

THE Freethinker

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One should only advise about matters in which one is prepared to co-operate.—GOETHE.

Mr. Blatchford's Blunder.

THE title of this article does not mean that Mr. Robert Blatchford has made only one blunder. He has made many. He blundered over Determinism, he blundered over Shelley. He now blunders over the Blasphemy Laws.

He has just been writing on the last subject. His reason for doing so is that "some of the Freethinkers in Leeds have been sent to prison for making 'blasphemous' speeches in the streets," and "one of them writes to ask me for help in the *Clarion*."

Whoever wrote to Mr. Blatchford was very ill-advised. He has never given help in "blasphemy" cases. Why should he alter now? He has not even interest enough in the matter to be reasonably accurate. Prosecutions for "blasphemy" have been dropped at Leeds; the more recent prosecutions have been for "profane language" under the Police Clauses Act, in which the heaviest possible sentence is only a fortnight's imprisonment.

All that Mr. Blatchford can offer the person who asks him for "help" is "friendly and good advice." No doubt the advice is as good as it is friendly—and as friendly as it is good.

Mr. Blatchford's advice is characteristic. Practically he says, like the gentleman in the comic song, "You do as I do." He believes in written Freethought, and apparently in nothing else; and that is because he has no faculty for anything else. If he were a public speaker he would have more respect for oratory. He would even sympathise with the rougher propagandists of "the streets."

But to return to our main point. Mr. Blatchford says he "thinks the Leeds Freethinkers are guilty of bad manners when they annoy Christians in the streets." Now "in the streets" is a popular and striking expression, but in this case it does not represent the truth. The Freethought speakers at Leeds do not run up and down the streets shouting "blasphemy" or "profanity" to the annoyance of passers-by. They deliver lectures at open places, like Victoria-square, which have always been devoted to outdoor oratory, and are patronised by all sorts of societies. When this fact is perceived it throws a strange light on Mr. Blatchford's advice. "Don't speak blasphemy in the streets," he says. They don't. They speak it, if it is blasphemy—and the word sounds odd from Mr. Blatchford's lips—in a kind of public discussion forum. People who stop to listen know they are likely to be "annoyed." Their remedy is to walk on if they cannot hear their own views challenged in plain language.

Why is Mr. Blatchford's advice confined to Freethinkers? Why did he not give it long ago to Socialists? He begs Freethinkers to spare the feelings of the Christians. Why has he not begged Socialists to spare the feelings of "exploiters" and "capitalists"? It is all very well to say that "we Rationalists" have "a strong case" and "can afford to be tolerant, courteous, and calm." Mr. Blatchford believes that the Socialists have a strong case too.

His advice, therefore, is equally applicable in both cases.

Observe that it is not a question of good manners all round. It is a question whether Christians should imprison Freethinkers for "annoying" them. It has never been suggested that Freethinkers should serve Christians in the same way. Mr. Blatchford speaks sternly to the imprisoned Freethinker; he speaks pleasantly to the "annoyed" Christian who imprisoned him. That is what we object to. When you *imprison* a man he should have committed a *crime*. It is not enough to say that he "annoyed" his adversaries in a public discussion.

Mr. Blatchford would stop all Freethought propaganda "in the streets"—meaning, of course, in the open air. Listen to this:—

"I am convinced that this street oratory is useless to the cause of truth. It is not only bad manners: it is bad policy. To convince a Christian that his Bible is not true it is necessary to educate him anew. It needs much reasoning and many books; and he must read in quiet and in private. Fancy trying to convert anyone to Determinism and Evolution in a short speech in the open street.....My advice to the Leeds men is to abandon a useless and irritating form of propaganda and find a better way of serving the cause."

This "irritating" form of propaganda should be dropped by all parties, if it is dropped at all. If Mr. Blatchford means this, let him plainly say so. If he does not mean it, let him plainly say why.

Mr. Blatchford's tenderness towards the "annoyed" Christian is wonderful. Usually, the "annoyed" Christian is a policeman. Mr. Blatchford takes a different illustration. After quoting a well-known passage about Jehovah from *God and My Neighbor*, he proceeds:—

"Imagine the effect of such words in a crowd. Some decent but not well-informed Methodist hears what I say. He does not even guess what I mean. He thinks I am talking about God—his God. He goes away quickly, his simple and reverent mind full of anger and disgust. He does not know that Jahweh is not his God. He does not wait for me to prove my charges. He goes away feeling that I am a vile blasphemer."

This overwhelming sympathy for the "simple and reverent" Methodist who goes, for instance, to the Leeds discussion forum, is really touching. Mr. Blatchford has a tender heart.

We see Mr. Blatchford's generous nature—besides some other qualities—in the following passage:—

"And here I will notice a blunder made by Mr. Foote. Mr. Foote says: 'Mr. Blatchford was discreet enough to say "Jehovah" instead of "God."'

"Mr. Blatchford was discreet enough to say Jehovah instead of God, because Mr. Blatchford was speaking about Jehovah, and not about God.

"If Mr. Blatchford had said about God what he said about Jehovah he would have been as stupid as Mr. Foote."

It is not for us to discuss the relative proportions of Mr. Blatchford's stupidity and our own. We leave the public to attend to all such matters. We are sorry that he resents the word "discreet." He ought to have welcomed it in the light of his present article. We are also sorry that he is under the impression that Christians have any other God than the God of the Bible. When he says there are *two* Gods in the Bible he might as well say a *thousand*.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Religion of Disease.

IN my last article I tried to show that religion was a normal, inevitable, and logical expression of human intelligence dealing with a host of forces the nature of which was quite unknown. In that stage of culture, the gods are no more a deduction from observed facts. Certain things are seen and experienced, and the conclusion is that they are the products of supernatural agencies. From this point of view, religion takes rank as a primitive science. It is the first stage of that long series of generalisations that, beginning with primitive animism, ends with the discoveries of a Copernicus, a Newton, a Darwin, and a Spencer. It is a history which begins with vitalism and ends with mechanism. A world in which we commence with a chaotic assemblage of independent personal forces, and end with a universe that is self-acting, self-adjusting, and in which there is neither room nor any allowance made for the operation of intelligence save such as meets us in animal organisation.

So far, we have what one may call the normal basis of religious belief. But, in addition to this, the religious idea has received enormous support from the occurrence of purely pathologic states, and, what is more important, from the cultivation of abnormal conditions, with the deliberate intention of producing a conviction, in both the subject and the onlookers, of supernatural communion. Nor is there need to assume deliberate imposture. With some existing medicine men, this may be the case, but in the mass, certainly with a people more primitive than any existing tribe of savages, the operator imposes on himself quite as much as he imposes on others. Noting that privation of body, or torture of mind, or the eating or use of certain herbs is followed by an ecstatic state that brings one into touch with an assumed ghostly world, it is believed, not that the vision is the direct result of the practice, but that the practice is the condition of communication.

It is inevitable that this should be so. One could hardly expect uncivilised or semi-civilised man to know why conium should stimulate the nerves, or belladonna arrest the secretions; why aconite should decrease sensibility, or laurel water induce ecstasy. What are the precise effects of fasting on the nervous system is, again, a question quite beyond the powers of primitive man, and even in our own day is not always sufficiently recognised. And the instructive fact here is that the history of religion shows the same features throughout. The modern preacher no longer advocates the use of drugs as a means of securing celestial illumination; but he does advocate the cultivation of certain habits of mind if we desire to properly realise the workings of the spirit of God. That is, we are to achieve by a mental discipline what the savage secures by a coarser and more obvious method. The modern preacher is one with the savage in his inability to recognise the truth that the illumination is the product of the discipline, not the mere condition of its possession. Between the drug of the savage, the fasting and self-torture of the mediæval monk, and the prayerful meditation of the modern religious mystic, the difference is only one of changed times and altered conditions. The method is the same throughout.

This aspect of the matter is well put by Tylor in the following passage:—

"From the earliest stages of culture we find religion in close alliance with ecstatic physical conditions. These are brought on by various means of interference with the healthy action of body and mind, and it is scarcely needful to remind the reader that, according to philosophic theories antecedent to those of modern medicine, such morbid disturbances are explained as symptoms of divine visitation, or at least of super-human spirituality. Among the strongest means of disturbing the functions of the mind so as to produce ecstatic vision, is fasting, accompanied, as it usually is, with other privations, and with prolonged solitary

contemplation in the desert or in the forest. Among the ordinary vicissitudes of savage life, the wild hunter has many a time to try involuntarily the effects of such a life for days together, and under these circumstances he soon comes to see and talk with phantoms which are to him invisible spirits. The secret of spiritual intercourse thus learnt, he has thenceforth but to reproduce the cause in order to renew the effects."*

In the history of religion, and as a means of inducing a sense of religious conviction, we have to reckon, therefore, with the deliberate cultivation of abnormal states of mind and body as a very powerful factor in the perpetuation of religious beliefs. This exists, as Tylor says, from the earliest ages. Thus we find the Australians using a certain shrub in their religious ceremonies, or, since contact with the whites, tobacco. In Western Siberia a species of mushroom is used to produce religious ecstasy.† An early Spanish observer also records of the ancient Mexicans that they ate on religious occasions a species of mushroom, which produced visions, and which was called "the bread of the gods."‡ Among the North American Indians the most generally used agent is tobacco. The Californian Indians give children tobacco in order to obtain information from the resulting visions. The Darien Indians used the seeds of the "Datura Sanguinea" for the same purpose. In India the Laws of Manu describes as one of the means of producing sacred visions the use of the "soma" drink. This is prepared from the sap of the lotus flower, and, while poisonous in large doses, in small quantities merely induces hallucinations. Opium and hashish, a preparation of the hemp plant, has been in general use as a means of producing ecstasy among Eastern peoples from a very remote antiquity. Opium, it is known, produces an extraordinary state of exaltation, intensifying the sense of one's personality and inducing a pleasurable consciousness of mental clarity and strength.§ Belladonna, a drug much used by the mediæval witches and sorcerers, has also its vogue for purely religious purposes. With a people as generally advanced as the Greeks, the laurel was sacred to Æsculapius. Those who wished to ask counsel of the god had to appear before the altar crowned with laurel and chewing some of the leaves. The Greek priestesses, before prophesying, drank a preparation of laurel water, which contained two toxic substances—prussic acid and the volatile oil of laurel. The first would induce convulsions and the latter hallucinatory visions. The two combined would produce, both on the subject and on the spectators, a profound conviction of spiritual illumination and possession.

Apart from the religious use of drugs in either a natural or a prepared state, there are various other methods of inducing a sense of religious exaltation. Dancing, howling, and singing are common methods to this end, from the primitive savage down to the latest Welsh revival. Primitive dancing had both a phallic and a religious significance, although, as will be shown later, to the primitive mind the sexual functions themselves are closely connected with the idea of supernatural agency. In many cases the religious dance is preceded by drug-taking; in other instances reliance is placed on the dance alone. In Ceylon this is the case with the "Devil Dancers." In Africa the witch doctor discovers the wizard through the vision induced by a prolonged dance. The Eastern Dervish produces a state of frenzy by a whirling dance. In the Bible we have the Jews dancing round the Ark in a state of nudity. David, too, danced naked before the Lord. Dancing was also part of the Greek religious ceremonies attendant on the worship of Dionysius and Bacchus. In the mediæval period witch dances were used as a means of producing exaltation. When in a state of frenzy

* *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii., p. 410.

† J. G. Bourke, in his *Scatologic Rites*, has some curious and interesting notes on the use of this mushroom among various peoples. Pp. 69-75.

‡ Bourke, p. 90.

§ For a clear statement of the effects of hemp preparations, calculated to produce a feeling of religious ecstasy, see Hale White's *Text-Book of Pharmacology*; 1901; pp. 318-22.

visions of Satan naturally followed. In the dancing mania of the fourteenth century the sufferers saw visions of heaven with Jesus and the Virgin enthroned. Dancing was one of the prominent features of the Convulsionnaires of France in the eighteenth century. People were seized with convulsions, rolled on the ground, leaped in the air, and indulged in other forms of extravagance. So far as the religious world was concerned there was a common agreement as to the supernatural origin of the epidemic. Disagreement only arose as to whether the source was divine or diabolic. In the early period of the Methodist movement we have frenzied dancing and singing and convulsive movements again accepted as proofs of the working of the "Holy Spirit." In more recent times—except among the religiously primitive Welsh revivals—dancing and jumping seems to have been principally an outlet for the nervous energy generated at religious gatherings. In earlier times there is no doubt that dancing was deliberately resorted to as a means of inducing a sense of religious exaltation.

In both classes of cases dealt with we have the deliberate cultivation of abnormal states of mind, owing to the belief that these bring the subject into touch with a hidden supernatural world. Later, I hope to show how, with a change of form, essentially the same thing is taking place in present day religious organisations. At present we have to note that, in addition to deliberately inducing states of mind that favor or strengthen religious belief, there are other conditions of mind and body that have the same result. It has already been pointed out that amongst primitive peoples there is only one current explanation of disease. The insane person, the epileptic, the diseased person, is in the power of an indwelling spirit. There is no need to cite again evidence in favor of this statement. The main point is that people see in such cases continued and cumulative evidence of the existence of a supernatural world. Just as the inhabitants of a Welsh village have their religious beliefs quickened and strengthened by the hysterical ravings of an Evan Roberts, and in all convulsive capers of a whole congregation, so in all ages people have seen endorsement of their belief in a supernatural world in the existence of cases that are now universally handed over to the care of the physician.

Consider how much of the New Testament evidence for the supernatural rests upon cases that are obviously pathological. Thus in Matthew xvii. 15 we have recorded what is, on the face of it, a clear case of epilepsy. The man describes his son as "lunatic and sore vexed; for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water." The boy is brought to Jesus, who promptly rebukes the Devil and casts him out. The description of the seizure is more detailed still in Mark (ix. 18) but the method of cure remains the same. In Luke (viii. 2-3) there is also an account of many people out of whom devils are cast. But there is no doubt whatever as to the nature of the complaints under which the demoniacs of the New Testament were suffering, and it is a nice question, as Dean Trench remarks, with unconscious sarcasm, if one of the disciples "were to enter a madhouse now, how many of the sufferers there he might recognise as possessed?" The answer is, All. More, it is certain that a savage taken from any part of the world would find in the New Testament treatment of disease nothing incongruous with his own beliefs on the subject. He would be moving in a familiar atmosphere, and could cite his own experience in confirmation of the New Testament, or use the New Testament as confirmation of his own beliefs and practices.

(To be continued.)

C. COHEN.

Modern Criticism and Christianity.

A MAN'S religion is determined by geography. A mere glance at the religions of the world makes this perfectly clear. Whatever a man's religion may be,

if he professes it with any degree of sincerity and zeal, he believes it to be the only true one. If there are a million different religions in the world, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand of them are false. Everybody denounces superstition as vain and unprofitable; but it is the people who are not of the speaker's religious way of thinking alone who are superstitious. When a Christian is reminded of the fact that his religion is the result of the geographical accident of his birth, he waxes exceedingly indignant, and would deny it if he could. Deny it he cannot, however, except with deliberately closed eyes. Only the other day a well-known divine expressed the opinion that the Turk would be a very fine fellow if only he possessed a better religion; but he forgot that the Mohammedans cherish the same conviction concerning the Christians. Where can you find an umpire competent to settle the point in dispute? Dr. Horton admits that the Indians generally are much more religious than Britishers; but their religions are so imperfect and corrupt that they cannot produce the noblest type of character—Christianity alone can do that. Mrs. Besant is equally convinced that Theosophy is the best character-forming religion in the world, while thousands of intelligent people make the same claim for Buddhism. This is the tritest of truisms, though the majority of us act as though we had never heard of it. It is the same in connection with everything. It would be easy to name four or five European nations, each of which glories in the dream that it is the greatest in the world. Mr. Lloyd George seldom addresses an audience without indulging in that boast on behalf of the British nation. The champions of France and Germany sing the praises of their respective countries in the same superlative degree—all alike forgetting that comparisons of that kind are always invidious. It is a common human weakness to place self and its interests in the position of highest honor and dignity.

Now, the comparative study of religions exposes the utter absurdity of such an ignorant and selfish claim on the part of the representatives of any religion. We will consider it in its relation to Christianity. We are assured by the divines that Christianity is the only infallible religion in existence, and by infallible is meant not capable of erring, not liable to fail, deceive, or disappoint; the only religion in which redemption through the blood of a crucified Redeemer is offered free to a lost world. But the truth is that the Christian doctrine of the Redeemer is neither original nor unique. Professor Bousset says that "the figure of the Redeemer, as such, did not wait for Christianity to force its way into the religion of the Gnosis." There are two pre-Christian documents, according to the erudite Dr. Reitzenstein, in which he clearly appears; as a rule, these pre-Christian Gnostic sects were violently anti-Jewish, speaking of "the accursed God of the Jews," and identifying him with Saturn and the Devil; and even in the Mandaean and Manichean systems an entirely non-Christian standpoint is still visible. Speaking of all these pre- and non-Christian systems, Professor Gilbert Murray says:—

"Their Redeemer is descended by a fairly clear genealogy from the 'Tritos Soter' of early Greece, contaminated with similar figures, like Attis and Adonis from Asia Minor, Osiris from Egypt, and the special Jewish conception of the Messiah of the chosen people. He has various names, which the name of Jesus or 'Christos,' 'the Anointed,' tends gradually to supersede. Above all, he is, in some sense, Man, or 'the Second Man,' or 'the Son of Man.'.....He is the real, the ultimate, the perfect and eternal Man, of whom all bodily men are feeble copies. He is also the Father; the Savior is the Son, 'the image of the Father,' 'the Second Man,' 'the Son of Man.'.....In the main he descends, of his freewill or by the eternal purpose of the Father, from Heaven through the spheres of all the Archontes or Kosmokratores, the planets, to save mankind, or sometimes to save the fallen Virgin, Wisdom, or 'the Pearl.'.....When his work is done he ascends to Heaven to sit by the side of the Father in glory" (Four Stages of Greek Religion, pp. 144-5).

The Rev. B. W. Bacon, D.D., Professor of New

Testament Criticism and Exegesis in Yale University, is in full agreement with Professor Murray, and, on the whole, more to the point. He says:—

"In the Pauline gospel the story of Jesus is a drama of the supernal regions, wherein his earthly career as a prophet, leader, teacher, sinks to the level of the merest episode. As pre-existent spirit, Jesus had been from the beginning of creation 'in the form of God.' As the period of its consummation drew near he took upon him human form, descended through suffering and death to the lowest depths of the under-world, and by Divine power had re-ascended above all the heavens with their ranks of angelic hierarchies. Whether Paul himself so conceived it or not, the Gentile world had no other moulds of thought wherein to formulate such a Christology than the current myths of Redeemer-gods. The value of the individual *soul* had at last been discovered, and men resorted to the ancient personifications of the forces of Nature as deliverers of this new-found *soul* from its weakness and mortality. The influential religions of the time were those of personal redemption by mystic union with a dying and resurrected 'Savior-god,' an Osiris, an Adonis, a Mithra. Religions of this type were everywhere displacing the old national faiths" (*The Making of the New Testament*, pp. 49-50).

Dr. Bacon is a distinguished member of the Modernist School of Liberal Christianity, the distinction between which and Unitarianism is more nominal than real. He finds two distinct gospels in the New Testament, the Gospel of Jesus, or the gospel which Jesus himself preached, of which Dr. Bacon is minister, and the gospel *about* Jesus, which Paul and his followers proclaimed. Jesus was only a man. Paul changed him into a God-man, in order to make him acceptable to the Gentile world. Even if the human Jesus ever lived at all, he could not have lived in history had he not been arrayed in the borrowed garments of the God-man of Paganism. Christianity has persisted, not because it is true, but because it assumed a form in which it is palpably false. In a world saturated with superstition only a superstitious cult had the slightest chance of surviving.

Is it not indisputable, then, that the Christianity of the orthodox Church is fully as mythical, fully as great a failure as any Pagan religion ever was? Dr. Bacon himself practically admits this when he says that the difference between Paul and the Jerusalem Apostles had reference to the *quality* of their respective gospels, and not merely to the *extent* of their message. Professor Bacon puts it thus:—

"Paul's whole message of redemption through the cross and resurrection started from other premises than those of the Galilean apostles, and was conceived in other terms. For this reason it leads over to a new Christology. In short, the transition of Christianity from its Jewish to its Gentile form is not a mere enlargement of its field by the abolition of particularistic barriers. The background we must study for the understanding of it is not so much mere contemporary history as the contemporary history of religion. The development from the Petrine gospel, broadly characteristic of the Synoptic writings, through the Pauline Epistles to that of the Johannine writings, is a transition from Hebrew to Hellenic conceptions of what redemption is, and how it is effected" (*Ibid*, pp. 47, 48).

Thus, Biblical criticism, though it started on its career for the pious purpose of defending the traditional view of the Scripture, has been of the highest service to the cause of truth, firstly by putting the Bible in the same category as other sacred writings, and, secondly, by thrusting Christianity into its appropriate place among other religions. Instead of being, as its advocates vainly imagined, a thing apart, a special balm from heaven for the healing of the world's wounds, the science of criticism has positively proved it to be a blood-relation of every other religion on the planet. In origin, in nature, and in pretentiousness it is no exception to the rule. Its egotism is insufferable, its haughtiness is colossal, and its intolerance unequalled; and these wicked qualities were never in greater evidence than at the present moment. Almost daily they obtrude themselves upon us, and rob us of our rights and privileges. Dr. F. B. Meyer is perfectly well aware that there is "a growing demand for Sunday amuse-

ments," and yet he would move heaven and earth to prevent its being yielded to. In this metropolis, out of a population of six millions less than one million ever darken church or chapel doors; and yet the barely one million arrogate to themselves the right to determine how the remaining five millions shall spend their Sundays. Dr. Meyer has the temerity to expect the London County Council to legislate in the interests of the one million, and pay no heed whatever to any demands that may be made by the rest of the people. Is not this selfishness at its lowest and worst? Is it not bigotry in all its repulsiveness and shamelessness? Dr. Meyer's mode of life may have deprived him of the capacity to enjoy such amusements as theatres, music halls, and cinemas provide, and no doubt he has a perfect right to exhort Christians to stay away from such godless places; but he certainly has no right to impose upon the non-church going community the narrow rules by which he and his followers see fit to regulate their lives. As long as Christianity remains in our midst it will do all within its power to put down everything that does not tend to subserve its own interests. Therefore, we are resolved to devote all our resources to the task of bringing its nefarious and injurious career to as speedy an end as possible.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Vanguard of Science.

THE armies of ignorance were powerless against it. Prejudice, custom, conceit attacked it with all their malignity, and were sent awandering in the maze of credulity: they were utterly routed, but could not believe it. Strength rose up against it, fiercely innocuous. Surrounded, often, by almost inconceivable hardships, it survived to confound the imposers of them. Restricted, thwarted, bruised and broken on many a wheel of torture, its life suffered no developing weakness. Miseries were heaped upon it, and the misery-makers rewarded with a smile. Forced by bigotry into the prison of silence, it changed that into a house of thought, wherein it fashioned weapons for the future. Against it and around it religion massed its devotees, using every fair and every mean advantage to capture and enslave it, but unsuccessfully. For the desire to know is stronger than prisons, braver than its bravest enthusiast, greater than all religions, grander than its grandest discovery. To seek to enslave it, as religion has done, is but "to chasten the high sea with rods." The desire to know is immortal, in the only understandable sense, because humanity is immortal; and religion's attempt has but shown to all open minds how pitifully ignorant, or how grossly self-seeking, the upholders of superstition have been and are.

The searching for facts, and their accumulation in sequential order, named Science, has been man's principal and most glorious task. It is the father of all progress; has given into our hands the power to raise ourselves from the level whereon our predecessors walked. It has taught us their errors; nor has it omitted to tell us how to avoid them. From the greatest things to the smallest, in every aspect of our lives, the ministrations of Science have outswamped the influence of Religion. The veriest detail of our most commonplace duty is resplendent with the glory of man's organised knowledge. Contrast it with the vaunted indispensibility of Religion, and where is the latter? Hidden in the miasma of its own inutility.

Knowledge is no ascetic. Its nature is social. It belongs to humanity; not to the individual or to a sect. Its chief function is to attend humanity. And Science, classified knowledge, knowledge brought into mathematical perfection, has never stayed for one moment the dictates of its nature. Science is man's best friend. Accompanying him during his times of travail, easing his pains, smoothing the hard rough road before him, probing, with inexpressible sympathy and consideration, the pain-racked depths of

his being, that it might discover some lever whereby the load could be lifted from his heart, going ahead that it might light the lamp of encouragement and hope, guiding, assisting, attending, Science has never ceased to be man's most noble companion.

The tasks it has accomplished have been as tremendous in their import as they have been wide in their range. It has disrobed the stars of their secrecy. It has given the wayside violet a story more marvellous than the God-myth. The Book of Ages, so long heavily sealed, it has opened and partially translated for us. In the history of a flame Science has told a tale more wonderful than the assumed glory of an assumed Jesus Christ. From the past it has drawn facts that give the lie to the past as men have painted it for us. It has broken the bars that encircled the priest-slave, Knowledge, giving us a whiff of the fragrance of freedom. Throughout all its multifarious activities Science has ever sought the wellbeing of humanity. Behind even its errors, its shortcomings, its failures, we can often see its real nature shine.

Men, under the influence of Religion, which never sought to know, but ever remained amongst the unknown things, often treated Science contemptuously and superciliously, and yet they based their little lives upon its teachings all the time. Their bitterest condemnations were made possible by the Science they affected so thoroughly to despise; they did not renounce, in their severest fulminations, the results of Science they found in organised language.

Because it undermined some of man's most deeply rooted and cherished prejudices, many men, self-styled teachers, have turned round and rent the faithful attendant. In their ignorance and ire they have countenanced a persecution the results of which no one can truthfully reckon. Around man's ankles they have locked the gyves from which he has yet to escape. He is manacled and loaded with irons moulded from priest opposition to knowledge. He lives in a narrow dark den, and breathes a fetid atmosphere Religion has fouled. It has been inevitable! Yes, it has happened; and, were it not for the vainglorious assumption of unparalleled humanitarianism in which Religion enswathes itself, we would willingly forego condemnation; but the attitude of Religion demands condemnation, and there are those who shall see it fails not.

One by one the bars are being cut through, and the shutters unhinged. Slowly, stone by stone, the demolition of the structure Religion has raised takes place. Gradually the prisoner is drawn from the farthest corner of his den nearer to the light.

Science gave man power, and received buffets. She gave him mastery and was repaid with scorn and diatribe. From the chalice of her might she poured forth at his feet the fruits of her labors, and man trod the best of them under his heel. But the light, streaming through the orifices of his prison is beginning to stir within him a sense of remorse. With the gleams of understanding comes appreciation, and with appreciation comes the desire to test and to realize. And ears that were open only to the insidious word-fooling of priests are now hearing the clash and clamor of the war of ideas that rages outside the prison.

While Science worked, studied, and searched, there was something that used the ammunition provided, something that advanced boldly, militant and relentless, against the armies of superstition. It was Freethought, the pioneer, the vanguard of Science. Against the huge battalions that ranged themselves to confront the discoveries of Science the Freethinker toiled and struggled in active opposition, with never diminishing strength. Science worked patiently in peace, remote from the din and turmoil; but Freethought was there in the midst of the fight battling for the liberty of mind that is the spirit of Science. If Science has attended humanity, Freethought has attended Science. In the war of Reason with Religion the protagonist of Science has been and is Freethought. Despite the odds and hardships, the thanklessness of the task, Freethought

will never crave peace; not till the bars are all broken and the walls all razed to the ground, not till the foundation of religion is disentombed from its depths in ignorance.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Saucy and Audacious "Science."

"Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor."—*Much Ado About Nothing*.

SCIENCE and religion have ever been mortal enemies. Scientific teaching and investigation, or, indeed, any form of intellectual liberty, has always been incompatible with assent to the dogmas of religion. The entire organisation of priestcraft has invariably been brought to bear against science on the ground that it is a powerful solvent of religious faith. This resistance of the Church of Christ to the prevalent opinions of scientists has no indisputable claim to our respect. When we remember that the system of Copernicus, the discoveries of Galileo, the law of gravitation of Newton, and the Darwinian theory were all in turn received in the same venerable quarter with equal disfavor, we are inclined to attribute that resistance, not to the weakness of the arguments of the scientists, but to a general dislike of knowledge.

Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of "God." The early chemists were regarded as agents of "the Devil." Physiology and medicine were opposed on similar grounds. Geology and biology were also opposed tooth and nail by the Bride of Christ. She bitterly resented inquiry, and preferred explaining natural phenomena by mythological invention.

After these many centuries of opposition, however, a lady has boldly attempted to build a golden bridge between the two. As the lady hails from the land of tall buildings and tall statements, the new evangel is not hid under a bushel. It has been spread abroad, and the gospel of Mary Baker Glover Eddy bids fair to rival the older evangel of Jesus Christ. The newest of new bibles, *Christian Science: A Key to the Scriptures*, of which the American lady-savior is the author, appeared in 1866, and is now nearing its two hundredth edition. It has been enthusiastically received by thousands of half-educated religious men and women, reverent of learning, quite unable to discriminate it from its adulterated imitation. And Mrs. Eddy, quite as indiscriminating as any of them, was admirably equipped by a nodding acquaintance with theology, metaphysics, and a pseudo-scientific vocabulary, and the gift of a tenacious memory, to give them the thing they longed for. Words were Mrs. Eddy's sole stock-in-trade. Her pomp of court and her priesthood were verbosity. There are five hundred pages of polysyllabic words in her book. To a reader familiar with the sober use of scientific terms, her explanations and definitions are delirious jargon. They are the bastard offspring of a riotous imagination playing, in the light of half grasped ideas from the scientists, upon resonant polysyllables. For example, here is a—definition!—

"Matter, mythology, mortality; another name for mortal mind; illusion, intelligence, substance, and life in non-intelligence and mortality; life resulting in death, and death in life; sensation in the sensationless; mind originating in matter; the opposite of truth; the opposite of God; that of which immortal mind takes no cognisance; that which mortal mind sees, feels, tastes, and smells in belief."

The author of this farrago of nonsense has been appropriately hailed as a teacher "second only to" Christ. It was only proper, therefore, that she should regard matter, mythology, and mortality as synonymous. Even the sacrosanct individual who thought a "whale" was a "fish" could not improve upon that blunder. On another page of this "divine revelation" we read that—

"the metaphysics of Christian science prove the rule by inversion."

For example:—

"There is no pain in truth, and there is no truth in pain."

Mrs. Eddy regrets that ontology receives less attention than physiology, and relates the following improving anecdote, worthy of Baron Munchausen or Dr. Torrey:—

"It is related that a father, anxious to try such an experiment, plunged his infant babe, only a few hours old, into water for several minutes, and repeated this operation daily, until the child could remain under water twenty minutes, moving and playing without harm, like a fish. Parents should remember this, and so learn how to develop their children properly on dry land."

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" What, in the name of common sense, did the lady-savior suppose ontology to mean? It was fitting such a teacher should give her disciples a form of prayer and a confession of faith which bears the same resemblance to the "Lord's" Prayer that margarine does to butter. The new high-priestess strutted in borrowed plumes, and charged 300 dollars for a dozen lessons. No American oil-king ever kept a keener eye or a tighter fist on money—the only material thing in existence which "Christian" science allows to be real. She never allowed a dollar that had no friends to get by her alive. In short, Ma Eddy was a religious "boss" like the late-lamented General Booth. The high-priestess of the newest and most successful form of religiosity did not escape ridicule. Mark Twain, with that characteristic twinkle in his eye, that irresistible drawl in his voice, that gravity of manner, tried to convince the lady-savior that she was mistaken. This is the way Mark burlesqued the American Abracadabra:—

"There is an account of the restoration to perfect health in a single night, of a fatally injured horse, by the application of Christian science. I can stand a good deal, but I recognise that the ice is getting thin here. That horse had as many as fifty claims; how could he demonstrate over them? Could he do the All Good, Good-Good, Good Gracious, Liver, Bones, Truth, all down but nine, set them up on the other alley? Could he intone the scientific Statement of Being? Now could he? Wouldn't it give him a relapse? Let us draw the line at horses. Horses and furniture."

This is genuine fun, and more effective than reams of argument. It never affected the continued popularity of the Eddy evangel. For when a person joins the Christian Science temples he must leave his brains at home. Leave them locked up in an iron safe, or else have them removed by a skilled surgeon. If he should forget himself, and think just once, the bye-law provides that he shall be fired out—instantly—for ever—no return ticket.

We set out in a spirit of inquiry to make a serious examination of the claims made by Ma Eddy. But this nonsensical system makes us giddy; for, of all the strange, frantic, and incomprehensible books which have emanated from the imaginations of religious maniacs, this book takes the first prize. It is more incoherent than the ravings of Joanna Southcott. Beside it the Book of Mormon is a plain, unvarnished tale. The *Forty Coming Wonders* of the late Prophet Baxter is shrinking modesty compared with the effusion of Mrs. Eddy. This Yankee Bible fairly takes the breath away. No other less colloquial phrase can so aptly describe the effect of claims so far transcending sanity. One reels back from the insane heights of "Christian" Science to the simplicity of a rational system like Secularism, suited to the requirements of the age, and freed from the absurd aberrations of pre-scientific times.

MIMNERMUS.

We don't wonder that the Free Church Council of the Aberdeen district are denouncing the picture-show of the Life of Jesus called "From Manger to Cross." Their wallings nearly made a funeral number of a local newspaper. They scent mischief. People may prefer to see "The Old Old Story" in a picture theatre to hearing it in a church—and that will play Old Harry with the clerical business.

Acid Drops.

"Ben Adhem" of the *Liverpool Weekly Post*, whom we had to challenge a few weeks ago for giving extra publicity to a ridiculous fable about Charles Bradlaugh and a Christian young soldier at Portsmouth, and trying to justify it by declaring that it was endorsed by Mrs. Besant, has devoted a long column of small type to a reply which is no answer. The one important point he had to deal with was the statement about Mrs. Besant. The fable itself was taken from the book he referred to. He did not invent that, he did not even misrepresent it. But he did invent, or he borrowed from someone else who invented it, the fiction of Mrs. Besant's having endorsed it. We obtained the number of the *Theosophist* he mentioned as his authority, and all we found in it was a review of Mr. Alexander Irvine's book, signed by "E. S.," which are not Mrs. Besant's initials. The Portsmouth story is quoted in that review, but to say it is endorsed is absurd. "E. S." does not endorse it. "E. S." treats it as a pleasant story which he (or she) has heard of for the first time. A story can only be endorsed by a person who knows whether it is true or not. "Ben Adhem" is not a fool. He sees this clearly enough. But he seeks to relieve his endangered infallibility by pretending now that it doesn't matter whether Mrs. Besant endorsed the story or not. He says that is "a minor issue." Well, it was the *only* issue he raised when he was challenged. It was therefore neither minor nor major. It was all in all. Mrs. Besant's endorsement settled the matter. But it turns out that this was only supporting one fable with another.

"Ben Adhem's" case, his *only* case, breaks down. The Bradlaugh fable was not endorsed at all in the *Theosophist*, much less endorsed by Mrs. Besant. But there is no end to the wriggling of a Christian when his infallibility is attacked. "Ben Adhem" is like the rest of his fraternity under an obligation—to his editor or his God—never to be mistaken. So he defends himself with another infallibility. "I am sure," he says. Is he? Sure of what? Why, that Mrs. Besant "would not print anything about her old colleague unless she endorses it as correct." We beg to tell "Ben Adhem" that he would be laughed at if he tried this sort of logic in a court of law. Judges don't take inferential statements as valid testimony. A plain peremptory allegation has to be justified by plain peremptory evidence. Let us also tell "Ben Adhem" that his idea of editorial responsibility is ridiculous, and especially so in this case. Mrs. Besant spends most of her time in India. How, as a mere matter of fact, can she see everything beforehand in a monthly magazine which one buys in London? Even if she did—even if she saw "E. S.'s" review of a new book published in London—it is nonsense to say that she endorsed what the reviewer did not endorse. "Ben Adhem's" argument comes to this,—that any statement about Bradlaugh must be true if it appears in the *Theosophist*—even if it is only quoted by an unknown contributor from a book casually under review! Such is the intellectual legerdemain which takes the place of the clear assertion that the Bradlaugh story was "endorsed" by Mrs. Besant.

"Ben Adhem" cannot even keep up this nonsense in his own person. After declaring that any Bradlaugh story must be true if it appears in the *Theosophist*, and arguing that *this* story must be considered as certified by Mrs. Besant's endorsement, he asks "Is Mr. Irvine's story true?" and he replies "As to that I cannot say." Of course he cannot. He sees the truth in a lucid interval.

What more is to be said? "Ben Adhem's" case is done for. The long list of Bradlaugh fables is lengthened by another. But a few words may be devoted to "Ben Adhem" himself.

There is said to be an editor in the Midlands who declares that he is the only sane editor in the district; at least the only editor who can *prove* he is sane. He was once confined in a lunatic asylum, and he was released with a certificate of sanity. He flourishes it. He defies other editors to show one like it. "Ben Adhem" goes one better than that. He writes and signs his own certificate. He assures his readers that *his* mind is of a high philosophical type. He always sees both sides of a question. Bradlaugh did not. He was a fanatic. Foote does not. He is a fanatic. "He is unbalanced," this great critic says, "as every man must be who believes that he is right and that all who hold a different view are wrong." At this rate we are *all* fanatics—including "Ben Adhem." Every man believes he is right; he *must* do so,—otherwise he would hold another opinion. Every man, likewise, believes that all who differ from him are mis-

taken. To say that he is right is to say that they are wrong. This is not fanaticism. It is a necessary law of thought. A fanatic is not a person who believes he is right, and that those who differ from him are wrong. All men do that. It is inevitable. A fanatic is a person who tries to back up his opinions with his personality; who is insulted by the dissidence of others; who assumes that others are easily mistaken and that he cannot be; who attaches an exorbitant value to his opinions on the smallest questions; and, above all, who is prepared to promote his own views by any and every available form of force, instead of trusting to intellectual and moral persuasion. Judged by this standard, both Bradlaugh and Foote (it is "Ben Adhem" who puts them together) might hope for a verdict of Not Guilty against the charge of fanaticism.

We don't see why "Ben Adhem" should be annoyed at our observation "whoever that gentleman may be." He says that he might as well say "Mr. G. W. Foote—whichever that gentleman may be." Really! We have said that "Ben Adhem" is not a fool, but a man who is not a fool may sometimes be foolish. To print Mr. Foote's name is to say who he is. To print a writer's name as "Ben Adhem" is not to say who he is. Doesn't the gentleman see the difference?

All that can be inferred from the pseudonym of "Ben Adhem" is that the gentleman is acquainted with Leigh Hunt's beautiful poem. He might be better acquainted with it than he is. "Ben Adhem" is not a name at all. The name of the hero of the poem is Abou,—which doesn't sound so nice. Ben Adhem means a son of the family, house, or tribe of Adhem. "Ben" occurs in the Bible—for Hebrew is a Semitic language. The familiar name of Benjamin is a case in point. But we will stop here. If we went further "Ben Adhem" might regard us as a "fanatic" in accuracy—which we are sure he is not.

There was an illuminating passage in "A Correspondent's" reminiscences of Adrianople in the *Daily Chronicle* of February 5:—

"The people do not trust themselves alone in the streets at night where the population is mixed. Dark deeds can easily be done quietly. This is not so true of Adrianople as of smaller towns in Turkey, where the feud between Greeks and Bulgarians have always been very bitter."

So much for the alleged "happy family" character of the Soldiers of the Cross.

Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett has been the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* during the Balkan War. His communications have not manifested any very strong partiality for the Turks, and what he has to say in their favor comes, therefore, with the greater force. His experiences have just been issued under the title of *With the Turks in Thrace*, and in this volume he meets with a flat denial of the stories of Turkish atrocities that were circulated, apparently as a counterblast to the undoubted Christian atrocities that occurred. The following description of the behavior of the retiring Turkish troops from Lule Burgas is taken from a *Daily Telegraph* review of the volume named:—

"The men were starving and disorganised, but they left untouched the flocks, the chickens, and the corn of the villages they passed through, and when food was refused to them by the Christian inhabitants, who had plenty, they were gentle and forbearing. One of them offered to share with the Christian foreigner his last crust of bread. Amid all the welter of confusion and failure that these pages record there is revealed a quality of fortitude and magnanimity in the beaten Turkish soldier which is profoundly impressive."

We wonder of how many Christian troops, embittered by failure and defeat, it would be possible to write the same words?

There are times when a man of simple mind will take up a much more straightforward position, because of his simplicity, than that occupied by a more acute intelligence. The Bishop of London has been discussing the question of a miraculous versus a non-miraculous Christianity. Quite properly, he defends the miraculous. Being a Bishop, that, as Heine said in another connection, is his trade. He is convinced that if once the working man of East London wakes up to the fact that belief in the miraculous is absurd, he will cease to believe in the Christian Church. We agree with him. A non-miraculous Christianity is no Christianity at all. The life of the New Testament Jesus is simply saturated with the miraculous. It begins before his birth and it follows him after his death. And if anyone believes in either the miraculous birth or the resurrection of Jesus, it is simply idiotic to boggle at accepting any other of the miracles recorded. We agree with Bishop Ingram that a genuine Christianity must hold to "a supernatural and

miraculous Christ." They who say otherwise are either dishonest or stupid. And we will only add that a supernatural and miraculous Christ is precisely the thing that the educated intelligence finds it increasingly difficult to accept.

The Rev. Dr. W. F. Adeney has been gladdening a Church congregation by an address on the same subject. In the course of this address, he is reported as taking his hearers back some fifteen centuries and proving from Christian writings, by what the report calls "infallible evidence," that the writers of that time believed that Jesus Christ *did* live. We don't doubt it. But there was no need to travel back fifteen centuries to produce this wonderful testimony. The *War Cry* would have done quite as well, and would have been equally conclusive. People believed, three hundred years after his alleged death, that Jesus actually lived. How on earth does that prove that their belief was solidly based on fact? Above all, how does it prove that the stories told about the Jesus whom they believed to have lived were the true stories? Dr. Adeney is the principal of a theological training college, and one can imagine the kind of thinkers that will be turned out after being subjected to his discipline.

After all, what does it matter? Suppose it could be shown that people, not fifteen centuries ago, but people living in A.D. 30 believed and knew Jesus lived. How much further have we got? All it proves is that people believed in him and the stories related about him. They believed he had a miraculous birth, that he was a supernatural person, that he worked miracles, that he rose from the dead. They believed all these things, but it does not prove that any of them occurred. Does the belief of the girl Bernadette that the Virgin appeared to her at Lourdes, and the belief of thousands of others that she did appear, prove that the Virgin Mary actually landed in Lourdes on that occasion? It proves this just as much or just as little as the belief of the primitive Christians prove that the Gospel story is true. Freethinkers do not want Christians to prove that other Christians, centuries ago, believed these stories, they want them to prove their truth. And the question is not, fundamentally, a question of history. It is a question of psychology. All the stories told about Jesus were believed about other people—both before and after him. Find out how people came to believe these stories about others, and you will understand how they came to believe them about Jesus. Dr. Adeney is merely illustrating in his own person the persistence of the type of mind that craves for the miraculous, and accordingly discovers it.

For sheer cant a sentence in the Rev. F. B. Meyer's appeal to the Churches concerning the L.C.C. elections beats everything we have seen for some time. He refers to "the variety artistes, with whom I have cast in my lot." The notion that Mr. Meyer has anything in common with music-hall artistes is supremely ridiculous. One would imagine that Mr. Meyer intended seeing that the poorer ones were better paid, or that in any legitimate grievance they have in the mode of their employment they could count on his assistance. It might even be expected that he would not be averse to doing a "turn" himself on the music-hall stage, in order to help those with whom "I have cast in my lot." Of course, all that this clerical "artful dodger" desires is to exploit the music-hall artistes in the interests of his own bigoted Sabbatarianism. We would impress upon music-hall artistes the necessity of having an eye on the company they appear to have been keeping.

What wonderful things happen to preachers. The Rev. R. J. Campbell told his congregation the other day that "One of the ablest men in the House of Commons, a man of world-wide fame, told me with the utmost simplicity and frankness that he was converted all at once from Agnosticism to faith in Christ through the power exercised, all unknown to him, by the daily prayers of someone who loved him dearly." This converted Agnostic said that the change had "nothing to do with his mentality," which we can quite believe. What we are curious about is how it was done. And how did this "ablest man in the House Commons" know it was done in that way? And if it worked with this one individual, why cannot it work with others? Why does not Mr. Campbell, for instance, select some well-known Freethinker and convert him, "all at once," by the same method? It is really a pity, with so many Freethinkers abroad, and such a cheap and easy method of getting them to see the error of their ways, that the plan is not put into practice more.

What an unspeakable scoundrel was that Parson Knight who not only abandoned his wife and went off with a girl

engaged in Church work, but let it be supposed that he had fallen over Flamborough cliffs, and thus set far better men than himself risking their lives in a charitable effort to find him! That was the worst part of his offence. It was simply detestable.

We hear that several ladies of the congregation went into deep mourning for the "dear vicar." Their comments now are decidedly interesting. So are their husbands' who paid for the mourning.

Freethinkers may derive some amusement, at any rate in looking back, from the way in which "God" was made a party to the Hunslet farce. A memorial service was held in the eloping vicar's church, with the Bishop of Richmond as the principal performer. Men and women wept over the poor "deceased" and sang "O God Our Help in Ages Past." "God" said nothing; the pious farce went through without a word of remonstrance; which seems to us to prove the extreme improbability of "God" being a real existence.

The eloping vicar's clerical friends naturally make the most of that knock on the head. Rev. W. L. Moreton, of St. Clement's Church, Leeds, for instance, addressed his Shrovetide congregation on the subject as follows:—

"We are met together to-night with sad hearts. It has been a heart-breaking affair to us who were friends of him of whom we are all thinking. I am glad that you all in St. Clement's parish stood up for him before this news came. He was one whom we knew to be good, and I don't think that the dreadful things of the past twelve months would ever have happened but for that motor-car accident of five years ago."

We don't suppose the Rev. W. L. Moreton extends this sort of consideration to ordinary offenders. Yet if he would give the matter a few minutes' honest reflection he would see that, whether the existing state of a man's brain was produced by an accident or given him as a natural endowment by God or Nature, he is equally under the compulsion of his physical organism. The eloping vicar is entitled to the same consideration as other offenders—no less and no more.

Parson Knight's curate, the Rev. H. J. Cobett, believing his superior officer in the Army of the Lord to be dead, published the following about him in the February number of the parish magazine:—

"Our dear vicar has left us an example. His life was beautiful, and a few years of such service as he gave are worth a hundred years of humdrum toil. We need the inspiration of such a life as his."

What a joke! It is enough to tickle the melancholy rhinoceros.

Suppose this vulgar and vicious priest of the Church of Christ had been one of the prosecuted Freethought advocates at Leeds, only a few miles distant from Hunslet. What a hullabaloo would have been raised then! What articles would have been written, what sermons preached, on the awful effects of infidelity! As it is, however, the reverend blackguard's performance is attributed by many to his having knocked his poor head some time ago.

Parson Knight's little boy, seven years of age, is most to be pitied. He was told that his father was dead. He has since learnt that his father is a living scoundrel. Poor boy! And they sentimentalise over his father's "fondness" for him! Christianity used to be cruel; it is now simply disgusting.

Rev. Robert Leamon, aged sixty, has been sentenced at the Old Bailey, London, to three months' imprisonment for publishing libels concerning Mr. Douglas Earle Marsh. The Common Serjeant said he had no doubt that the prisoner's object was blackmail.

A young woman of twenty, called Lucie Allajgre, of Anney, murdered her mother because she would not allow her to become a nun in a convent. In face of suspicious circumstances she finally confessed her guilt, and is now doing twenty years' imprisonment. We presume the clergy will not parade this case as a testimony to the moral influence of religion.

Buddhu, the prisoner who has turned King's evidence in the Clark case at Agra, mentions a curious instance of religious action in the course of the murder. One of the assassins hired to kill Mrs. Clark "proceeded to the Clarks' house with a large knife, which Mohan kissed and worshiped and sharpened on a stone." There is nothing new in this to the student of religion, but it may strike the ordinary man as extremely strange. The explanation is that religion

is not necessarily connected with morality at all. It is frequently the last sanction of crime.

In the course of a recent application at a Consistory Court on behalf of Grosvenor Chapel, Hanover-square, it was mentioned that the chapel had accommodation for 800 persons but 80 was now considered a good congregation. It was thought that more people would be attracted if a four-post canopy (a balachino) were erected over the communion table. What a sensible and dignified way of trying to fill a church!

Sunday tramcars have just started at Bournemouth. We shall see whether the cliffs fall in.

The opponents of Sunday picture-shows are now railing at what they call the "thin pretext of charity" on the part of the management. We beg to remind them that it was their own invention. They did not like to deliver a frontal attack on "Sunday amusements" so they raised an objection to such things being carried on "for gain." It was a silly objection—as well as a dishonest objection; but it caught on with the "authorities," and committees were formed to comply with the new regulation. When it was found that the Sunday picture-shows were not stopped by this difficult regulation the Sabbatarians took to denouncing their own offspring. They now talk about "gain" and the "thin pretext of charity" in the same breath.

The Wolverhampton Free Church Council has passed the following resolution:—

"This Council, composed of ministers and laymen representing the Free Churches of Wolverhampton and district, deeply deprecates the publishing of newspapers to be sold on Sunday, and especially regrets the intention to add to such papers by the issuing of one in Wolverhampton."

Note the trade spirit of this protest. It is Sunday *selling*, not Sunday *labor*, that is found so objectionable; for Sunday papers are edited and printed on Saturday, while Monday papers are edited and printed on Sunday. Of course the *selling* of papers on Sunday is a rivalry with the Churches. Anything that interests the people on the "Lord's Day" tends to keep them away from "divine service." What the Free Church ministers and their friends want is a monopoly of business on the Blessed Sabbath. They don't say so, but that is what they mean, and it is the key to all their acts and resolutions.

A remark made by the Rev. Davison Brown in the discussion was very naive. "If they had administrative power to the extent of their convictions," he said, "there would be a great change in the social conditions in Wolverhampton." No doubt there would. Fortunately it isn't likely to happen.

As our readers are probably aware, the proposed census of the churches by the *Daily News* has been abandoned, owing to an appeal from the Bishop of London and the Rev. F. B. Meyer. Both these clerical lights argue that numbers prove nothing, or are positively misleading. Their position is that what the churches lose in quantity they gain in quality. The lukewarm and indifferentists drop out, and the church is left with a band of devoted and enthusiastic believers. We are glad to see the *British Weekly* protesting against this assumption, and calling for the census to be taken. It also quotes from the *Inquirer* to the effect that a declining church attendance, instead of meaning a concentration of "spiritual power," really "means that the diminishing congregations of the faithful are depressed and out of heart.... The decline in the habit of worshiping means a decline in the power of religion, and should be treated from that point of view." And this, we think, is the only sane point of view from which to treat it.

The assumption that it is the mentally lazy, the indifferent, and the "worldly minded" who throw up the churches is simply untrue. It is precisely those classes that remain. In the vast majority of cases the people who sever their connection with churches are those who think seriously about religious questions, and who value consistency above worldly advancement. There is simply no question that, if one could subject to some common test those who have thrown up the churches and those who still remain, there would be a big balance of moral force and intellectual strength in favor of those who are outside. No man gains anything by throwing up a church; it may often subject him to loss. And the notion that the remaining church attendants are filled with moral fervor, intellectual strength, and high spiritual aspirations is about as ridiculous as anything could well be. Look at a church or chapel congregation, listen to their conversation, or follow their progress from Monday morning to Saturday night, and see.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, February 16, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, Regent-street, London, W., at 7.30, "The Meaning of Death."

February 23, Queen's (Minor) Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

J. B.—We have not the slightest idea who "Ben Adhem" is. He says he contributed to this journal when he was a mere boy. We do not recollect it, but there have been hundreds of "contributors" to the *Freethinker*, first and last, outside the regular staff; besides, nothing hangs on that point in the present controversy.

T. HOBSON.—The quotation from the *Huddersfield Examiner* was written by the editor in 1880 and might have been challenged at the time if it could be challenged. What is the use of a contradiction at this time of day? You may rely upon it that the gentleman you refer to is mistaken. The watch story is a myth. It has been told of all Freethought leaders, and every one of them has denied it in his or her own case. Bradlaugh asked for the evidence in his case; it was never produced, even though he took legal action in order to kill the slander. If the evidence could not be produced then, how on earth is it to be produced now? Besides, the gentleman you refer to, being 64, must have been remarkably young at the time when Bradlaugh was alleged to have performed the watch trick at the Philosophical Hall, Huddersfield. That was in 1860 or 1861. Ask the gentleman to work out the figures for himself.

E. HANNAH.—Thanks for the cuttings. We did not know that the eloping vicar of Hunslet had publicly debated with Mr. T. A. Jackson at Victoria-square, Leeds.

SYDNEY A. GIMSON, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "I hope the Fund may be early completed, and that you may have health and strength to enjoy it and to give that service to Freethought which is the salt of life to you."

F. C. HOLDEN (U.S.A.).—Thanks for your efforts to extend our circulation.

F. HILL.—Quite right. Freethinkers who claim to affirm under Bradlaugh's Oaths Act should recollect that they are demanding a right not requesting a privilege. If they ask why they claim to affirm, they should reply that they do so on the ground that they have no religious belief. They should stick to this and respectfully decline to answer any other question.

E. RUSSELL.—There is nothing to take hold of in the reverend gentleman's sermon. Glad you owe your mental emancipation to the *Freethinker*.

H. SILVERSTEIN.—Your appreciative and encouraging letter is valued. As a member of the N. S. S. Executive you are in a position to judge, and you know what you are talking about. Thanks for your good wishes, as well as subscription (in last week's list) for the President's Honorarium Fund.

JOSEPH BEVINS.—Sorry for the oversight.

A. W. HUTTY.—Harold Spender's articles on the war are jokes. He is just a hired partisan. Mr. Foote keeps tolerably well.

S. SOLOMONS.—Not quite up to our mark—and we have plenty of copy at present.

H. HUMPHREYS.—Shall appear.

E. B. forwards cheque "With compliments and best wishes for a more rapid inpouring of the subscriptions to the Honorarium Fund, which stands as the tangible appreciation of the gifted editor of the all-alive *Freethinker* by its grateful readers"

JOHN SUMNER (Birmingham) remarks that his subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund for 1913 is twice the amount of last year's. This is on account of the reference in the Appeal to the death of former large subscribers. "I sincerely hope," he says, "that many others may be like-influenced, and that the sum aimed at may be considerably exceeded." Our correspondent wishes that "an additional nought could supplement" the present figure. It is good of him, but our wants do not rise to that majestic height. We are not a Bishop—though we hope we are more useful.

F. FRAWKETT.—The sentence you quote from Mr. Lloyd is a fine one, but we don't think it quite meets the questioner's trouble re Determinism. At the root of most misunderstanding of the subject is the confusion of free choice and free will.

M. M.—Sorry you had the trouble.

R. P.—Mr. Foote is an extemporaneous speaker; all his notes for any lecture would go on one page of a sheet of notepaper, and would be unintelligible to anyone but himself. It would be too expensive to have verbatim reports of his lectures taken for publication, either in the *Freethinker* or in pamphlet form.

A. R.—Next week. Thanks.

AVON DALE.—Dante was a great poet, of course, but it is a pity that his genius is associated with such a theme as the exploded theology of the Middle Ages. It has not been in our way to refer to him much. We have no other reason for our silence. We are sorry the publicist you refer to is so "jumpy."

CAN anyone supply us with Nos. 14 and 34 of the *Freethinker* for 1893?

KEBIDON.—Shall be very pleased to receive it, or anything else from your pen. Glad to have your opinion that the "Logic of Persecution" is "exceptionally fine."

E. N.—It is impossible to say how much the State Church really costs. The clergy have always managed to baffle inquiry. Gladstone reckoned its capitalised revenues would represent a hundred millions. Estimates vary from four to ten millions annually.

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.

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

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

The President's Honorarium Fund.

SECOND LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Previously acknowledged, £30 10s. 10d. Received since: C. F. Simpson, 10s. 6d.; Sydney A. Gimson, £2 2s.; E. B., £1 1s.; John Sumner, £2 2s.; Josiah Pendlebury, £1; Joseph Bevins, £1; M. M., 5s.; W. H. Morrish, £2 2s.; T. Robson, 5s.

Correction: Harriet Blake in last week's list should have been Harriet Baker.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's subject at Queen's Hall this evening (Feb. 16) is "The Meaning of Death." Such a subject should be generally attractive. It affords a good opportunity for Freethinkers to bring their orthodox friends along to the meeting.

London Freethinkers should heckle their County Council candidates on the question of collections at meetings conducted by *bona fide* Societies in the Parks and other open spaces under the Council's control. The Parks Committee are trying to stop all such collections, and a Central Committee of delegates from advanced Societies, including the N. S. S., is trying to assert the old right. The fight will begin in grim earnest as soon as the new Council meets.

Mr. Cohen is paying Belfast another visit. He is booked to lecture at the Old School of Art on February 13, 14, and 16. We hope all readers of the *Freethinker* in the neighborhood will try to attend these meetings.

The Annual Meeting of the Secular Education League will be held at Room 18, Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Tuesday evening, March 11, at 7.30. Members are specially urged to attend. A public meeting will follow at 8.15, with Mr. Halley Stewart in the chair. The list of speakers includes Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., Mr. G. W. Foote, Rev. Walter Walsh, D.D.

The newly formed Croydon Branch of the N. S. S. held its first meeting on Sunday at Ruskin House, West Croydon. There was a good attendance. Officers were elected for the ensuing twelve months, and it was arranged to hold meetings at Ruskin House opposite West Croydon Station. Freethinkers in the neighborhood are earnestly invited to attend the next meeting on March 2 at 7.30 p.m. Further information may be obtained of the secretary, Mr. J. U. Wood, 200 St. James's-road, Croydon.

The half-yearly meeting of London members of the N. S. S. will be held at Chandos Hall, Maiden-lane, Strand, on Tuesday, March 4. Chair will be taken at 8 p.m. by the President, Mr. G. W. Foote. The Executive will be present. Members are reminded that admission can only be secured by showing cards of membership. This rule will be strictly observed. The business of the meeting will be a discussion

on the lines of the resolution carried at the last (Leeds) Conference.

We are pleased to hear again from our veteran friend Mr. W. H. Morrish, of Bristol, whose memories of Free-thought go back to the days of Charles Southwell and the imprisonment of George Jacob Holyoake. Our old friend's handwriting is nearly as good as ever, but we regret to hear that he has been ailing lately. He says of the President's Honorarium Fund "it has always commanded my warmest sympathies." "I have still a warm corner in my heart for the *Freethinker*," he adds, "and it is a frequent wonder to me that you still find so many good things to say."

The local press notices the death and funeral of Mr. B. L. Coleman, of Sandwich, but nothing is said about his having been almost a lifelong Freethinker. We see by the *Advertiser* that the clergyman who lent himself to the "ignoble farce," as we called it, of burying Coleman as a Christian, was the Rev. Orlebar Payne, who must know that the dead man would laugh in his face if he could. The *Deal, Walmer, and Sandwich Mercury* confirms a point in our own obituary notice of Coleman. He says that he "will be greatly missed by many in the district whom he has at various times befriended."

Rev. Dr. Inge, preaching at St. Ann's Church, Manchester, on "Christianity and its Opponents," said there were three counts in the indictment against Christianity (we quote from the *Daily Mail* (Feb. 7) :—

"First, the educated man of the world said, 'Your ethics on the whole are sound and good, but they are entangled in a mythology which has become almost incredible and barbarous.' Secondly, the student of evolutionary science said Christian ethics were founded on sentiment, not on reason. It thwarted the beneficent action of nature by protecting the weak against the strong. It preached forgiveness, whereas nature never forgave. Thirdly, and much more clamorously, they heard all round them a very different complaint, couched in less academic language, 'You sky-pilots offer us cheques on another world in order that we may tamely submit to be swindled in this. We don't want to hear about heaven or hell; we want better wages and shorter hours. If your religion will help us to get what we want here and now, well and good; otherwise, we have no use for it.'"

Dr. Inge's reply was of no importance. It was, indeed, no reply at all, but a rapturous eulogy of Christianity. The really important thing is the admission which we reproduce.

China and Our Christian Civilisation.

A FEW weeks ago I had the pleasure of meeting, at one of the principal hotels in London, a distinguished Chinese Freethinker, Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia, the founder of the Parliamentary Sinophile group in Europe. Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia is a cultured young man, apparently of the higher literary class in China. He has spent the last six years of his life in France and Belgium, principally as a student at the University of Liège, preparatory to entering upon his professional career as a civil engineer. His knowledge of English is confined to the reading of our authors, but his mastery of the French language has been justly admired, especially on account of his notable speech at the Freethought demonstration at Brussels in November last, when he occupied the platform and divided the honors of the evening with such accomplished orators as M. Gustave Hubbard, the French Député, and the Portuguese Senator, Senhor Magalhaes Lima.

Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia is evidently a man of considerable energy and determination of character, with a phenomenally impressive personality. Despite the immense disadvantage of being an unknown and unaccompanied individuality, he has been able, in quite a surprisingly short space of time, to visit the different capitals of Europe, and obtain introductions to, and awaken the deep interest of, some of the most prominent parliamentarians of France, England, Belgium, Germany, and Austria in his semi-official project for the formation of Sinophile groups in the different countries of Europe and America. His mission was to expound the present situation as between China and European civilisation, and to invite the different Parliaments of the West to send representatives to attend the approaching assembly of the first legislative Chambers of the Chinese Republic.

The opening of the first Chinese Parliament will take place two months hence (in April), and this event will form one of the most remarkable occurrences in contemporary history. Not the most optimistic amongst the friends of human progress would have dared, a few years ago, to prophesy that a Chinese Republic was destined to be formed within the lifetime of this generation, or that a clean sweep would be made of the Manchu regime. But this and many other things even more astounding have been realised in the epoch-making year of 1912, the first day of which was signalled by the proclamation of the Chinese Republic and the deposition of the Emperor. In this work of regeneration we may see the leaven of the principles of Freethought and its collateral political principles brought into China from Europe in the quick brains and receptive intelligence of the many Chinese students who have been sent to Europe as "chiels amang ye takin' notes," and have studied and reflected upon the virtues and vices inherent in our Western civilisation.

The regeneration of China and the rejuvenating of its anachronistic type of civilisation became the inevitable law of national defence and of the corporate stability of the yellow race after the culminating horrors which the coalesced nations of Europe imposed upon the Chinese people at the time when the allied robber nations of Christendom were Shanghaied into a crusade of plunder and spoliation in China. The process of national rejuvenation, indeed, became inevitable after France and England had nefariously combined to levy the odious opium war against the "heathen Chinese" Government. China's crime was that she sought to defend her subjects against the imposition of Christian-grown opium, with its demoralising train of consequences. The pillage of the Summer Palace was the barbaric sign and manifestation of the superior morality of Christianity as a civilising agency in the Farther East. The Shanghai expedition, ten years ago, was but the culminating point at which a cynical display was made of the rapacity and unblushing piracy of the religious robber races of the West in their dealings with the defenceless hordes of the East. It is clear that unless Europe is willing in the near future to make atonement to China by adopting the policy nearest to the heart of the Chinese people—a policy of *laissez faire*—the course of national evolution in China will assuredly take shape in the militarisation of the Republic and the ultimate consecration of its chief resources to the patriotic task of driving the European nations into the sea.

My intercourse with Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia taught me that such a line of national development is farthest from the thought of the capable and enlightened men who are at the helm of affairs in the Celestial Republic. Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia assured me that China has but one wish, and that is to develop her internal resources and to remain at peace with the whole world. The Chinese, in fact, although far from lacking animal courage, are naturally the most pacific race of men, and have no ambition to overrun the neighboring nations, inasmuch as the enormous territory settled by them forms in itself a complete world, amply meeting all the requirements of the national ideals. If the evolution of the sceptical and utilitarian Chinese is, indeed, to take the direction of excessive militarisation, it will be entirely the fault of the peace-loving followers of Christianity. At this very moment, Russia—Christian and holy—is endeavoring to grab Mongolia, and is, moreover, laboring in an underhand manner to obtain the restoration of the fallen Manchu dynasty. All the Powers besides seem actuated by the maleficent desire to secure the economic servitude of China by imposing loans upon her that shall be territorially secured, or by extracting from her enforced concessions for the benefit of unscrupulous financial syndicates. This dangerous Christian game, already successfully played quite recently in Persia, of "beating my neighbor out of doors," can only have

one issue—the partition of China; and China would follow the downward path pursued by Poland, and share the fate of Poland, with all the usual dreadful consequences of national absorption, enforced by irresponsible satraps and by soldiery acting at their behests. In view of these grim possibilities, the Chinese, who, though heathen, are not idiots cretinised by the slave ethics of Christianity, are quite determined to defend their national integrity and are not sighing to be placed under the tender mercies of European tutelage.

The leading men who are now guiding the destinies of the Chinese Republic are anxious to establish sympathetic relations between the intellectuals of China and the intellectuals of Europe. Up to the present, as Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia has epigrammatically stated, China has only come in contact with three categories of Europeans, the diplomatists, the financiers, and the missionaries. The first step towards the establishment of this eminently desirable understanding was the formation of the French parliamentary group, under the presidency of M. Painlevé, Membre of the Institut de France and Député. Similar groups have since been formed in Belgium, Germany, Austria, Portugal, and the United States, and in each case the initiative has been undertaken by our friend, Hain-Jou-Kia. As the result of his labors, a joint parliamentary visit will be paid to Peking, and the party will most likely consist of Herr Scheidemann, the veteran German Socialist Democrat, my friend Magalhaes Lima, representing the Portuguese Parliament—the latest Republic in Europe thus saluting the first Republic in Asia—and my good friend Lorand, who says that though the journey is a long one, it is worth the time and the money and the labor in order to take part in this embodied proof of the awakening of the yellow races. M. H. de Pressensé, the eminent French Socialist, and M. Pichon will go as representing the French Government, and England will probably be represented by Mr. Josiah Wedgwood, M.P.

The formation of the English parliamentary group took place on January 1. A preliminary meeting was held the same day in one of the Committee Rooms of the House of Commons, and several well-known M.P.'s, including Mr. Arthur Lynch and Mr. J. Wedgwood signified their willingness to join. In this way England was happily brought into line with the other progressive nations of Europe in this important movement for a better understanding between East and West.

In my interview with him, Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia stated that as soon as the French parliamentary group had been formed at Paris, Yan-Shi-Kai, the Provisional President of the Chinese Republic, at once gave his adhesion to the French group, and the President of the Provisional Assembly telegraphed to him that he had formed a parliamentary group at Peking amongst the Chinese delegates. He told me that, in forming these groups, "we are concerned not only with a principle of justice, but with a principle dealing with the universal conscience of mankind towards the aspirations of the Chinese people for more light and liberty." He was abounding in gratitude to the French nation, because it was in France, in March last, at Paris, that he had the honor of organising the first manifestation in Europe favorable to the maintenance of the Chinese Republic—viz., at the inaugural banquet at which three hundred parliamentary delegates and university professors took part, under the presidency of M. Paul Painlevé, assisted by M. Monis, late President of the Council, and the world-renowned M. Anatole France, who, in a superb speech, expressed himself in these terms:—

"The Chinese Republic is founded on the principle of justice and liberty. In spite of the troublous experiences and the somewhat uncertain situation through which the Republic is passing, I have confidence in the Chinese Republic. China, now a Republic, is the preparation for universal peace."

In expounding his object, Mr. Hain-Jou-Kai reminded me that the Chinese people, up to the

present, have been in contact with only two sorts of European—the religious missionaries and the men of commerce. But the great bulk of the Chinese—those in the interior—have been for thousands of years trained in the Confucian philosophy and are indifferent to religious questions; and, as for the European traders and exploiters, whose only interest is in material affairs, the Chinese people are equally suspicious of them and their particular ways of pushing their commercial interests. The intellectuals in China know that in Europe there exist great numbers of independent and high-minded politicians and savants and philosophers of immense value, who enjoy an important moral authority in the world of thought. These are the sort of Europeans too little known in China, the men with whom it is extremely important that China should become intimately and sympathetically acquainted. I, therefore, propose (he said) to form an Anglo-Chinese Association, consisting, first of all, of members of the English parliamentary group, and, secondly, of English scientists, savants, philosophers, journalists—in a word, of all the men of liberal thought and humanitarian principles, in order to bring home to the Chinese people a clear knowledge of the true conditions of civilisation, as understood in Europe; to teach them that the Europe outside China is not to be judged by the Europe as seen in China; and, finally, to complete the work of the parliamentary group, as exerted upon governments and diplomacy, by a sympathetic understanding between the progressive and enlightened elements both in Europe and China.

I hope that these Sinophile groups, so happily inaugurated by Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia, will prosper in every land; and I shall look forward with intense interest to the reports which our parliamentary missionaries will render as to the prospects of stability before the new Republic of China. To Freethinkers, especially, this mission of goodwill from West to East will be of deep interest, as opening up a new world to be won for the eternal principles of human liberty. WILLIAM HEAFORD.

The Black Army.—III.

I MAY be told—in fact I have been told—that the salary is not *everything* to the members of the Black Army. I never said it was. They have tastes and inclinations, like other men, and prefer to earn their living in that way. What tickles my risibility is the pretence that they are "moved by the Holy Ghost." They are really "called" by the motives which lead men into other professions. When a man already in holy orders receives a "call," in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is to a more lucrative or eligible situation. The farce which is gone through on such occasions is sickening. When a clergyman leaves a poor living for a richer one, he solemnly declares that he is directed thither by the third person of the Trinity. Every man of sense knows this to be a hypocritical falsehood. Nor is the case any better among Nonconformists. A minister is invited by a neighboring or distant congregation; the stipend is higher, and the church more famous. He cannot give an immediate answer, for it would look too much like a mere business transaction. He says he will consider it, and consult the Lord, and pray to be told what he should do. Meanwhile he makes inquiries, the negotiations continue, and perhaps his old congregation makes him a tempting offer to remain. When he has thought the matter out and come to a decision, he finds that he has a clear call from the Holy Ghost; and when he preaches his farewell sermon, he does not say that he has accepted a better situation, but that he is going to a wider sphere of usefulness.

Many years ago a friend of mine was a member of a Congregational Church at Manchester. The minister was an attractive rhetorician, and was known to be contemplating a career in London. His congrega-

tion wished to retain him, and money was raised to purchase him a house. Subsequently a fresh bribe had to be put in his way. Another house was purchased for him, and a handsome cheque was presented to him in the vestry. The man of God pocketed the cheque with great complacency: but he could not tell the deputation whether he would stay with "his old church" or go to London. He would have to lay the matter before the Lord. A week later he said he had been told to go. But he did not return the cheque, and within another week the house was advertised "to be sold." My friend thought the church was sold too. It was a lesson to him for life. He has understood the Black Army ever since.

English history furnishes a colossal illustration of the worldly, mercenary motives of the Black Army. During the sixteenth century England was converted, reconverted, and converted back again; and it was all done with the high hand of temporal power. Henry the Eighth quarrelled with the Pope, repudiated his spiritual supremacy, and set up an independent Church. Under his successor this Church was made definitely Protestant. The reign of Edward the Sixth was a short one, but during that brief period the Prayer Book was drawn up and ordered to be used in all churches, under penalty of fine, imprisonment, banishment, and finally death. The Church officials declared that they were moved in this matter by the Holy Ghost. But soon after, when Mary came to the throne, they kicked out the Prayer Book, and declared that the Holy Ghost had nothing to do with it. Once more the English Church became Catholic, and the Protestant clergy turned right about face to keep their livings. Only a hundred and twenty, out of about thirteen thousand, had the honesty to stand by their convictions. Elizabeth succeeded Mary, the English Church went back to Protestantism, and the glorious Reformation was a standing proof of the ease with which the pulpit can be turned by those who have power over the bread-and-cheese of the clergy.

Let me conclude with a few words on the function of this Black Army. Our red-coats have to fight a visible, tangible enemy; they shoot, and they are shot at; they kill, and they are killed. Many who are not killed are wounded, and bear about them the scars of combat. But the Black Army fight an enemy who is intangible and invisible. They fight the Devil. This personage was once a grim reality, at least in the imagination of believers; but he has sunk into a comic figure, and is now laughed at as a bogey. Nevertheless, the Black Army survives. It is engaged in fighting "Sin." But what a ridiculous notion it is that sin can be put down by preaching. The Black Army should be disbanded, and the money it costs be expended on the secular improvement of the people.

G. W. FOOTE.

"Vital Lies."

"How shall my friend revere the truth in my mind when I myself am careless about it, when I believe things because I want to believe them, and because they are comforting and pleasant? Will he not learn to cry 'Peace' to me when there is no peace? By such a course I shall surround myself with a thick atmosphere of falsehood and fraud, and in that I must live. It may matter little to me, in my cloud-castle of sweet illusions and darling lies; but it matters much to Man that I have made my neighbors ready to deceive. The credulous man is father to the liar and the cheat; he lives in the bosom of this his family, and it is no marvel if he should become even as they are."—PROFESSOR W. K. CLIFFORD, *Lectures and Essays*; 1886; pp. 345-6.

"This is a common argument: 'If you only knew the comfort of belief!' My reply is that I choose the nobler part of Emerson, when, after various disenchantments, he exclaimed, 'I covet truth!' The gladness of true heroism visits the heart of him who is really competent to say this."—PROFESSOR TYNDALL, *Fragments of Science*; 1879; vol. ii., p. 233.

"The profoundest of all infidelity is the fear lest the truth be bad."—HERBERT SPENCER.

EVERY year, with monotonous regularity, when the statistics of the Nonconformist Churches are published, it is found that their membership, instead of

increasing, has decreased, and this in spite of the increase in the population. And yet, in spite of this increasing slump in membership, we are assured by the religious press that there is not less religious belief prevalent, but more; that the mechanical and materialistic explanations of the scientists of the last century have been abandoned, and that science is now leading us to a belief in a spiritual, in place of a material, basis of the universe.

Now, those who are conversant with the aims and methods of modern science know that this is untrue, and if the writers in the religious press knew anything more of science than what they skim from the pages of the *Hibbert Journal*, the *Contemporary Review*, and similar spineless publications, they also would know that it was untrue.

That there has not been so much attention bestowed by scientific men upon what is called the conflict between religion and science, is due to the fact that the scientists of the last century, represented by Tyndall, Huxley, Clifford, and others—using the bullets moulded by Spencer and Darwin—so completely put the theologians to rout that their successors have regarded any further operations in this direction in the light of flogging a dead horse. As Huxley once remarked, scientists "have better than mere antiquarian business in hand, and if dogmas, which ought to be fossils but are not, are not forced upon their notice, they are too happy to treat them as non-existent."*

Taking heart from this victorious peace, we find the defenders of supernaturalism now claiming that science is not opposed to the teachings of religion as to creation and a future life, and back their assertion by citing Kelvin, Wallace, and Sir Oliver Lodge. We have gone into this question before, and have pointed out that Wallace admits, and deplures, that scientists as a body are wholly given over to the mechanical view of things. Sir Oliver Lodge declares that the "atmosphere of modern science is adverse to the highest religious emotion," and it "shows us a self-contained and self-sufficient universe.....nothing supernatural or miraculous, no intervention of beings other than ourselves being conceived possible."† When Lord Kelvin—deservedly famous for his discoveries and inventions in mathematics, physics, and mechanics—appealed to creative power for the production of life, the introduction of the supernatural into this department of science was promptly repudiated by our leading naturalists and biologists, Sir Thistleton Dyer roundly declaring that "For dogmatic utterance on biological questions there is no reason to suppose that he is better equipped than any person of average intelligence."

But it is from the philosophers like the French Professor Bergson and the American Professor James that the reactionaries draw their greatest strength. We make bold to assert that neither of these gentlemen would have been heard of beyond their own circle but for their gift of fine writing with which they have clothed their ideas, such as they are. As Mr. Hugh Elliott has observed, "The metaphysic of Bergson has all the incomprehensibility that are essential to the most respectable philosophy."‡

By the way, was the Bergsonian philosophy responsible for the conversion of Mr. Bernard Shaw—who used loudly to proclaim his Atheism—whose "Life Force" bears a suspicious family likeness to Bergson's "Vital Impetus"? Meeting Mr. Shaw one day, the Rev. R. J. Campbell—like another Paul at Athens—improved the occasion by saying: "Do you know, Shaw, that your 'Life Force' is identical with my God?" Stunned by this revelation from the City Temple prophet, Mr. Bernard Shaw replied: "Good God! Campbell, you don't say so?" "Oh, yes; it's quite true," said the divine; "and what's more, Shaw, you're a Christian without knowing it." And Mr. Bernard Shaw went straight home and

* *Lay Sermons*, p. 277.

† *Man and the Universe*, pp. 4-6.

‡ Hugh Elliott, *Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*; 1912; p. 7. Those who wish to see an uncompromising exposure of Bergson's philosophy should read this work.

wrote a tract in which he declared his belief "not only in a trinity, but in a trillion-trinity," and in the immaculate conception of Jesus, because he believed in the immaculate conception of every mother.* The Rev. R. J. Campbell thankfully accepted this marvellous—and evidently inspired proof—of doctrines which even Christians had become ashamed of, and published it in his "Modern Palpit" series. This comes of consorting with a priest and a metaphysician.

Mr. Hugh Elliott dealt faithfully with Professor Bergson, and now we have another trenchant work dealing with Professor James and other obscurantists, by the brilliant and accomplished lady who writes under the pen name of "Vernon Lee."†

Professor James is best known as the author of *The Will to Believe, Pragmatism, and Varieties of Religious Experience*. It is to these works that Vernon Lee more especially addresses herself. Says the author:—

"The peculiarity of Pragmatism is (as I hope to demonstrate) its tactics of advancing untenable propositions and falling back upon received ones; its shuffling the principle which is hard to accept in a handful of principles we have willingly accepted; its medium-like device (for only successive metaphors can illustrate habits so protean) of slipping a hand out of the seemingly unbroken circle of concatenated thought, in order to produce all manner of new and desirable manifestations" (vol. i., p. 8).

Pragmatism was not invented by Professor James, although it is now identified with his name; it was the name adopted by Mr. Pierce for the principle of "How to Make our Ideas Clear," a very laudable undertaking until Professor James, as Vernon Lee shows, transmogrified it into the Will-to-Believe and the Making of Truth, "and by converting this principle, by endless moves revoked whenever detected, into the very thing which that proto-Pragmatist had invented Pragmatism to expose, disprove, confute, and reduce for ever to silence" (vol. i., p. 12).

In the chapters dealing with "What is Truth?" Vernon Lee lays bare the true inwardness of Pragmatism. It works out like this (to give a very short and condensed summary): Professor James begins with the seemingly innocent statement that you can say of an opinion "either that 'it is useful because it is true' or that 'it is true because it is useful'—both these phrases mean exactly the same thing." That is the first step. Then farther:—

"The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite assignable reasonable reasons. Surely you must admit this, that if there were no good for life in true ideas, or if the knowledge of them were positively disadvantageous and false ideas the only useful ones, then the current notion that truth is divine, and its pursuit a duty, could never have grown up or become a dogma. In a world like that, our duty would be to shun truth, rather."

That is the second step, which brings us to the third step, as follows:—

"If there be any life that it is really better we should lead, and if there be any idea which, if believed in, would help us to lead that life, then it would be really better for us to believe in that idea, unless, indeed, belief in it incidentally clashed with other greater vital benefits."‡

And there you have it; the believer, or rather the one who wills to believe, can be safely trusted to take the last step for himself, and say that he believes in a future life and a benevolent God, not because they can be proved true, but because they are useful or comfortable.

Vernon Lee also calls attention to Professor James' claim for alcohol, that it "stimulates the mystical faculties of human nature." That drunkenness "brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to their radiant core. It makes him for the

moment one with truth." This provides a new excuse for the toper, who may now plead that he is only stimulating his "mystical faculties." The Professor does not state that he himself experimented in this direction; but he submitted himself to the influence of nitrous oxide gas—commonly called "laughing gas"—and he gives some examples of the resulting gibberish. This is one: "What's mistake but a kind of take? What's nausea but a kind of ausea? Sober, drunk,—unk, astonishment, etc., etc." How sublime!

However, Professor James was not the first to experiment in this direction. Mr. Moncure Conway tells us that, when ether was discovered, Oliver Wendell Holmes—thinking it might possess some spiritual virtues—placed himself under its influence, pencil in hand. Being seized with a vast thought, he wrote it down.

"It proved to be these words: 'A strong smell of turpentine pervades the whole.' But he was not satisfied with that, and made another effort. 'This time,' he said, 'I felt as I wrote that I really had seen the secret of the universe. The words proved to be: Put Jesus Christ into a Brahma press and that's what you'll get!'"*

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JAN. 30.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, occupied the chair. Other members present were: Messrs. Barry, Brandes, Cohen, Cowell, Davey, Davies, Davidson, Gorniot, Leat, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, Silverstein, Schindle, Wood, and Misses Kough and Stanley.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for the Liverpool and West Ham Branches and the Parent Society, and an application was received and granted for the formation of a new Branch at Croydon as the result of the lectures recently given there under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd.

A suggestion from M. Victor Charbonnel, Secretary of the Cercle Berthelot, of Paris, was received through a friend of the movement, that an interchange of visits between French and English Freethinkers might be arranged, and that whilst in this country the French delegates might join in a protestation against the Blasphemy Laws. The Secretary was instructed to reply cordially reciprocating their desire.

Further particulars having been received, it was resolved to affiliate with the Social Defence Committee, and Messrs. Heaford and Cohen were elected as delegates.

The Executive being informed that the L. C. C. Parks Committee had not reported to the Council, the President suggested that it was time for the N. S. S. to act, the Executive heartily concurring.

The following resolution was moved by Mr. Rosetti, and strongly supported by Mr. Cowell and Mr. Gorniot:—

"That this Executive ask the Management Committee to draw up a syllabus and details of examination for the Scholarship Scheme. To prepare copies, and insert a notice in the *Freethinker* inviting intending candidates to apply for a copy. That a date be fixed for close of applications, and arrangements be made for examination to take place in London in May, 1913."

An application from one candidate under the Scholarship Scheme was received.

Other matters of business were held over until next month.

E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

The first person to report what is false is a liar. When a lie is a few days, or a few years old, it becomes hearsay, and when the lie has lived to a patriarchal age it is then called tradition. But Nature prevents any lie from becoming history. Nature is true and always tells the truth, while every lie is unnatural and must at last be exposed as such. This is why the story of Jesus must die out of men's minds and men's mouths: it is false and unnatural.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

* Moncure Conway, *Autobiography*; 1904; vol. i., p. 342.

* *Modern Religion*, by George Bernard Shaw; 1912; p. 3.

† *Vital Lies*, by Vernon Lee; 1912; 2 vols. (John Lane; 10s. net.)

‡ These quotations of Professor James are all taken from *Vital Lies*, pp. 50-59-73.

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 Meaning of Death."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmen's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, R. H. Rosetti, "Where Recent Researches in Science Have Put God."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, F. E. Willis, "The Religion of the 'Terrible Turk.'"

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Arthur, "Christianity, Old and New."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, E. Egerton Stafford, "Haeckel's Riddle of the Universe."

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