to the opposition of his wife, who was a formidable critic on the hearth, many of his iconoclastic jests were suppressed, and his most clearly expressed heresies remain unpublished or were issued in privately printed volumes with limited issues. However, through the sincerity of his friend and biographer, Mr. Bigelow Paine, we have, at last, a clear account of the extent of Twain's Freethought, and excellent

reading it makes. As the literary hirelings who write for the "free" press of England have chosen to ignore the subject of Twain's heresies, it is necessary to refer to the subject.

The orthodox journalist who suggested the Westminster Abbey memorial to Mark Twain must have forgotten that the great jester's jokes on the Christian superstition have something of the flavor of Ingersoll, although Twain lacked his great contemporary's epigrammatic power. Some of the best occur in the *New Pilgrim's Progress*, in which he describes the travels of an excursion party through the Holy Land. Here is a characteristic jibe:—

"The street called Straight is straighter than a corkscrew, but not as straight as a rainbow. St. Luke is careful not to commit himself, he does not say it is the street which is straight, but the 'street which is called Straight.' It is a fine piece of irony; it is the only facetious remark in the Bible, I believe."

There is a palpable thrust at Oriental boasting in the following:—

"When I used to read of 'kings' in Sunday-school, it suggested to me the kings of such countries as England, France, etc., arrayed in splendid robes ablaze with jewels, marching in grave procession, with sceptres of gold in their hands and flashing crowns on their heads. But here in Syria it suggested ill-clad and ill-conditioned savages, much like our Indians, who lived in sight of each other, and whose 'kingdoms' were large when they were five miles square and contained two thousand souls."

A shrewd hit at clerical fraud is shown in his laughing remark that:—

"These gifted monks never do anything by halves. If they were to show you the brazen serpent that was elevated in the wilderness, you could depend upon it they had on hand the pole it was elevated on also, and even the hole it stood in."

A delightful piece of irony is displayed in his comment on Adam's tomb:—

"There is no question that he is actually buried in the grave which is pointed out as his—there can be none—because it has never yet been proved that that grave is not the grave in which he is buried."

Speaking of monks, he is in his most Ingersollian vein:—

"They have banished the tender grace of life, and left only the sapped and skinny mockery. Their lips are lips that never kiss and never sing; their hearts are hearts that never hate and never love. They are dead men that walk."

Probably we shall never know how far Mark Twain's writings were edited in the interests of Mrs. Grundy. Some of his jokes have disappeared from late editions of his books, notably the jest on "Joseph and his Brethren," in which Joseph says, "Pity me"; and Twain adds, "his brethren pitted him." Even Mark Twain's serious attempt at philosophical writing, *What is Man?* was printed privately and circulated only among his close friends during his lifetime, and its wider publication prevented after the author's death by pious relatives. Happily, however, Twain found a biographer who spoke the truth, and broke down the cowardly policy of boycott once and for all. Mr. Paine is careful to point out that Mark Twain did not recant at the approach of death. This testimony is especially valuable as his biographer was his constant companion during the last years of his life. Twain's sense of humor never deserted him. Near the end, he said to Mr. Paine, "After forty years of public effort I have become just a target for medicines." And again, "I am sorry for you, Paine, but I can't help it—I can't hurry this dying business."

It was, perhaps, only natural that Mark Twain, who permitted his Puritan wife to edit his writings, should have hugged the shore and never put his prow towards the open sea. In other words, he was Theistic rather than Atheistic; but his creed, which he penned in the early "eighties," is such a characteristic document that it is well worth a perusal. In it Twain states that he believed in God; but does not believe that he ever sent a message to man. As to the Bible, Twain considers that was

the work of human beings. Eternal punishment excites his indignation, and he preserved an open mind on the question of the hereafter. Moral laws, to him, were simply the outcome of the world's experience. The passage concerning hell is worth quoting in full:—

"I cannot see how eternal punishment hereafter could accomplish any good end, therefore I am not able to believe in it. To chasten a man in order to perfect him might be reasonable enough; but to roast him for ever for the mere satisfaction of seeing him roast would not be reasonable—even the atrocious God imagined by the Jews would tire of the spectacle eventually."

The question of ethics and religion is well put in the following:—

"I believe that the world's moral laws are the outcome of the world's experience. It needed no God to come down out of heaven to tell men that murder and theft and the other immoralities were bad, both for the individual who commits them and for society which suffers from them.

"If I break all these moral laws, I cannot see how I injure God by it, for he is beyond the reach of injury from me—I could as easily injure a planet by throwing mud at it. It seems to me that my misconduct could only injure me and other men. I cannot benefit God by obeying these moral laws—I could as easily benefit the planet by withholding my mud. (Let these sentences be read in the light of the fact that I believe I have received moral laws *only* from man—none whatever from God.) Consequently, I do not see why I should be either punished or rewarded hereafter for the deeds I do here."

As time went on, Twain's ideas underwent modification, and it is quite clear had he re-written his creed in his later years that it would have been shorn of much of its anthropomorphism. As Mr. Paine tell us, "Mark Twain had many moods, and he did not always approve of his own God."

He was audacious on occasion, as in the cynical passage:—

"If I had been helping the Almighty when he created man, I would have had him begin at the other end, and start human beings with old age—think of the joyous prospect of growing young instead of old. Think of working forward to eighteen instead of eighty."

In his autobiography he has another characteristic fling. Whilst staying at Berlin he had an invitation to dinner from the Kaiser. For some time previously Twain had been meeting men with imposing, lofty titles, but when the imperial card was passed around the breakfast table, his daughter said, with motion and excitement, "Why, papa, if it keeps going on like this, pretty soon there won't be anybody left for you to get acquainted with but God." It was not complimentary, adds Twain, to think I was not acquainted in that quarter; but she was young, and the young jump to conclusions without reflection.

For forty years Mark Twain filled the English-speaking world with laughter, always generous, always clean, often springing, as the truest humor must always spring, from the source of tears. But beneath his quaint drollery was partially concealed one of the sanest writers of our time; a satirist who reserved his scorn for the mean and ignoble, and all his praise for the worthy and pure. The incident of his failure, which, like Sir Walter Scott's was wholly the work of others, raised him to the rank of the heroes of literature, and every new revelation of his character only brought him closer to the hearts of his admirers. This famous Freethinker was, in his day, the most eminent man of letters in America, and the lustre of his fame must tend to deepen with the progress of years.

MIMNERMUS.

Upon the shadowy shore of death the sea of trouble casts no wave. Eyes that have been curtained by the everlasting dark will never know again the burning touch of tears. Lips touched by eternal silence will never speak again the broken words of grief. Hearts of dust do not break.—*Ingersoll*.

## The "Advanced" Clergy and Miracles.

How readers of the *Freethinker* who are old enough to remember the "Oxford House Papers," published some twenty-six years ago as an answer to the "infidelity" so rife among the more intellectually inclined of the working classes, must smile when they compare the efforts of the university men and dignitaries, possessing credentials ranging from B.A. up to Canon and Professor, who wrote the papers, with the results as seen to-day! The learned gentlemen of Oxford House came forward to enlighten those who were being "misled" by such wicked journals as the *Freethinker*; and the result has been, not that they made converts, but that probably more than one of themselves have become converts to views they then denounced as "infidel."

Take, for example, Dr. Sanday. When he wrote the paper entitled "Free-Thinking" he took his stand on miracles. His position then was that all objections to Christianity that are of any weight ultimately resolve themselves into that against miracles. He concluded his paper with this declaration of faith: "On one simple proposition I should take my stand, as a rock of certainty amidst much that is uncertain: *miracles did actually happen.*" Dr. Sanday knows as much about Greek and the early MSS. as anyone need wish to learn; but it puzzled the *Freethinker* at the time to guess why Dr. Sanday should imagine that he could make converts by such "stuff" as this. The result has shown that those whom he sought to enlighten were his superiors, if not in learning, certainly in logical grasp.

To his honor, however, be it said that Professor Sanday has advanced since he wrote his Oxford House paper. I do not know to what extent his enlightenment since 1886 is due to the *Freethinker* or to Mr. J. M. Robertson, who, in *Our Corner* (September to December, 1886), showed the learned critic of Part II. of *The Freethinker's Text-Book* what nonsense his paper was. Dr. Sanday may, of course, have had other sources of information, to which he would sooner own his indebtedness than to either of those just mentioned. But most assuredly he can have had no safer guides. He proved the truth of this when, at the Church Conference a month or two ago, he read a paper on Miracles in which he showed that his present attitude is as follows:—

"By 'supernatural' I mean that there is conclusive evidence of the presence of a 'higher cause' in the world. But for myself I do not think that the activities of this cause were really 'abnormal,' or in any true sense 'contrary to Nature.'.....I, for one, shrink from what is really abnormal. I mean, what we are obliged to regard as abnormal from our modern point of view. I need not say that there is not the slightest blame upon the ancients for setting down things that may be so described. They followed their ideas, and they could not do otherwise."

Professor Sanday wrote this paper on Miracles five times without realising that to rule out the abnormal is to rule out the "supernatural." But that only shows that much Greek may go with a lack of logical discernment. The satisfactory thing is that, whereas he formerly took his stand on miracles, Dr. Sanday now agrees with the *Freethinker* that "they didn't know everything down in Judee." The evangelists, he now recognises, could not be expected to know what we know nowadays, so they just filled the Gospels with stories of miracles that had long been current in Egypt, India, and Persia. Quite so, Dr. Sanday; but, although they had not the advantage of living in the twentieth century, perhaps, after all, they had as much real knowledge of "the supernatural" and "the activities" of "the supernatural" as the, for many years, Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis has.

Dr. Sanday's "advanced" thought brought down upon him the wrath of the "parochial clergy" as represented by Prebendary Webb-Peploe. A somewhat similar fate has befallen another of the Oxford House gentlemen. The new Dean of Durham was head of Oxford House in 1887-8, and wrote a paper

entitled "Christianity and Slavery" as an answer to the Editor of the *Freethinker*. In this paper Dr. Henson took what I should call the strictly orthodox Christian view, and argued his case much in the same way as Dr. Sanday did the case he dealt with. I do not know whether Dr. Henson would now say all that he then said on this particular question; nor have I any means of knowing whether, at that time, he was equally orthodox on other matters. If he was, it seems clear that, since then, he has lapsed considerably from orthodoxy.

Quite recently Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton have published a volume, entitled *The Creed in the Pulpit*, which consists of sermons delivered at Westminster by Dr. Henson. As summarised by the *Guardian* for November 8, 1912, the position Dr. Henson takes in these sermons is as follows:—

"He has made up his mind that nineteenth-century science spoke the last word as to what is possible and impossible within the whole sphere of vital phenomena. He is convinced that 'the uniformity of nature,' as then understood, has made the very notion of miracle an absurdity. Of course the Apostles expected and believed in miracles, and accordingly the presence of the miraculous is good evidence of the historical character of the Biblical records. But the miracles did not happen, and can no longer be believed in. The stories of the Virgin Birth, of the marvel at Cana, of the Gadarene demoniac, of the empty tomb—all must be set aside. The Lord's life has to be regarded as a normally human life—by which it appears we are to understand not even a life such as humanity might be expected to lead if at its highest and holiest, in unbroken fellowship with the Divine; but a life according to the very poor measures of knowledge and power with which we at our present low level of experience are constrained to be familiar."

Thus does Dr. Henson now say ditto to much that the *Freethinker* said thirty years ago. But, to the editor of the *Guardian*, Dean Henson's ingenuousness is displeasing, and he scolds him in these terms:—

"We feel bound to express an emphatic and regretful disapprobation of the line which Dr. Henson has judged it his duty to take and to advocate. He will not tolerate any counsels of moderation and restraint. For him these are the suggestions of ignorance and timidity. .... We can only say that we seriously decline such an attempted solution of our problems."

The amusing thing in this scolding is the talk about "problems." Are there any problems, apart from the insane notion that the superstition of the first century must, somehow, be reconciled with the science of the twentieth? For serious students the kinship of Christian legends with those of the religions that preceded Christianity has long been established; and, for Freethinkers, the tardy recognition of this obvious truth by the "advanced" clergy is the only point of interest in the dispute about miracles between the "parochial" clergy and their clerical opponents.

The *Guardian* finds some consolation in Dean Henson's assurance that "He whose birth in time is celebrated throughout Christendom on Christmas Day is truly to be identified with the ultimate Author of our being, the CREATOR of the universe." It seems a pity to rob the editor of the *Guardian* of any comfort this assurance may give him; but, in the interest of truth, it should be pointed out that Dr. Henson realises that his "truly to be identified," etc., is merely an assumption. An "immense assumption," he calls it. And truly the assumption is as "immense" as it is groundless. With the editor of the *Guardian* the phrase "CREATOR of the universe" seems to do duty as an argument. But, looked at scientifically, this form of words has no meaning. Science knows only change of form or condition; it knows nothing about origination of substance. Science proceeds on our knowledge of the fact that *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. When applied to the universe the words "beginning" and "end" have no meaning. These terms have relation only to phenomena. This being so, the word "creation" is inadmissible as used by theologians.

ANDREW LIDDLE.

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOV. 28.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, occupied the chair. There were also present: Messrs. Baker, Barry, Brandes, Cowell, Davey, Greyton, Heaford, Leat, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Silverstein, Thurlow, and Wood.

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed, and the Monthly Cash Statement presented and adopted.

New members were accepted for the Bethnal Green, Colne, and Preston Branches, and for the Parent Society.

The President reported the result of the deputation to the London County Council, of which he and Mr. Cohen had formed part, on November 1. Mr. Ben Cooper, of the London Trades Council, had discharged the duties of spokesman in an able manner. No definite reply, however, had yet been received. Should the expected reply be unfavorable, he (the President) suggested an immediate course of action.

Reference was made to the Defence Fund, and the President proposed to now recoup the N. S. S. for its outlay for counsel's fees, etc., in the police-court case. This was agreed to unanimously.

Arrangements for the Annual Dinner were discussed, other matters of minor importance in connection with the propaganda were dealt with, and, in consequence of the approaching Christmas holidays, the meeting adjourned until the first Thursday in January.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

## Official Notes.

### THE NORTHERN TOUR.

THE inclement weather still continues to play havoc with the outdoor meetings of our missionaries and has rendered several meetings impossible.

However, two good meetings were held at Leeds on Sunday (Nov. 24), with good sales of literature. In this town the local "Anti-Infidel Mission" still appears to batten on the antiquated garbage known to them as "the Leeds Orgies." For the benefit of the readers of this paper living in the North of England who may not be acquainted with the disgraceful part our then Christian opponents played in this matter, we may mention that the whole subject has been fully dealt with by Mr. G. W. Foote, who ably shows to what depths of degradation the enemies of Freethought can descend, in a pamphlet entitled *The Hall of Science Libel Case*, of which a few copies may still be obtained from the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press at a cost of 6d. each.

During last week good meetings were also held at Stockport and Ashton-under-Lyne to advertise the indoor meetings at Manchester, and good sales of literature are also reported.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

## The Night Wind.

### A REVERIE.

I sit in silence and shadow,  
And muse in the growing gloom,  
As the firelight faintly flickers,  
Dim-lighting the white-walled room.

And I look out from the window  
On the landscape fading fast,  
As the darkling night grows darker  
And the wind goes sighing past.

Its tone is austere and solemn,  
Commingled in grand accord,  
And it stirs the pensive spirit  
Like an orator's mighty word.

Is it joy that follows sadness,  
Or peace distilled from pain,  
This glory and this gladness  
That lifts my breast again?

Or harper memory sounding—  
Its tale is the gift of years—  
The story of sorrows fading,  
The passing of vulgar fears—  
Now soft in sweet upbraiding,  
Now thundering in mine ears.

ANDREW MILLAR.

**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, "The Virgin Mother of God."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmen's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, Miss K. B. Kough, "He hath a devil and is mad."

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, W. Heaford, "Ferrer's Recent Vindication: the Aftermath of Martyrdom."

BOLTON (Paragon Picture Palace, Bradshaw Gate): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "All Things Die. There is No Death"; 7, "The Alleged Conversion of Science." Tea at Scott's Café, Bridge-street.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Special Meeting of Committee for Repeal of Blasphemy Laws; 6.30, Discussion, "Does Science Lead to Theism?" Affirmative, W. C. Cochrane; Negative, J. Brown.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. E. Flynn, "From Roman Catholicism to Freethought."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. Bailey, "Esperanto the Second Language for All." Blackboard illustrations.

**OUTDOOR.**

LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE: Thos. A. Jackson—Bolton (Town Hall Square): 8, at 11, "The Atheist in the Market Place" Nelson (Chapel-street): 9, at 7.30, "The Dead Hand"; 10, at 7.30, "Who Made God?" 11, at 7.30, "The Blasphemer in Evolution." Burnley (Market Place): 12, at 7.30, "Why I Reject Christianity." Colne (Cumberland-street): 13, at 7.30, "If I Were God." Nelson (Chapel-street): 14, at 7.30, "The Crimes of God."

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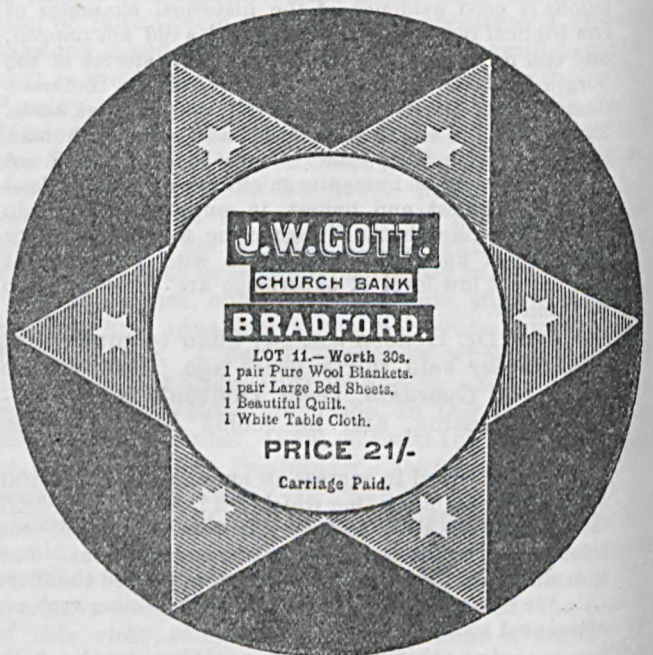
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