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The Christian nations are the warlike nations of the world. The most destructive weapons of war have been invented by Christians. The musket, the revolver, the rifled cannon, the bombshell, the torpedo, the explosive bullet, have been invented by Christian brains. Above all other arts the Christian world has placed the art of war.—R. G. INGERSOLL.

The Consumptive Churches.

As a rule consumptives are confident, almost to the last, that they are going to recover, though all their friends are fully aware that they are gradually dying. All who think are sensible of the fact that Christianity is far gone in consumption, that this most dreadful and fatal of diseases has been steadily developing within it for at least a hundred years, and that to-day the symptoms are more hopeless than they ever were before; but, strangely enough, the physicians who treat this unfortunate sufferer, and practically all its friends, firmly believe that its vitality, stimulated by the various remedies administered, is strong enough to win a glorious victory over the forces of death at work upon it. The Rev. F. B. Meyer recently predicted that before many months are past it shall have completely recovered its health and vigor. The Rev. R. J. Campbell reports that while attending a religious conference of two thousand men held a few weeks ago in Rouen Cathedral, he inferred that there is going on at present in France "a sort of reaction against the irreligion of a generation ago." "There is something like a revival of religion taking place," he assures us. Then he explains: "I do not mean, of course, a revival in the ordinary evangelical sense of the word, but a general quickening of interest in religion, an increased passion and vitality and power in religion; and there is also more attention to the observances of worship." Other visitors to France, notably the Rev. F. Hastings, confess, some of them sorrowfully, that they can see no sign of a revival of religion in that most interesting country. Mr. Hastings, speaking as chairman of the London Congregational Union, admitted that in France all interest in religion was practically a thing of the past, and that in this country also it was rapidly disappearing. Indeed, there seems to be a general conviction that just now religion everywhere is in a most deplorable state, though a strong hope is entertained that almost immediately a decided change for the better shall occur.

At the recent meeting of the Free Church Council, held at Newcastle-on-Tyne, the address from the Chair was almost throughout in the minor key. The Chairman is himself an exceptionally able and successful minister. Mr. Connell was for many years in charge of the Regent-square Presbyterian Church, London, where he proved himself to be a worker that needed not to be ashamed, and now is equally prosperous as successor to the late Ian Maclaren at Sefton Park, Liverpool, one of the strongest Presbyterian congregations in England. And yet, though personally he has achieved signal success, Mr. Connell is obliged to acknowledge that religion in this land is

at a painfully low ebb. As reported in the *Daily News and Leader* for March 12, he said:—

"We have somehow lost our grip of God. The Churches seem to have lost the old impressiveness of their appeal. Vital religion has suffered depression and decline in visible strength. The Christian testimony on great issues of morals and religion seems to lack something in depth of gravity and authority, and we do not seem able to command the energy, or the means, or the men, for the shouldering of urgent duties which yet we dare not refuse.....The fact seems to be that we have been caught in the undertow of a civilisation which, with all the material excellences it may rightly claim, is the product of forces that are largely non-Christian, and, in some cases, definitely anti-Christian. There is not a country in Europe to-day which does not, in its approved international policies, frankly lean its confidence on the arm of flesh, on human genius, and the assiduity of human enterprise. Civilisation has never yet acknowledged that it should serve a spiritual ideal. It has never admitted the need for reverence and submission to the will of God."

All that is perfectly true, and most illuminating. Nothing can be truer than that "we have somehow lost our grip of God"; but we wonder whether or not it occurred to Mr. Connell that, in making such a statement, he was exposing the fundamental and fatal weakness of the Theistic creed. We have lost our grip of God; but why? *Because God has never gripped us.* We have lost our grip of him because it lacked reality. The grip itself was always real enough, its one defect being that its object was purely fanciful. In other words, the loss of grip is due to a corresponding loss of faith. At one time in our lives we had a vice-like grip of ghosts; but to-day, with the majority of us, that grip is simply a thing of memory. Our grip of them ceased with our belief in them. To be permanent, grip must be mutual. Had ghosts existed their grip of us would have been so tight that we could never have released ourselves. So, likewise, had God existed as our Maker and Father, there would have been no danger of our ever losing our grip of him, for the initial and more potent grip would have been his of us. The infinite unreality of the Theistic creed appears the moment we look it in the face. A little while ago it was solemnly announced from a prominent London pulpit that "God's need of us is immeasurably greater than ours of him." That was said of a Being who is Biblically described as "doing according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." A similar statement is frequently made concerning God's love of man as compared with man's love of God. If God needs our love more than we need his, why has he not got it? The late Dr. George Matheson's famous hymn begins thus—

"O love that wilt not let me go."

As a matter of fact, however, God's love not only lets go of many people who believe in him, but never once touches people who lack faith in him; and this is only another way of saying what we have often said before, namely, that God exists only to those who believe in his existence.

Another illuminating utterance that fell from Mr. Connell relates to the non-Christian character of civilisation. Formerly it was customary to boast of Western civilisation as a distinctly Christian product. Some twenty years ago, when Robert Buchanan made

his dramatic attack upon the Christian religion, innumerable pulpits sneered at him, asserting that Christianity and civilisation were synonymous, so that if we renounced the former we would be compelled to part with the latter also. The present writer is ashamed to confess that, being in London at the time, he had the audacity to join in that irrational sneer. But even the pulpit, as represented by such men as the Chairman of the Free Church Council, is to-day wise enough to perceive that civilisation is, generally, non-Christian and, in particular cases, anti-Christian. And in this attitude to civilisation the modern pulpit is amply justified. For all its accomplishments civilisation depends upon human skill, human genius, and human enterprise. Civilisation, as such, does not recognise religion at all except as a factor that has hindered and retarded its progress. Guizot, who remained through life a deeply religious man, and who published a work entitled *Meditations on the Christian Religion*, will not be suspected of any anti-Christian prejudice in the following definition:—

"It seems to me that, by general consent, civilisation consists essentially of two facts: the development of the social state and that of the intellectual state; the development of the exterior and general condition and that of the interior and personal nature of man; in a word, the perfection of society and of humanity" (*Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, vol. i., p. 6).

In studying the history of European civilisation we shall discover that it was for many centuries diverted from its natural channels, and consequently delayed in its forward movement, by the influence of the Church, and that its accelerated progress in modern times is traceable to the fact that it has succeeded in releasing itself, more or less thoroughly, from that baneful interference. "Spiritual ideals," "the will of God," and "Divine reverence" are elements which civilisation, as such, does not recognise, and which, if left to itself, it would ere long eliminate from the sphere of influence. It is this gradual emancipation of civilisation from the bondage of religion that is causing Christian leaders such depression of spirits and dark forebodings. They are not really opposed to human progress, but they cannot bear the idea of its taking place without their being its chief agents. They are not genuinely opposed to social reforms, but they cannot help denouncing all schemes for securing them from which their predominant co-operation is excluded. The only fault with Socialism is that it is not Christianised, and with civilisation that it no longer goes on its knees. When they shall have Christianised the former, and brought the latter to its knees, all will be well.

Now, the question is how the Church is going to perform that miracle, and after the Chairman's address, this was the first question to which the assembly addressed itself. Three well-known reverend gentlemen read papers on the subject; but if Christianity is true such papers were an insult of the deepest dye to its Founder and his Apostles. Mr. Connell had said that "we never can create save as we steep ourselves in the life-giving essences of New Testament revelation." On consulting the New Testament we learn that "spiritual power," or "power from on high," or "the Holy Ghost," is to be had merely for the asking, and in the ecclesiastical ceremony of clerical ordination we are informed that the Holy Ghost is infused into the ordained by the laying on of episcopal hands. According to the latter idea, properly ordained ministers have no need to ask for power, their only duty being to exercise it, while, according to the former notion, no clergyman has the power until he asks for it in faith; and we are assured that the prayer of the believer is heard and answered. In any case, merely talking about "spiritual power" does not bring it, and history teaches us that neither does praying for it. What then? The only indisputable fact is that whatever power the Church once possessed and wielded, it has now, on its own showing, almost entirely lost. At present Christianity is utterly unable to substantiate its own claims. "True," say its champions, "to-day it seems

to be under eclipse, but to-morrow it will shine in superlative glory, and drive away for ever the darkness of unbelief and sin." We have heard that prophecy many times before, without once seeing any sign of its fulfilment. Mr. Meyer and others have uttered it again and again with amazing confidence, but as for the fulfilment we are quite content to "wait and see."

J. T. LLOYD.

Religion and Sex.—III.

(Continued from p. 163.)

IN the two preceding articles I have been concerned with tracing the close connection that existed with primitive peoples between religion and the manifestations of the sexual life. So far I have tried to fix attention on the normal expressions of the human sexual impulse, in order to show how inevitably it becomes associated with religious ideas and with religious ceremonies. So long as we restrict our survey to uncivilised life, the connection between the two is direct and obvious. As a force that arises in the life of each, and which intrudes, as it were, into consciousness, the phenomena of sex fills man with amazement and terror. As a supernatural force of unequalled intensity, it becomes inextricably bound up with his religious convictions. The connection is so close that the language and feelings peculiar to the sex life seems to serve equally as an outlet for religious feeling and conviction. And, paying religious honors to sexual impulse, man naturally comes to identify its manifestations as both an expression of the supernatural and as an act of worship towards it. To this we have to ascribe the widespread vogue of religious prostitution in India, Greece, Persia, Egypt, Judea,* and elsewhere. We have to seek along the same lines for an explanation of the religio-sexual festivals of Isis in Egypt, of Baal-Peor in Judea, and of Eleusis in Greece, to say nothing of the corresponding festivals that meet us all over the uncivilised world. In these cases, sexual self-surrender corresponds to the devotion with which the mediæval fanatic submits himself to torture, or tortures himself, in the fervor of his religious belief. Frankly accepted as an indication of the divine, the uncivilised mind sees an endorsement of the religious idea in every manifestation of sex life.

It is when we take man in a more advanced social state that obscurity gathers and difficulties thicken. Man no longer universally and frankly yields to sexual promptings as the voice of Deity. Symbolism and mysticism develop; a more complex social life provides disguised outlets for primitive and inextinguishable feelings. Sexualism, instead of being something to be glorified, and, so to say, annotated by religion, becomes something that must be hidden or denied. But man cannot escape the incidence of those forces upon which rest the perpetuation of the race. They may be ignored, but they cannot be denied. They will find expression in one form or another. Every attempt to suppress them only results in a more savage outburst. Every endeavor to disguise their operation only leads to their more unhealthy manifestation. The history of Christianity offers numerous illustrations of the truth of what has been said. Few religions have struggled harder to consciously suppress the power of the sexual life, and none have been more successful in producing unhealthy expressions of the force it strove to regulate or crush. With a great many of its leaders and teachers the consciousness of sex has been so strong as to become an obsession. Like the thirst-tormented traveller who is so apt to see visions of pools of clear, sparkling water, the Christian ascetic has been so obsessed with the idea of sex that he has often seen but little else. And the result has been that, instead of a developing social

* See 1 Samuel ii. 22.

life providing a healthy outlet for the sexual impulse, and so minimising, by regularising, its strength, it has found expression in all sorts of unhealthy ways in connection with religion, which has thus ignorantly encouraged the force against which it proclaimed a crusade. So we find right through the history of Christianity the constant uprising of curious religio-erotic sects, the operations of a perverted sexuality in religious epidemics, and the distortion of normal sexual feelings in the interests of religious organisations.

Although there is an understandable disinclination, amounting with some to positive revulsion, to recognise the sexual origin of much that passes for religious fervor, the fact is well known to competent medical observers, as the following citations will show. More than a generation since a well-known medical authority said:—

"I know of no fact in pathology more striking and more terrifying than the way in which the phenomena of the ecstatic—which have often been seized upon by sentimental theorists as proofs of spiritual exaltation—may be plainly seen to bridge the gulf between the innocent foolery of ordinary hypnotic patients and the degraded and repulsive phenomena of nymphomania and satyriasis."*

Dr. C. Norman also observes:—

"Ecstasy, as we see in cases of acute mental disease, is probably always connected with sexual excitement, if not with sexual depravity. The same association is seen in less extreme cases, and one of the commonest features in the conversation of acutely maniacal women is the intermingling of erotic and religious ideas."†

This opinion is fully endorsed by Dr. Francis Galton:—

"It has been noticed that among the morbid organic conditions which accompany the show of excessive piety and religious rapture in the insane, none are so frequent as disorders of the sexual organism. Conversely, the frenzies of religious revivals have not unfrequently ended in gross profligacy."‡

A German authority remarks:—

"I venture to express my conviction that we should rarely err if, in a case of religious melancholy, we assumed the sexual apparatus to be implicated."§

Dr. Beavan Lewis points out how frequently religious exaltation occurs with women at puberty, and religious melancholia at the period of sexual decline. ||

And Dr. Charles Mercier puts the interchangeability of sexual and religious feelings in the following passage:—

"Religious observances provide an alternative, into which the amatory instinct can be easily and naturally diverted. The emotions and instinctive desires, which find expression in courtship, is a vast body of vague feeling, which is at first undirected.....It is a volu- minous state of exaltation that demands enthusiastic action. This is the state antecedent to falling in love, and if an object presents himself or herself, the torrent of emotion is directed into amatory passion. But if no object appears, or if the selected object is denied, then religious observances yield a very passable substitute for the expression of the emotion. Religious observances provide the sensuous atmosphere, the call for self-renunciation, the means of expressing powerful and voluminous feeling, that the potential or disappointed lover needs. The madrigal is transformed into the hymn; the adornment of the person that should have gone to allure the beloved now takes the shape of eccle- siastical vestments; the reverence that should have been paid to the loved one is transformed to a higher object; the enthusiasm that would have expanded in courtship is expressed in worship; the gifts that would have been made, the services that would have been rendered to the loved one, are transferred to the Church."¶

Dr. Auguste Forel, Professor of Morbid Psychology in the University of Zurich, also points out that—

"When we study the religious sentiment profoundly, especially in the Christian religion, and Catholicism in

particular, we find at each step its astonishing connec- tion with eroticism."*

And Dr. Kraft-Ebing, after dwelling upon the sub- stantial identity of sexual love and religious emotion, summarises his conclusion by saying:—

"Religious and sexual hyperæsthesia at the acme of development show the same volume of intensity and the same quality of excitement, and may, therefore, under given circumstances interchange. Both will in certain pathologic states degenerate into cruelty." †

Even so orthodox a writer as the Rev. S. Baring- Gould points out that:—

"The existence of that evil, which, knowing the constitution of man, we should expect to find prevalent in mysticism, the experience of all ages has shown following, dogging its steps inevitably. So slight as the film that separates religion from sensual passion, that uncontrolled spiritual fervor roars readily into a blaze of licentiousness." ‡

No useful purpose would be served by lengthening this list of opinions—at least for the present. What has been said is enough to show that amongst those well qualified to express an opinion, there is a general, and one may add, growing recognition of the im- portant truth that the religious and sexual emotions are not only interchangeable, but may actually spring from a common source; and, further, that the opera- tion of one may be, and often is, mistaken for the operation of the other. It has also been pointed out that asceticism, which assumed so developed and so extravagant a form in the Christian Church, far from being a disproof of this, affords the strongest possible evidence of its truth. Very frequently the ascetic presents us with an unmistakable case of eroto-mania, expressing itself in terms of religion. It is highly significant that so many of the leading characters in early Christianity should have been persons of avowedly strong sensual passions, and that in the visions of the saints temptations by nude women should play so large a part. The care taken by the monks and by celebrated saintly characters to avoid contact with women, even with mothers and sisters, is equally significant. § We are obviously dealing in such cases with men who were obsessed with the fact of sex. And the result was that the early and mediæval Christian writers brought to the consideration of the subject a concentration of mind that resulted in detailed disquisitions of such a nature that it is impossible to more than merely refer to it. To the normal man, whose natural desires find their legitimate expres- sion and satisfaction, a consciousness of sex is but one of the many phases of his conscious life. But with the ascetic it was constantly active. He dwelt upon it by day, it haunted his dreams by night. Sexual feeling, suppressed in one direction, broke out in another under disguised forms. Feelings that were perfectly normal, because of repression and misdirection, became pathologic; with the result that on the one side, among those to whom religious exhortation made no appeal, there ensued an increase of vice in its more coarse and brutal forms, while among those to whom religious exhortation did appeal a vast volume of sexual feeling was interpreted as supernatural illumination and communion.

(To be continued.) C. COHEN.

Sinai and Suez.

THE dark sea was smooth except for the soft roll made by our homeward-bound ship, and the night sky, all even of hue, was cloudless entire, and sprinkled with stars that gleamed as in our northern time of frost. Though only at the crescent, the moon traced a bright way over the waters. What apter phase than the crescent could the pilgrim see

* Article in the *Lancet* for January 11, 1873.

† Article in *Tuke's Dictionary of Psychological Medicine*.

‡ *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, pp. 66-7.

§ Cited by Havelock Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, pp. 233-4.

¶ *Text Book of Mental Diseases*, p. 393.

‡ *Conduct and its Disorders*, pp. 368-9.

* *The Sexual Problem*, p. 354.

† *Psychopathia-Sexualis*, pp. 9-11.

‡ *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, Preface.

§ Lecky, *European Morals*, vol. ii., pp. 120-136.

in this ocean-channel, guarded by two Moslem shores, Arabia and Egypt?

Yonder, those hills of the twilight were the peaks of Sinai, where once a God, now little else but a name gilded in church missals, flung the red bolts over the wilderness, and thundered a moral law for a nation of nomads. Then, Gods were in their valiant prime and bushes burned with their divine flames, and their bounteous hands dropped nourishing manna on the waste.

Gods pass with the circling years. After Yahveh of Sinai arose Allah of Mecca; that Allah whom the visionary camel-driver found behind veils innumerable. The Arabs of these barren valleys and tablelands still kneel at his footstool five times a day. A few decades will lapse, and Allah, too, will be ranked as a memory in a tomb as tranquil as the mummy-chambers of the Egypt which this sea laves.

"Wandering Arabs," I mused, "have lit a camp-fire behind the mountains."

But it was the foretoken of the dawn,—a faint, dull russet in the Arabian east, over the black horizon.

The north sky was yet a livid grey, as if with the smoke of a manufacturing town, half hiding its grime in the night; or as if a storm was creeping away by stealth, leaving a ghostly blur and shadow of death in its train. The sea was creased as gently as a lake in Westmorland, or a loch that slumbers amid the boulders of the Grampians.

"Gold," said I, "appear and match the red."

The gold did not hasten. The red paled slowly, and the end of the hesitation was a change to saffron. Self-effacing, the modest stars had slipped into nothingness. Like the million Yesterdays of history, they were no more. The crescent was fading. Meanwhile, black Sinai had crowned itself with a band of yet deeper crimson below the saffron. If color could shout, the Arabian crimson would have raised a *gæan*. But the silence of the glorious morn was superb; and the waters flushed red, and straight silver lines were ruled across them where the shadow of the mountains fell.

"Wordsworth, thou shouldst be living at this hour!" The poet who longed for Milton would have spoken nobly had he been here to-day to repeat the chronicle of this pageant of splendors.

As the light grew, the sable ridge resolved itself into a nearer range and a further range, and a misty vale lay between; and the sea glistened yellow and clear like the heaven, as if all secrets were ended, and lucidity was the watchword of the coming day.

"Come!" prayed I.

In a niche of the yet sombre horizon, the brightness of the sky brightened more, and it was for all the world as if a crowd of courtiers bent towards a door, and a curtain over it was about to lift, and the king would enter and salute the saluting court.

A dolphin suddenly broke from the limpid sea,—symbol of the living things that live their life by the sun.

Then a blazing star shot its unequalled ray across the rocks of Sinai, and, in two moments, the star had become the manifest lord of the cosmos; and the grey north was no longer grey, and creation had opened its daily evolution.

Glad am I, before the last dimness shall gather over my eyes, to have beheld this drama of the morning, prompting one to a gaiety such as no comedy of artist-genius could evoke, and to tears that purge more finely than the tragedies commended by ancient Aristotle.

I smiled when I suddenly recollected that this historic sea on which I sailed, and whence I had admired the rising sun, was the place of the Israelite emigration from Egypt, the terrors of the Ten Plagues, the terrors of the Pillar of Fire, the terrors of the broken chariots of the Egyptian pursuers, the terrors of the drowning of the armed hosts of Pharaoh. All these terrors had transformed themselves into innocent folk-lore. For such indeed is most of the narrative of the Bible, and, read as folk-lore, the stories have a message, a human interest,

and a value. The sun in whose coming forth I had rejoiced is, to our age, the centre of an understood astronomical system, whose movements are predictable by science, and whose very origin is relatively known. We who study the story of the nebular unfolding of sun and planets need not deride the simple and natural folk-lore which saw in the sun the God of Fire and of Battles, and accounted the planets as mere lamps set in the crystal firmament to light our central world.

And the honor and praise once rendered to the Lord of Hosts may now be offered to the Heroes of Work who create the wonders of the human world. Here at Suez begins the grand canal which threads its way through the desert for ninety-nine miles, and links the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean. As I write, our ship glides along this marvellous passage. An hour or two ago, we floated past the bust of Waghorn, at Suez; Waghorn, the organiser of the Overland Route. In a few hours more, we shall emerge at Port Said, where the statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps points to his masterpiece, the Suez Canal.

Ere long, a cry of joy from civilisation will greet the inauguration of the canal at Panama.

Beyond that, there await yet other triumphs of humanity, outshining the achievements of to-day as the engineering of the Nineteenth Century outshone the efforts of Primitive Man.

F. J. GOULD.

Written near Suez, March, 1913.

Mr. Yoshio Markino and the Missionaries.

"Hankow itself swarms with missionaries 'who are unhappily divided into so many sects that even a foreigner is bewildered by their number, let alone the heathen to whom they are accredited' (Medhurst).....The Chinese 'Rice Christians,' those spurious Christians who become converted in return for being provided with rice, are just those who profit by those differences of opinion, and who, with timely lapses from grace, are said to succeed in being converted in turn by all the missions, from the Augustines to the Quakers." —Dr. G. E. MERRISON, *An Australian in China*, 1902, pp. 5-6.

"So far as I can see, the tutor missionaries have succeeded in their enterprise of making scholars by the thousand, but then those scholars neither are nor will become Christians.....The educated natives (of India), so far from accepting Christianity, think it as much a fetter on the free movement of the intellect as Hindooism is, and are proud to be as much in advance of their tutors as they are of their countrymen. Christian ideas and Hindoo ideas are both to them ideas of the populace, and they have left them miles behind." —MERRITH TOWNSEND, *Contemporary Review*, July, 1889.

THE testimony of travellers has often been cited in these pages to the fact that Christian missions to primitive and uncivilised races are, as a rule, productive of more harm than good; and that missions to the more civilised races, the Indians, Chinese, and Japanese are a failure. It is only the scum of these races—corresponding to the submerged tenth of our country—that they are able to lay hold of, and then only through a bribe in some form or another.

The apologists of the missionaries retort that these travellers are prejudiced; that they are infidels; that they have no intimate knowledge of the subject, but rely upon what is told them by the traders, who are prejudiced against the missionaries.

We have just been reading Mr. Yoshio Markino's book, *When I was a Child*, which confirms in every particular the charges made against Christian missions in the Far East. We can now see, thanks to the revelations of Mr. Markino, what goes on behind the scenes in the missionary world. We have here the testimony of one who has actually been through the missionary mill, and has figured as a convert in missionary statistics. We can see why he was attracted to the mission, and how it affected him.

But, to begin with, as our readers doubtless know, Mr. Markino is a Japanese. Born at a time when Japan was acquiring Western civilisation and pre-

paring for the gigantic struggle through which we have seen it emerge so victoriously, the boy Markino was seized with an intense desire to become better acquainted with this marvellous Western civilisation. He first went to America, and endeavored to study art while acting as a house servant. Driven from America by hardship and ill-usage, he then came to London, where he came within an ace of starving to death while trying to earn a living as an artist; indeed, it was only the acceptance by Mr. Spielman of some of his work on the very day that he had determined to end the struggle, that saved him from a death by suicide. Mr. Markino is now famous; he has held an exhibition of his works at the West End. He is much sought after as an illustrator of books. He himself is an author whose books—*My Idealized John Bull*—*A Japanese Artist in London*, and *When I was a Child*—have had a phenomenal success, being universally reviewed and quoted wherever books are known. Mr. Markino has achieved a success very rarely attained even by English men of genius, and it is marvellous in an alien, speaking volumes for his courage, determination, energy, and resource—characteristics which many people regard as peculiarly British. If we consider the opposite possibility, of an English boy learning Japanese and going to make his fortune in Japan as an artist, the magnitude of Markino's achievement can be seen in its true perspective.

Yoshio Markino was the child of well-to-do parents living at a village nine miles from Nagoya in Japan. His desire for European travel, which we have noticed, was increased by the arrival at the village of Professor Ban, of the Japanese Educational Department, who had just returned from a tour of America and Europe, upon which he gave lectures, illustrated by lantern slides. "That," he says, "made me quite mad with my ambition to come out to America or Europe more than ever."*

The first step was to learn the English language, and for this purpose he used to walk to Nagoya, nine miles away, twice a week! The boy was at this time thirteen years of age. Unfortunately, his father, originally well-to-do, became financially embarrassed, and was unable to continue his education, whereupon his Japanese teacher, Mr. Inuma, advised him to attend the Missionary College, where he himself was a teacher, and, as the American missionaries were in want of a boy to sweep the schoolrooms, he could have his tuition free. The offer was gladly accepted, and the boy used to get up at four o'clock in the morning, run to school in the dark, and sweep the schoolroom by lamplight.

During the morning he worked for another native Japanese teacher, in residence at the school, who paid him two shillings a month for his services:—

"I was almost starving [he observes of these times], but I did not worry about my poverty. For I was too delighted with my post. They had the night school. I attended to it as well. It was always 12 p.m. when I went back to my inn."

After three or four months of this, an arrangement was made for him to sleep at the school and receive six shillings a month. He tells us:—

"I lived entirely on the boiled rice and pickles. There were two couples and one old lady American missionaries. I used to look upon them as very civilised and very honorable people, because they were from such a great country. And I thought the Christianity must be the most superior ethic, because all the most civilised nations in this world belonged to it. So I decided to investigate the Christianity, notwithstanding the surrounding people used to hate it and call it 'Yaso.' The word 'Yaso' came from Jesuit (I think), but it had a double meaning—'mysterious and un-patriotic religion.' Many of my friends asked me seriously, 'Are you really going to be a "Yaso"?' I said 'Yes.' And they were shocked very much."†

However, Markino attended the meetings at the missionary's private house, held especially for those who desired to become "Yaso." There were fifteen

altogether. Mr. Inuma, his former friend and teacher, acted as interpreter. Now, Markino was so earnest to learn English, and so curious to hear how the interpreter translated each word out of English into Japanese, that he confesses his "mind was quite absent from the religious matter."

One evening the head missionary said: "Now, seeing all of you so earnest, I shall baptise you on next Sunday. But to-night I shall ask each of you to tell me exactly what you feel." Some of them flattered the missionary so unnaturally and so insincerely that Markino was disgusted with them. When the missionary came to him, Markino said:—

"Your honorable religion must be the best one in the world, but I am so miserably ignorant about it. Now I have only one fear, that your honorable God might not be pleased with my present mind." He said, 'Excellent, splendid!' I said again, 'Is it not a wiser way for me to wait until I study the Bible thoroughly?' He said, 'Not necessarily at all. Your sincere faith is worthy to be baptised, and you see it is so much better to study the Bible after being a Christian. The Bible is most difficult to understand. Only God will help you when you have faith in Him.'"

On the following Sunday, after service, the missionary read a paper before each one of them, but, says Markino,—

"His Japanese pronunciation was rather bad, and I could not catch the meaning well, but he whispered me that I ought to say 'Yes' each time. So I did, and he poured the water from the bowl upon my head. Thus I became a 'Yaso.'"

That throws a good deal of light upon missionary methods, but there is more to follow. A few days later he went to see his friend the Japanese teacher, Mr. Inuma, who said:—

"Now you are a Christian, can you believe your future life?" I said, 'What? What do you mean by "Future Life"?' He smiled and said, 'I thought you did not quite understand the Christian's faith. You see, all those missionaries are so happy, because they think that when they do good deeds in this world, they shall be sent to Paradise in their next life as their reward!.....' But tell me how they believe that.' 'Well, they believe they all shall meet each other in heaven and live for ever!'

"I sighed deeply, and I was astonished beyond the words. Now I will tell the readers why. I thought in my boyish mind that all the civilised Westerners were scientific, and they treated every philosophical question with their own science. I was often afraid that the Westerners might laugh at our Buddhists, because they were quite superstitious enough to believe in the future. What a great surprise to me to hear the Christians believed in their future life too! 'Are the Christians so superstitious then?' I asked him. He said, 'You must not call them superstitious. They shall be offended!'

"And they do good deeds because they simply want to go to heaven?" This last question came into my mind so naturally, because it is the spirit of Samurai to think that if it were the will of God, we are perfectly willing to suffer in hell" (p. 82).

Then he put his final question to the teacher: "And have you yourself the Christian faith?" He said: "Yes, I have. But *very differently from that of the missionaries.*" And, upon Markino pressing for an explanation, Mr. Inuma shook his head and replied, "No, my faith is only for myself," and advised him to study from the missionaries and read the Bible.

What he learned by this method we shall see in our next.

(To be continued.)

W. MANN.

The Pagan Poets of Persia.

"What I write is not written on slate; and no finger, not that of Time himself, who dips it in the mist of years, can efface it."—LANDOR.

PERSIA itself is an interesting country, and has had a past history of varied fortune. Owing to her geographical position, she may also have an historical future. Even now European diplomats are keeping sharp eyes on Persia and her politics. Poetry and

* Yoshio Markino, *When I was a Child*, 1912, p. 65.

† *When I was a Child*, pp. 77-78.

politics are sufficiently remote; but the life of a people is as much concerned with the one as with the other. Whilst the diplomatic relations of Europe and Asia are of immediate interest to but a small circle, the poetry of an old-world Power may claim more general attention.

The Golden Age of Persian poetry lasted five centuries, from the eleventh to the fifteenth, and includes such great poets as Firdausi, Sadi, Hafiz, Jalaluddin, and Omar Khayyam. Interest in Persian literature was never keen in England before the time of Fitzgerald, the Victorian poet. There are not many who have taken the trouble to ascertain for themselves that the pearls of translation are to be had for a small price. Omar is the best known to English readers. Seven hundred years after the astronomer-poet's death a manuscript of some of his incomparable quatrains came into the hands of an Englishman of genius who was pleasing his scholarly leisure with the study of Persian. Edward Fitzgerald's magnificent verses have made the thoughts of Omar Khayyam a possession for all time of English speech. No translation in the world, except the subsidised version of the Bible, has ever achieved such popularity.

But, among Persians, Hafiz is far and away the best-loved singer. In all lands where the beautiful Persian tongue is spoken he is loved and appreciated. Five hundred years after his death his verses are still chanted by the boatmen of the Ganges and discussed by the learned at Constantinople. They are copied in ornate manuscript for the wealthy noblemen of Delhi, and lithographed for the poorer lovers of literature in Calcutta and Alexandria. The poetry of Hafiz concerns itself, not only with praise of love and wine, but with sceptical speculations on religion. Indeed, the same may be said of nearly all Persian poetry. Hafiz was an Epicurean, and the way he enforces his opinions is, of course, by praising wine—a deadly breach of orthodoxy, for he was a Persian and a Mohammedan. Hafiz has been called the Anacreon of Persia, and some of his poems bear out the comparison. Here is a taste of his quality:—

"Boy, let yon liquid ruby flow,
And bid thy pensive heart be glad.
Whate'er the frowning zealots say,
Tell them their Eden cannot show
A stream so clear as Ruknabad,
A bower so sweet as Mossalay."

Small wonder the priests demurred to say prayers over the poet's dead body.

These old Persian poets were very ironical gentlemen, if their mysticism is to be taken seriously. Jalaluddin, one of the greatest of the mystic poets, makes a lover exclaim to his beloved:—

"With thee a prison would be a rose garden,
O thou ravisher of hearts! With thee Hell
Would be a Paradise, O thou cheerer of souls!"

This is pretty blasphemy, and, let us hope, pleased the lover as much as it pained the priests.

Omar Khayyam, after all, interests us most. He is the Voltaire of Persia. There is no doubt about his Freethought and his Materialism. He falls to find any Providence but Destiny, and any certain world but this, which he advises us to make the best of.

"Oh, threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—This life flies.
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies:
The flower that once has bloomed for ever dies."

He voices with no uncertain sound the scepticism at the bottom of all thoughtful men's minds, and makes splendid music of it.

"The moving finger writes, and having writ,
Moves on; nor all thy piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.
And that inverted bowl we call the sky,
Whereunder crawling coopt we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to it for help, for it
Rolls impotently on as thou or I."

Across more than half a millennium of time and thousands of miles of space, across the far deeper abyss of thought and faith, of inheritance and aim, of art and language, the golden-mouthed Persian

nightingales sing to our ears. Under the witchery of their genius we scent in our western winds the aroma from the lovely Eastern gardens. We gaze on the brilliant colors of the roses, the perfect flame of the tulips. We taste the Persian wine, and wind our longing fingers in the tresses of the beloved. Oh, immortals of literature! The old Persian poets saw their visions and their dreams, and wrote them, and many centuries after the tired merchant, forgetting for a little space his counting-house and ledgers, lives a freer and a fuller life in the wonderland of the poets' genius. Here are nymphs and roses, grotesque imaginings and human memories. This is immortality indeed! Under the poets' opiate wands he dreams their dreams for one little hour, and is refreshed.

MIMNERMUS.

A Dumb Lie.

"It's all a dumb lie; God's dead."

I rubbed my eyes. Phew! How could God die? Who would bury him? What a tremendous funeral it would be! What would happen to heaven, and the angels, and the never-ceasing psalms? Where would the Holy Ghost discover a headstone big enough and grand enough for God? And my young mind gaped at the thoughts.

The words first reached my eyes many years ago, when I was a boy, nine or ten years old. They were spoken by Cleg Kelly in a tale of the same name by S. R. Crockett. Only the incident, of which the words form the climax, comes back to me; the rest of the story is lost.

Cleg was an Edinburgh urchin, a city waif, who had, in some way or other, found himself in a Sunday-school. It is, or was, the custom in Scottish Sunday-schools for the superintendent to address the children either before or after their class lesson; and Cleg had perforce to listen to a sermonette on the living God's great goodness, or something similar. But Cleg Kelly was "gleg i' the uptak." Besides, he knew what it was to be hungry and homeless and forsaken. The little fellow's restraint gave out; and he leapt to his feet and yelled, "It's all a dumb lie; God's dead."

In half a minute the little, impudent Atheist was at the other side of the holy door.

Cleg and his adventures disappeared in the oncoming waves of yarns; but sometimes, looking back to the blur of white surf that lies, for me, on the eastern horizon of literature, the ever-moving waste of episode, adventure, and wild excitement, with their crowds of conquering heroes, I think I can see the dim upright figure of a street wayfarer, in a Sunday-school, facing the superintendent and telling him his fairy-tale was a dumb lie. If the form of my youthful friend cannot clearly be determined through the distance of years, there still remain for me his brave words, as sharply decisive now as then; and my regret is I cannot trace this influence upon my mental life.

It was my introduction to Freethought—or so I like to name it. There was a fascination in the words that rooted them deeply in my mind. They rang out often at the most inopportune times; and, as a consequence, they frequently got me into trouble. When saying my prayers at night the concluding phrase, "for Jesus' sake, Amen," would extend itself into, "it's all a dumb lie; God's dead." During prayer spasms in church restlessness would seize me, to my discomfiture later, when I discovered that a parental reprimand did not come within the minister's advice, to be forgiving in all things. Often, too, the words served me as a source of extenuation. We got ha'pennies to put into the Sunday-school mission-box. Very solemnly we were told we were giving them to God (which was not quite true). But if God were dead he would not miss them. And we fairly enjoyed the toffee we bought with those ha'pennies.

When I became older, and learned to appreciate fine words and eloquence, Cleg Kelly's verdict would pop into what seemed a glorious piece of pulpit oratory, and take the shine out of it. I began to have boyish suspicions that many things were off the straight; that the teachings on Sunday were too absurd to be crystallised in conduct on the Monday; that our Sunday-school superintendent was a funny fellow, because he helped to send his brother Christians to hell on Saturday by making drunken brutes of them, while he instructed their children, on Sunday, in the gentle art of getting to heaven; that because a man was a Christian was no guarantee he would be considerate and just to us, his pupils. These wavering suspicions gradually massed themselves around Cleg's words, giving them firmer support; and when, every Sunday, I saw a man, dressed in a black silk night-shirt, trying to convert Christians to Christianity, the farce of the whole thing often tickled my boyish mind to such an extent that I could hardly contain myself. When my mind became illumed with the flash of the words, the inclination to laugh aloud invariably possessed me, the whole affair seemed to be so ludicrously funny.

But, as Time marked me, Cleg Kelly's condemnation deepened in its significance. It came to mean something that demanded serious thought. The words became the springs of many long rivers of reflection. When I was forced to study the stained pages of the book of man, the words became bitterly sad in their relationship to the sufferings of the past and present. When the cry of anguish tore the night in twain, and the pain-prayer, ascending to empty skies, rejoined the aching, ragged parts, at the back of my mind were the words, "It's all a dumb lie; God's dead." When the mother's sorrow was intensified by her appeal to the great wound-healer, Christ, to pardon her erring daughter, and guide her feet from the miry clay, the words, "It's all a dumb lie; God's dead," throbbed and heaved in my mind.

When I understood that Religion was no friend in need, but a foe in disguise; that it contorted minds with its insistent repetition of dull dogma, and poisoned thought with its mirage "to-be," and drained the body social of much courage, strength, and effort, that might have gone to purify it; that instead of hastening the increasing wellbeing of society, it delayed and hampered by consorting with lower life; that it was, in short, a social evil, Cleg's words took a harder and sterner meaning. I changed the adjective, making it, too, harder and sterner, and felt justified.

A dumb lie! Perhaps; but with a million tongues whose power for evil has outweighed their power for good in the history of mankind. They have poured the vitriol of hate on progress in the past; in the present they seem to be dropping honey. But their fawning suavity can only be understood by their conscienceless malignity. That was too successful then; and it would seem as if their detestable sycophantic sophistry, so soft and sweet, to-day, were to be equally successful. So remarkable is the sway of the dumb lie that even professed Agnostics, with sober face and omniscient counsel, bid us bear patiently the constant wagging of those lying tongues, and advise us not to irritate the poor, irresponsible waggors of them by publicly voicing our condemnation of a lie.

Lying creeds, whose influence upon society is in every respect evil, demand public chastisement; and will get it. The wellbeing of society must rest upon recognition of truth. A lie is corruption and contamination; and no lie was ever dumb until it was dead and forgotten. Falsehood simply asks honest minds to whip it. It seems that Freethought has much work to do yet.

ROBERT MORELAND.

ADVANCED STUDY.

"What has become of Miss Snooks? She was going in for Theosophy when I saw her last."
"She married a restaurant man and is studying dishpan-theism."

Acid Drops.

"The fact that they had to face to-day was that what they called civilisation was not the handmaid or the ally of Christianity, that it rejected Christian principle largely in practice, and some thought wholly in spirit." So says the new President of the Free Church Council, and, so far as genuine civilisation is concerned, it is only what we are always saying. All the same, we quite expect to find the same preacher pointing out, when occasion serves, that civilisation owes all that is good in it to Christian influence. Indeed, the President goes on to indicate the directions in which civilisation fails. Thus, civilisation leaves men careless how dividends are derived so long as they get them, social economists are in despair how to enlist the youth of the country in desirable pursuits, etc. Quite so; but the question is not whether the secular civilising forces can at present do all that is desired, but whether religion can do it more effectively. And religious organisations have had every opportunity to show what they can do. They have had charge of people from childhood to old age, and have consciously manipulated social forces to their own advantage. The evils deplored are not products of civilisation at all; they are the products rather of religious interference with normally civilising forces. The conscious control of social life in the interests of a rational secular civilisation has never yet obtained. The conscious control of social forces in the interests of religion has; and the result is seen in the evils deplored by the Rev. Mr. Connell.

Rev. Charles Brown, also addressing the Free Church Council, rejoiced in the provision of better salaries for ministers, since it would put an end to ignorance in the pulpit. Not a bit of it. Ignorance in the pulpit is not created by low salaries, and will not be destroyed by high ones. It is part of the inevitable character of the situation. The ministry becomes more ignorant—in the deeper and wider sense of the word—with each generation. Look at the leaders in any of the Churches, and see what one discovers. How many of them are of real and unquestionable capacity? Where else but in the pulpit would men like Bishop Ingram, Dr. Clifford, Mr. Campbell, F. B. Meyer, etc., occupy positions of eminence? Higher salaries cannot create capacity; they can only decorate native incapacity. Men of real ability do not go into the pulpit; they find occupations in other directions. The proof of this is that there is not a Church in Europe that is not raising the same complaint as to the lower mental calibre of such as present themselves for ordination. A religion that is not intellectually respectable cannot hope to command the support of intellectually respectable men.

Dr. F. B. Jevons says that thousands of people will buy a shilling handbook on Comparative Religion because they feel that science could tell them something about religion. Exactly; science is the only thing that can tell them anything about religion. Preachers of religion are, of all people, the most ignorant of this subject. They can tell you all about the difference between partial and total immersion, or the right kind of dress to wear, or candles to burn, or formulae to use. But when it comes to giving any real knowledge about religion, they are quite at sea. One goes to ministers of religion to find out what religious people believe; but when one wants to find out what religion is, how it began, and how it developed, then one turns to the scientific investigator, whose religion is usually a minus quantity. In fact, you cannot at the same time understand and believe in religion.

Dr. Jevons himself illustrates how his own belief interferes with a complete understanding of religion. He says: "The great reassuring and comforting fact that emerged was that all men, however low they stood in point of culture or civilisation, were without exception seeking after God." Now, to commence with, the use of the words "reassuring" and "comforting" betokens anything but a scientific turn of mind. A scientific inquiry is concerned, not with what is comforting, but with what is true. Nor is there anything really comforting in finding that certain of our own beliefs are shared by savages. This is far more frequently an indication of error than of accuracy. And, in the next place, we altogether deny that men in a low culture stage are "seeking after God." Savages do not seek gods any more than they seek a pestilence. The gods find them, and the savage seems to spend no small part of his energies in dodging them. This is really one of the vital facts of the situation, and without an appreciation of its significance, one's study of religion is robbed of a deal of its value. The search for God only commences at a later date, when people

are taught to express their feelings in terms of religion, and also to believe they cannot get along without God. And Dr. Jevons might pay some attention to the fact that if people are looking for God, a large number lose him, and those who lose him are amongst the most thoughtful and the most educated in the civilised world.

The last sentence is, perhaps, open to misapprehension. Its truth and its significance is often lost because religious people make contrasts in a quite unjustifiable manner. Freethinkers with small opportunities are contrasted with religionists who have had social and financial opportunities that others lack. This does not affect the expression of capacity, but it does affect the form in which it is cast, and form counts for much with superficial observers. But we say boldly and plainly, that class for class, the Freethinkers of any country are markedly superior to their religious fellow countrymen. Take a hundred Freethinkers, haphazard, from any class, and contrast them with a hundred Christians from the same class, and taken in the same manner, and their general superiority will be evident. Class for class, Freethinkers do actually represent the better type. It may sound conceded to say this, but it needs saying, and it is easy to test its truth by actual observation.

What a pretty lot the native Christians in the Balkans are! First of all their war of liberation resolved itself into a mere struggle for more territory. Then their crusade for religious freedom manifested the usual characteristic of religious crusades—wholesale butchery. Then their brotherly love for each other was shown by the Greeks and Bulgarians going for each other before the common enemy was out of the way. And now Mr. Claude G. Montefiore and Mr. D. L. Alexander, in a lengthy communication to the *Daily Telegraph*, calls attention to what Christian Roumania understands by religious freedom. A condition of Roumanian independence, as guaranteed by the Berlin Treaty, was that religious freedom should be permitted, and that "the difference of religious creeds and confessions shall not be alleged against any person as a ground for exclusion or incapacity in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil and political rights, admission to public employments," etc. In spite of this, practically all Jews are to this day unemancipated. They are not even admitted to belong to the land of their birth, and in various ways are insulted and persecuted. First of all, the Roumanian Government tried to evade its treaty obligations by pleading that the Jews were illiterate—this in a country where 88 per cent. of the Gentile population cannot read or write. Farther, as aliens could not claim political rights, the Jews were declared aliens—although the vast majority of the Jewish population are native born. They were thus in the position of unprotected aliens, as they had no country to which they could appeal for protection. Finally, the Roumanian Government agreed to treat the Jews as natives where letters of naturalisation were taken out. That this was a mere subterfuge is shown by the fact that in thirty-five years, with a Jewish population of nearly 300,000 only 200 have been granted naturalisation.

Thus the operation of Christian bigotry was made easy. Under the laws that dealt ostensibly with aliens in general, regulations were framed that were intended to harass the Jews in all directions. They were affected in their rights of residence, their trading rights, their access to schools, professions, and the public services. In 1902, it was actually proposed that all foreigners should be prohibited exercising handicrafts in Roumania unless they could show reciprocity in their own country. But the Roumanian Jews had no other country, and the Roumanian law declared them aliens. This measure would have brought about 200,000 Jews to face starvation had not European intervention brought about its withdrawal. Still, an attempt was made to reintroduce the same law last year, and there is hardly another country, except Russia, where Jews are persecuted as they are in Roumania. So stands the record of the sleeping partner in the Balkan confederation of Christian peoples. And one can only say that Roumania is worthy of her confederates.

The question of the moment, says Professor Gardner, is, whether Christianity can survive the immense increase of our knowledge of man and society? Professor Gardner thinks it can; because, when faced with changes of knowledge in the past, "In every case Christianity showed itself capable of such changes as enabled it to escape what looked like irresistible forces of destruction." This is the kind of statement often made by Christian apologists, and it is wholly false. We are told that Christianity survived the attack of Voltaire, and of Paine, and of many others. And

this also is false. The Christianity against which Voltaire and Paine fought is substantially defunct. What has become of the Christianity of the sixteenth century, or of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? It is the same with all that we have left; but the doctrines against which the older Freethinkers fought are now discarded by educated believers. Professor Gardner himself would be more at one with an educated Freethinker of to-day than with a staunch believer of two hundred years ago. Christianity itself is not capable of great changes, but Christians have shown themselves first of all capable of imprisoning, and even killing, men and women for attacking Christian doctrines, and afterwards of preaching the very things that were denounced. The advanced thought of the Christian world to-day is only the alphabet of the Freethought of fifty years ago. A religion of greater intellectual strength and sense of rectitude than Christianity would have died defending its doctrines. But religious organisations that are capable, under pressure, of swallowing anything and of teaching anything, may drag on a more or less dishonorable career until such time as outraged decency drives it finally from the field.

A religious census of the prison population of South Africa is included in a Blue-book just issued by the Department of Justice. The *East London Daily Dispatch* tells us that "the Church of England produced the largest number of criminals, the Wesleyans being a fair second, and the Dutch Reformed Church third. Among the 'also rans' is the Free Church of Scotland, which is credited with ten offenders; but it is not clear whether the 'Wee Frees' or the 'United Frees' are entitled to this doubtful honor." The clergy are always prating of the ethical value of religious teaching; but their statements are rarely put to the test.

The clergy of Peterborough have issued a public protest against Good Friday football. It is this sort of medievalism which so endears the parsons to the general public.

Le Revue, the French newspaper, has been collecting the opinions of public men on deforestation in France. President Poincaré, in his reply, said "I am frantically fond of trees, and should like to have the power to behead those who cut them down." This is almost as bad as the sentence passed on Adam and Eve for meddling with the tree in Eden.

"Serpent in the Garden," read a headline in the *Evening News* recently. It referred to a proposed railway across Hampstead, and not to the devilish reptile of Eden.

An American minister, writing in *Faith and Doubt*, the new theological magazine, pleads for a restatement of Christianity. In the land of the almighty dollar this means flattering the Rockefellers and ignoring the fellows on the rocks.

The Rev. Mr. Selbie, Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, charges preachers with holding and expressing uncertain views on religion. The charge is doubtless true, and may be held partly responsible for the decay of interest in religion; but the Principal forgets that religion deals with subjects concerning which nobody possesses any knowledge whatever. Even he, though a trainer of young preachers, is as ignorant as all the rest. Who knows anything about God, Christ, the soul, and immortality? It is easy enough for wholly ignorant men to *dogmatise*, but they cannot *teach*. Such is the case with all parsons, Principal Selbie included. Their "messages" are myths manufactured by themselves.

An attractive bioscope poster on the London hoardings reads, "Satan, at enormous expense." The Ecclesiastical Commissioners might be able to supply some idea of the cost of exploiting his Satanic Majesty.

Dr. W. E. Barton, writing in the magazine, *Faith and Doubt*, on "Christian Claims," says he has "gone to the edge of the precipice and looked over, to discover if I might, into what abyss I might be plunged by any discovery of modern science or Biblical criticism to-morrow or the day after. I have looked unterrified, and have returned to find my feet upon a rock and a song in my heart." Evidently that song was not "Let me like a soldier fall."

A Bill to establish fishing as a legal Sunday pastime has recently been introduced into the Pennsylvania Senate on the grounds that angling affords opportunity of rest and relaxation. Fishing for money is already extensively practised by the clergy on that day.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £78 0s. 10d. Received since:—N. M. X., £1; George Taylor, 10s.; John Grange, £2 2s. *Per Miss Vance*: J. Carruthers, 2s. 6d.; Manchester, 5s.; Chas. E. Hearson, £1 1s.

A. M.—We quite understand your indignation at the ordinary press boycott of Mr. Foote. He, however, feels no indignation, but only contempt. The creature you bring to our notice, after mentioning every article in the *English Review* except Mr. Foote's, has the pious effrontery to say there is no boycott in that. When he says that Meredith's letters don't amount to much he simply speaks like a—Christian. It is because the letters do amount to a great deal that he was silent on the subject. Meredith praised Mr. Foote for "fighting for the best of causes," told him that the said cause was "destined to victory," and sent him a cheque (with his name) in support of the *Freethinker* in the very last letter he ever wrote—and all that amounts to nothing! If that is all it amounts to, why not draw attention to "harmless facts"? The reference to the feelings of the Meredith family is hypocritical—and Scotch at that. He was a public man, as poet and novelist, he does not belong to any family, but to the world. The family represent him legally; they may be the natural guardians of his honor, but not of his genius and convictions. They had and have, apparently, no share in either.

H. D. WOOLLEY.—"My earnest and sincere desire," you say, "is that you may discover your awful mistake ere it is too late." Thanks. We believe you mean well. But what a God you worship! Fancy a Deity damning us for differing from you! The comedy overwhelms the tragedy.

J. TOMKINS.—Thanks for the *Daily Herald* cutting. We have a very small opinion, as you have, of the brains and style of Free Church "literature." Heaven save the mark!

VARGHAN GRAY.—Thanks for the Bruno postcard and the stamp upon it of the Giordano Bruno Associazione at Rome as a message of friendship to the President of the N. S. S. We had a picture of the Bruno statue already; a photograph taken on the spot, with the N. S. S. delegates to the great World's Freethought Congress, some ten years ago.

AFTER reading the Editor's "Personal" it will be easy to understand why the bulk of this week's correspondence has to stand over till next week. This applies to subscriptions as well.

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

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

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

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

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

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office 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.

Personal.

ON Tuesday evening, March 11, I attended the Annual Meeting of the Secular Education League. There was an excellent gathering, and a really good audience when the time for the public meeting arrived. Mr. Halley Stewart, whose health had broken down, was compelled to resign the Presidency of the League; and, with many warm thanks for Mr. Stewart's devoted service, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., was elected as Mr. Stewart's successor.

I should have strained a point to be present at that meeting, and I did strain it. I had a cold upon me, but I was in London on the Tuesday on the paper, and I stopped for the League meeting while I was there. I was grieved to see my younger colleague, Mr. Cohen, showing traces of his recent illness, and I gave him some fatherly advice about taking greater care of himself. By this time, I

suppose, he is thinking that I need some such advice myself.

I went up on Friday evening to London again, in order to speak the distinctive note of the Free-thought party at the meeting convened by the Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. It was a grand meeting, with a curious variety of view represented on the platform. When my turn arrived to speak, I received a very striking reception. I told the meeting that I had almost left my bed to attend, and I threw myself upon their indulgence. But I forgot my indisposition as I went along, I threw myself into the work, and the audience was unstinting in its applause. It was a great effort, in the state in which I then was; and the weather was wretched, and by an odd series of accidents things were made worse than they might have been, and I was completely upset when I arrived home at one o'clock in the morning. I had to put myself into the doctor's hands on Saturday, and there I am still. I am getting a bit better, but serious work or going up to London is out of the question.

On former occasions I have called Mr. Cohen in to sit in the editorial chair in my absence. I could hardly have done so this time; partly because of his own recent illness, and partly because of his lecturing on Sunday at Liverpool. "Mimnermus" happens to be living near me. He promptly went to London at my request, and did his best on Monday,—hoping on Tuesday to be assisted by Mr. Lloyd. This hurried arrangement leaves the *Freethinker*—and naturally leaves it—somewhat short of its usual attractions. Beyond this "Personal" and a few small items that were in type beforehand, my hand on the paper is paralysed this week. But I must be careful. The doctor says I have been overdoing it, and warns me to get rest and change as soon as possible.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

The annual meeting of the Secular Education League was held on March 11 at Caxton Hall, Westminster, London. Excellent speeches were delivered by Mr. G. Greenwood, M.P., who presided, and by Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. F. S. Swiny, and the Rev. W. Bell. Sir H. Cotton moved a vote of thanks to the chairman. The Rev. W. Bell, who is a Nonconformist minister, pointed out the disloyalty of the Free Churches to their own principles in opposing Secular Education.

Mr. John Grange, sending his annual cheque to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes:—

"As years roll by, it is a joy to behold the tenacious loyalty and devotion and vitality that always characterise your advocacy of Freethought. The perennial freshness of the *Freethinker* is, in my judgment, incomparable. Its brainy breeziness is a mental tonic indeed. The frothy nature of current literature impels one to relish it all the more in this regard. I fondly hope its publication will outlast my life's span, otherwise lament and gloom would possess my being. May you live long as the bearer of the Torch of Reason."

We promise our old friend—who is not old in years though—that we shall try to keep alive as long as possible, if only for the sake of the cause which we have already been serving for more years than we care to count.

Here is an extract from another letter that may interest our readers—especially the older ones:—

"I hope your article in the *English Review* on George Meredith will be followed by others from your pen on Freethought topics in the same or similar quarters. They are badly needed. I think I remember seeing some years ago in one of your articles that your appreciation of Cardinal Newman had been included in a collection of tributes to his memory published by the Roman Catholics. If my memory is not at fault, I should be glad to know the name and price of this book. I have read your tribute to Newman many times, and have also lent it to friends. This, the tribute of the 'batant' Atheist to the great Cardinal, is one of the few fine things in literature."

We regret that we are unable to give the title and price of the Catholic collection of tributes to Newman in which our own was included. The book was in our possession once, but we have missed it of late years. It is curious how books can go missing, but they do. Perhaps it will turn up again some day.

Richard Carlile.

[We have often been asked for a brief biography of Richard Carlile, the bravest and hardest of the fighters for a free press in England. The following may supply the need. It was written by Mr. Foote some thirty-seven years ago. He has no time to rewrite it or revise it. It tells, at least, the story of Carlile's great fight, as it stands.—EDITOR.]

In proportion as we value a free press, so ought we to be grateful to those who achieved it for us at the cost of personal comfort and public repute. Their number is great, and the memory of most must perish; but others will never be forgotten; their splendid championship or loyal devotion being their passport to deathless fame. These memorable ones are of two kinds—those who have adduced impregnable arguments for the cause, adorned with the eloquence of conviction, and those who have practically striven for it in actual warfare. Of the former John Milton is the supreme English type, of the latter Richard Carlile.

In England the ruling classes always dreaded freedom of discussion and criticism, and were ever ready to exercise a rigid censorship over the press. When arbitrary suppression was possible it was invariably employed; since then, until quite recently, invidious legislation has been resorted to. The nineteenth century witnessed the trial of each method and the final extinguishment of both. During the first twenty years of it high-handed acts of power were levelled against authors and publishers; during the second twenty years stamp duties on newspapers were imposed to obstruct their sale among the poorer classes. Fortunately, both evils were broken down by the resolute opposition of noble-minded men, who valued "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberties"; of whom Richard Carlile was the noblest, the most sincere, the most intrepid.

Richard Carlile was born at Ashburton, in Devonshire, on December 8, 1790. Of his parents not much is known. His father possessed some talent as an arithmetician, and published a collection of arithmetical, mathematical, and algebraical questions. His trade was shoemaking, but he early quitted it to become an exciseman. Intoxication beset him in that profession, and he betook himself to teaching as a schoolmaster. Subsequently he became a soldier, and died at the age of thirty-four, "nobody's enemy but his own," leaving his wife with three infant children, Richard and two sisters. The widow was for several years in a flourishing business, but the hard times about 1800 greatly diminished it, and alternate sickness and poverty afflicted her. She was through all changes an indulgent mother and a virtuous woman. At the age of sixty she died, being supported by her son until then, from the time when he was able to earn a living for them.

Carlile's education was but scant; it comprised reading, writing, arithmetic, and sufficient Latin to read a physician's prescription. On leaving school he engaged in the service of Mr. Lee, chemist and druggist, in Exeter; but he soon left it on account of being put to do things deemed derogatory to his office. Following that he idled away three months at home, where he amused himself with coloring pictures to sell in his mother's shop. His mother's principal customers, says Mr. Holyoake, were the firm of Gifford & Co., which consisted of the brothers of that Attorney-General who had such extensive dealings with the son afterwards, in a different line. Carlile was then apprenticed to the tin-plate business, and, although he never liked it, he continued to work at it for many years. His apprenticeship lasted seven years and three months, and was marked by great hardships, and consequent conspiracies and rebellions. His master, a Mr. Cummings, allowed five or six hours for sleep, but no leisure for recreation. On being released from this galling bondage, he determined to forsake the trade as soon as possible; but for a long time he was compelled to follow it, and thereby earn his subsistence. After travelling in

various parts as a journeyman tinman, he came to London in 1811, but he returned to Exeter the same year. In 1813 he was in London again, working at Benham & Sons, Blackfriars-road. During the interval he had formed an acquaintance with a lady who, after two months' courtship, became his wife, she being then thirty years of age and he twenty-three. This union does not seem to have been productive of great happiness. Mrs. Carlile was a woman of considerable personal attractions, and possessed all the business qualities necessary to a tradesman's wife. In after years of persecution she bravely stood by her husband's side and shared his imprisonment. But their tempers were ill-matched, their ages disparate, their mental characters irreconcilably diverse. By mutual consent they parted in 1832. No blame is legitimately ascribable to either; their conflicting idiosyncrasies were their misfortune, and not their fault.

During the years of his labor as a tinman, Carlile had not been mentally quiescent. He was ambitious to win a public reputation and to earn his living by his pen. Very early in life he had dreams of purifying the Church, which certainly needed purging. Heresy had not found a home in his mind, and necessarily his reforming tendencies concerned themselves with what he was acquainted with. He relates how, in his youth, he gathered faggots to burn "Old Tom Paine," instead of Guy Fawkes, being then totally ignorant of Paine's writings, and, like other people, incensed against him by irrational prejudice. Not until 1810, in his twentieth year, did he even see a copy of the *Rights of Man*. But towards 1816 he read Paine's works and the writings of other reformers; his mind became excited by his newly acquired ideas, and he essayed public life. Cobbett and other editors were plagued at first by his literary scraps, which were uniformly refused. But in the following year, 1817, Wooller's *Black Dwarf* made its appearance, and, being more to Carlile's taste than Cobbett's *Register*, which did not go far enough for him, he determined to push it amongst the news-vendors, as the sale was very low. "The Habeas Corpus Act," says Mr. Holyoake, "was suspended, and Sidmouth had sent forth his circular; there was a damp amongst the news-vendors, and few would sell. This excited Carlile with a desire to become a bookseller. The story of Lackington beginning with a stall encouraged him. He resolved to set a good example in the trade of political pamphlets. Finding the sale of the *Black Dwarf* very low, he borrowed £1 from his employer, and invested it in one hundred *Dwarfs*, and on the 9th of March, 1817, he sallied forth from the manufactory, with his stock in his handkerchief, to commence the trade of bookselling. He traversed the metropolis in every direction to get news-vendors to sell the *Dwarf*, and called every day to see how they sold. He inquired also after Cobbett's *Register* and Sherwin's *Republican*, but, finding that they did not want pushing, he took none of those round. Indeed, he refused to avail himself of the profit he could have made by taking Cobbett's *Register*, because it did not go far enough. He carried the *Dwarf* round several weeks, walking thirty miles a day, for a profit of fifteen or eighteen pence. At length an information was lodged against the publisher, and Mr. Steill was arrested. Carlile at once offered to take his place. Mr. Wooller, however, arranged the matter, and Carlile's offer was declined. Mr. Sherwin, then a young man editing the *Republican*, perceived Carlile's value, and offered him the publishing of his paper, which he accepted. Carlile guaranteed Mr. Sherwin against arrest, which left him free to be bold without danger. The shop on which he now entered was 183 Fleet-street, which Mr. Cobbett afterwards occupied. Carlile's first ideas of politics were, that neither writers, printers, nor publishers were bold enough; and he now commenced to set the example he thought wanted."

Those were stirring times, and Carlile stepped into the ranks of publishers just at the moment when his sturdy independence and resolute will were needed to stem the torrent of Government prosecutions.

The Tory Government made war upon the press, and to effect its designs furnished up every rusty instrument of tyranny. "It is difficult," says Knight, "to imagine a more degraded and dangerous position than that in which every political writer was placed during the year 1817. In the first place, he was subject, by a Secretary of State's warrant, to be imprisoned upon suspicion, under the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Secondly, he was open to an *ex-officio* information, under which he would be compelled to find bail, or be imprisoned. The power of *ex-officio* information had been extended, so as to compel bail, by an Act of 1808; but from 1808 to 1811, during which three years forty such informations were laid, only one person was held to bail. In 1817 numerous *ex officio* informations were filed, and the almost invariable practice then was to hold the alleged offender to bail, or, in default, to commit to prison. Under this Act Mr. Hone, and others, were committed to prison during this year. To complete a triple cord with which the ministers believed they could bind down the 'man mountain' of the press, came forth Lord Sidmouth's Circular." Sidmouth's famous Circular to the Lords-Lieutenants of Counties, urging the importance of preventing the circulation of blasphemous and seditious pamphlets, stated that he had obtained the opinion of the law officers, "that a justice of the peace may issue a warrant to apprehend a person charged before him, on oath, with the publication of libels of the nature in question, and compel him to give bail to answer the charge." This was practically a deprivation of every particle of liberty, and placed every writer at the mercy of informers and unpaid magistrates. It did away with trial by jury, and substituted for it the arbitrary caprice of judges. Earl Grey, in the House of Lords, asked: "If such be the power of the magistrate, and if this be the law, where are all the boasted securities of our independence and freedom?" These proceedings were the most daring invasion of public liberty that had been attempted since the time of the Stuarts. The reformers, however, stood firm; only one fled—William Cobbett. But no cowardice dictated his movement. He sacrificed an incredibly profitable business, and departed with his family to America, being determined not to be gagged by judges, or magistrates, or Secretaries of State. There he continued to write his *Register*, the first numbers of which, dated from Long Island, preserve as an indelible brand on the oligarchy the story of the Last Hundred Days of English Freedom.

Carlile vigorously set to work at printing and publishing works under the ban of legal prohibition. He was determined, at whatever cost, to defy the Government, and resolved to publish, on principle, every forbidden book. His first step was to resist Southey's attempt to suppress his early poem, *Wat Tyler*, composed in former days of Republican and Communistic convictions, when, with Coleridge, he fondly contemplated the progress of extreme principles, and longed to see them put into practice. Of that poem Carlile sold twenty-five thousand copies in 1817. His next publication was the prosecution and defence of Wooller, of the *Black Dwarf*. Next came a reprint of Paine's political works, edited by Carlile and Sherwin conjointly. Immediately afterwards he reprinted William Hone's suppressed political squibs, called *The Parodies on the Book of Common Prayer*. This freed on the trial of Hone for blasphemy; but happily the old book-worm, after making one of the most remarkable defences on record, was acquitted. The publication, however, of the *Parodies* cost Carlile eighteen weeks' imprisonment in the King's Bench Prison, from which he was liberated on the acquittal of Hone.

By the end of 1818 Carlile had published the theological works of Paine, which, with the political writings and miscellaneous pieces, were collected in two handsomely printed volumes, forming the only complete edition of Paine ever published. No expense was spared to render the collection as complete as possible. The prosecutions set on foot against him gave to these works an unprecedented

sale; and other publications of a similar character were proceeded with, such as the *Doubts of Infidels*, *Watson Refuted*, *Palmer's Principles of Nature*, and the *God of the Jews*. By the month of October, 1819, six indictments were pending against him, two of which were tried from the 12th to the 16th of that month. "When he came to trial," says Mr. Holyoake, "he had no clear understanding of the subject of his defence; it was compiled from the pleadings of others for toleration and free discussion." His defence, however, so alarmed the Emperor Alexander of Russia that he issued a Ukase, forbidding any printed report of it from being brought into his territory. The verdict was gained against him, and he was sentenced to fifteen hundred pounds fine, and three years' imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, whither he was driven off, handcuffed, in the middle of the night. This imprisonment was, of course, endured with no grateful feelings, but it produced a good result in affording opportunity for patient study of religious questions. "He had taken the impression," says Mr. Holyoake, "from the hint of an aged political friend, that all the evils of mankind rooted in the superstition and consequent priestcraft practised upon them, and was resolved to devote the solitude of his imprisonment to the study of religious mysteries, and fearlessly and faithfully to make the revelation for the common good of man." The brave man was true to his resolve. He did study those questions, and very speedily saw reason to disclaim all belief in dogmas and creeds based on revelation.

The first thing he did after the close of his trial was to publish a report of his defence, in which he had taken care to read the whole of Paine's *Age of Reason*. The sale was immense, and to stay it a prosecution was begun against Mrs. Carlile, but was dropped on her declining the sale. She was not, however, long unmolested. "Under pretence of seizing for Mr. Carlile's fines," says Mr. Holyoake, "the sheriff, with a writ of *levari facias* from the Court of King's Bench, took possession of his house, furniture, and stock-in-trade, and closed the shop. It was thus held from November 16 to December 24. Rent became due, and it was then emptied. Under Mr. Carlile's desire, Mrs. Carlile renewed a business, in January, 1820, with what could be scraped together from the unseized wreck of their property. In February she was arrested; but the first indictment failed through a flaw in its construction. She was immediately proceeded against by the Attorney-General, and became her husband's fellow-prisoner in Dorchester Gaol in February, 1821." The sentence passed upon her was two years' imprisonment, not one jot of which was abated, although her accouchement in gaol without proper attendance seemed so terrible to her husband that he did for her what he never did for himself, and begged of Peel to grant her a release.

Carlile's sister Mary Ann carried on the business after Mrs. Carlile's imprisonment. She, likewise, was prosecuted by the relentless Government, and in November, 1821, found herself a fellow-prisoner with her brother, under a fine of five hundred pounds. The business was continued by Mrs. Wright, and a troop of other assistants, whose names should be put on record: George Beer, John Barkley, Humphrey Boyle, Joseph Rhodes, William Holmes, John Jones, Joseph Trust, Charles Sanderson, Thomas Jeffries, William Haley, William Campion, Richard Hassell, Michael O'Connor, William Cochrane, John Clarke, John Christopher, and Thomas Riley Perry. All of these were imprisoned for terms varying from six months to three years. A second seizure of house and stock was made, on pretence of satisfying the fines. But no abatement was made from the amount of fines, and, notwithstanding Carlile's persistent application to "Christian Judge Bailey," he was obliged to serve out the extra three years' imprisonment in lieu thereof.

Carlile's imprisonment was rendered as irksome to him as possible. Inside the gaol the utmost indignities were practised upon him, his wife, and his

sister. The chaplain laughed at their complaints, and more than hinted that no degradation could exceed their deserts. He even professed a fear that the thieves confined there might be contaminated by communication with a heretic and Republican, and suggested precautions against such a deplorable contingency. The prisoner's opportunities of exercise in fresh air depended on the caprice of the gaoler; and even when permitted that luxury he was led out as a caged animal, and exhibited to the gaze of the passing curious. In consequence of this he passed two years and a half in his own chamber, for which he paid two guineas and a half a week, without going into the open air. During the whole period he continued to edit the *Republican* as vigorously as before, and made it more decided on theological questions. To spite his persecutors, he dated it in the era of "the Carpenter's Wife's Son." None of his publications had been suppressed, and the Cabinet was reported to have acknowledged Carlile invincible in his course of moral resistance. When he was liberated from Dorchester Gaol in 1825, the freedom of the press was virtually complete so far as Government was concerned. His incarcerated shopmen had still to finish their terms of imprisonment, but no fresh arrests were made. One brave, unflinching man had done battle against the power and wealth of the oligarchy, and issued from the contest victor. His practical sagacity, even while imprisoned, provided against every unfavorable contingency, and devised means to surmount every obstacle. When he found that the Government could not be beaten by straightforward means, he adopted others; laws which could not be broken he eluded. The intention of Government to exhaust his means of resistance by repeated arrests of his shopmen he frustrated by providing a mechanical process of sale. Books were sold through an aperture, so that the buyer was unable to identify the seller. Afterwards they were sold by clockwork. On a dial was written the name of every publication for sale; the purchaser entered, and turned the hand of the dial to the book he wanted, which, on depositing his money, dropped down before him without the necessity of anyone speaking. The circulation of his books was quadrupled, and cheering crowds assembled daily around his shop windows. In the provinces, at public dinners, the health was drunk of "Carlile's invisible shopman." The number of copies of Paine's works sold was amazing; from December, 1818, to December, 1822, 20,000 copies were sent into circulation. While in prison his friends liberally supported him; subscriptions to the amount of £500 a year were acknowledged in the *Republican*. The profits of the business also amounted to about £50 per week. Occasionally the trade was prodigious; in one week, while a trial was pending, Mrs. Carlile took £500 over the counter. On his leaving Dorchester Gaol, one friend lent him £1,000 to extend his business in the new shop at 62 Fleet-street. The triumph was on the side of Right against Might; the war had lasted six years, and Might was worn out and obliged to retreat. Henceforth, although newspaper duties, or "taxes on knowledge," still continued to impede the sale of literature amongst the working classes, Bourbon misrule was absolutely impossible. Editors and publishers enjoyed a pleasant peace, won for them mainly by Carlile's invincible hostility to oppression.

(To be continued.)

Love your parents. Do not let the family which springs from you make you ever forget the family from which you sprang. Too often indeed the new ties relax the old, whereas they ought only to be a new link in the chain of love which should bind together the three generations of a family. Surround the white heads of the mother and of the father with tender and respectful affection till their last day. Strew their way to the grave with flowers. Breathe over their weary souls a fragrance of faith and immortality with the constancy of your love. And may the affection which you keep inviolate for your parents be a pledge of that which your children will keep for you.—*Joseph Mazzini.*

To End the Blasphemy Laws.

CROWDED MEETING FOR REPEAL.

A STRONGLY worded resolution, urging that immediate steps be taken to secure the early repeal of the ferocious and inhuman Blasphemy Laws, was carried unanimously at a crowded and enthusiastic meeting held at the Essex Hall, Strand, London, on Friday evening. The Rev. W. Copeland Bowie presided, and was supported by an imposing array of speakers, including Lord Harberton, Sir W. P. Byles, M.P., Sir Hiram Maxim, Mr. G. G. Greenwood, M.P., Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. G. W. Foote, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, and the Rev. Stewart Headlam.

Mr. Herbert Burrows also occupied a seat upon the platform, and letters of sympathy with the objects of the meeting were read by Mrs. Bonner from the Rt Hon Thomas Burt, Mr. Joseph King, M.P., Mr. Athelstan Rendall, M.P., Mr. Holt, M.P., Mr. Philip Snowden, M.P., Mr. H. Verinder, and others, together with resolutions of sympathy from a number of Secular, Ethical, and Socialist societies.

The Rev. Copeland Bowie opened with a vigorous speech, in which he pointed out that the gravest matter in the administration of the Blasphemy Laws was the discrimination exercised. There was small chance of a scholar being sent to prison for profanity; but a speaker at an open-air meeting would be promptly sentenced. This was not only unjustifiable, but it was iniquitous.

The Rev. Stewart Headlam, white-haired and dignified, moved the resolution, and recalled the stormy days of "the 'seventies," when Charles Bradlaugh was in the forefront of the battle for free speech. It was, he said, the treatment of Bradlaugh by Christians that caused him (Headlam) to support the abolition of these odious laws. Unfortunately, legislation was delayed because members of Parliament were greater cowards than members of the County Council. For forty years he had advocated the abolition of these laws, and before he died he hoped to see them abolished.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, who followed, was clever and cynical. He immediately raised a laugh by saying that he had himself given satisfaction all round. He was received at the City Temple as the last refuge of Christianity, and was applauded by Secularists as a super-Atheist. The Blasphemy Laws were out of date. When England was a Christian country these laws were not undemocratic; but Christians were now in an insignificant minority in the British Empire. There was something worse than uproarious blasphemy, and that was a dead and terrified silence. Hardly any public man would to-day tell the truth on any subject whatever. At present he or any other dramatist would be prevented from producing a play upon the subject of Mohammed. The Blasphemy Laws should be uncompromisingly abolished.

Mr. G. G. Greenwood, M.P., was unusually grave, and he referred in detail to the legal aspects of the Blasphemy Laws. He said that judges had ruled that if the decencies of controversy were observed, the fundamentals of religion may be attacked. But a British jury would be scared by a lively song of Beranger's, and who was to judge as to what were the decencies of controversy?

Mr. Foote's rising was received with prolonged applause. His speech, which was in his happiest vein, was a sustained piece of oratory, and bristled with good things. Very happy was his reminder to Mr. Shaw that Voltaire had written a play on Mohammed. He hoped to see Mr. Shaw's production, for the two might be bound together, and the wit of the eighteenth century compared with the wit of the twentieth. He himself stood for absolute freedom of thought and speech. Mr. Stead had pointed out that the editor of the *Freethinker* was the only English journalist who had protested against the extreme treatment of the Church in France under the Separation Law. He had also used his pen in favor of the Peculiar People. He remembered a rosy-faced man named Senior introducing himself in a tramcar at Stratford and thanking him for his efforts on behalf of the Peculiar People. Senior said, "We ought to know one another. You have been imprisoned for not believing in the Bible and I for believing it." The Blasphemy Laws simply meant the prosecution of dissidents. Such prosecutions never fail, because the *Freethinker* stands in such a position that brains cannot save him. If, for example, Mr. Greenwood were tried by a jury of Tariff Reformers, he would get twelve months. What right has a man to feelings if he is afraid of honest controversy? The only restrictions needed were the restrictions placed on the discussion of every other subject. *Freethinkers* asked for equal rights with other citizens. They asked for no more and would be satisfied with no less.

Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., said that the Blasphemy Laws were a survival of barbarism, which had disgraced the statute book for three hundred years. Only Atheists were now punished.

Sir Hiram Maxim followed with a witty speech, which he humorously said he had had type-written in case of a Government spy being present.

Sir William P. Byles, M.P., said that the right to express thought was the greatest of all causes. Darwin, Tyndall, and Huxley had utterly destroyed the faith of millions. It was high time the statute book was cleansed of the intolerable Blasphemy Laws.

Lord Harberton stated that he supported the resolution with a whole heart. The function of government should be to protect the individual and not to imprison him. Ridicule was an extremely effective weapon, and the Blasphemy Laws simply deprived Freethinkers of the use of that weapon.

The resolution was then put, every hand being held up in favor. So ended a memorable meeting, noteworthy for the enthusiasm and number of the audience, and also for the very representative character of the speakers. C. E. S.

Sir Hiram Maxim's Protest.

SPEECH AT ESSEX HALL, MARCH 14.

It is certainly a most extraordinary fact that right here in England and to-day the wisest and best among us are liable to be arrested and imprisoned with hard labor for long terms for expressing our honest opinions regarding certain impossible and silly fables invented by depraved and ignorant barbarians in the very childhood of the world. We cannot control our own beliefs. To many of us it is absolutely impossible to believe in talking snakes and jackasses. We could not torture our minds into believing that a barbarian general stopped the rotation of the earth for a whole day in order to give him time to murder the whole of another barbarian race—all except the young women. To us it is not a question of belief at all; we know that these ancient stories cannot be true. Still, in England, and in the high civilisation of the twentieth century, we have our Statute-books laws which make it possible for foolish and superstitious bigots, and some other evil-minded persons, to persecute and imprison those of us who are wise and honest enough to express doubts as to the truth of the most extraordinary fables that were ever invented by a diseased imagination.

For many ages attempts have been made to enforce uniformity in religious belief. Every possible form of torture has been tried, and still there are more heretics in the world than ever before. Dogmatic Christianity, as we know it to-day, did not originate in Jerusalem nineteen hundred years ago, as many suppose. It was manufactured at Rome at a much later date, and consists for the most part of a crazy mosaic, or rather a patchwork of many colors. When the priests and monks who had produced this remarkable new religion presented it to the people, it was found to be a misfit religion; many were quite unable to believe such extraordinary tales relating to devils, demons, fish, and snakes; but the priests, instead of remodelling their religion to make it fit the intelligence of the people, sought rather to reduce the intelligence of the people to fit their new religion, and this was accomplished by killing off all unbelievers. Hundreds of thousands were tortured to death, generally by being burnt alive over a slow fire; and this went on for more than a thousand years.

The article in the Christian faith that led to the greatest number of burnings was the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Many people were unable to believe that a priest could hold up a bit of bread, and, by repeating certain hocus-pocus, transform it into the flesh of someone who had long been dead. If one killed his father or mother, and murdered innocent children, there was yet hope for him if, at the eleventh hour, the priest was able to give him a through ticket, a golden harp, and a halo; but to disbelieve this utterly absurd and impossible priestly hocus pocus was regarded as the crime of crimes, and for such a sinner there was no hope—he was doomed to spend an eternity in fire and brimstone.

If the Blasphemy Laws that were in force in England in the time of Henry VIII. were put in force to-day, every member of the Established Church of England would be burnt alive to-morrow. From this it will be evident that, though we are a slow-moving people, we are really making some progress. Religion is, and always has been, in a constant state of transition. We have already modified the interpretation of the Blasphemy Laws in England, and in some of the very highly civilised countries like France they have disappeared altogether. It is only a question of time when the last vestige of these old, cruel, and barbarous laws will disappear from our Statute-books.

The changes in religion are slow when considered in terms of a human life, but when considered in terms of geological epochs they are rapid indeed. It is the duty of every honest thinking man and woman to put their shoulder to the

wheel and do their utmost to have these old and disgraceful laws repealed—modern civilisation demands it. Many laws have been made and millions of mankind have been tortured and put to death for not believing manifest falsehood. But no laws have ever been made and no one has ever been tortured for not believing a manifest truth. It requires no faith to believe a fact. Truth does not have to be protected by law. All our Blasphemy Laws are for the protection of what is known to be untrue.

I approve of the resolution.

"George Meredith—Freethinker."

THE claim made by orthodox religious people that Meredith was a sort of Christian philosopher, a "Defender of the Faith," is a pretty impudent one. How often he is quoted in the interests of a discredited creed! Every allusion to religion which he puts upon the lips of his characters is heralded as an item in Meredith's own dogmatic faith. This game or pretence is just splendidly exposed by G. W. Foote in the March number of the *English Review*. The article is of great significance on the subject of the novelist's religion. It is wonderful how anxious Church ministers are to nobble Meredith. They are so thankful for the support of big personalities, especially now when the drift from the Churches is generally admitted (not at all frankly by those who run orthodoxy). By hook or crook every possible genius must be roped in.

MEREDITH AND BRADLAUGH.

Mr. Foote shows that Meredith, up to the end of his life, was a courageous helper of the Freethought movement. That means a great deal. It is a sign of intellectual weakness and of cowardice, of a diseased spirituality and of ecclesiastical snobbery, to ignore or depreciate the movement for a humanist religion. And militant Rationalism has done a considerable work in opening the eyes of the people to the tyranny and falsehood of Christian dogma.

Incident after incident is given of Meredith's position. In 1869, he writes to John Morley, "You see how they dealt with Bradlaugh. I spoke to Greenwood about him, insisting that he was a man of power, and was not to be sneered down." Writing to Maxse in 1870, he says, "The Parsonry are irritating me fearfully, but a non-celibate clergy are a terrific power. They are interwound with the whole of the Middle Class like the poisonous ivy." Mr. Foote quotes from the poems of Meredith in support of his case.

LETTERS TO FOOTE.

The personal testimony of Mr. Foote is of peculiar interest. "My own correspondence with Meredith—I should rather say his correspondence with me—did not run to many letters, but they cover some thirty years of time. I was far from forcing myself upon his attention. Words of encouragement that he sent me from time to time were never solicited, but always spontaneous." In the middle seventies, when Foote was fighting for Freethought, Meredith was watching him, and later on promised to write for his new magazine. He sent a cheque to assist the propagandist in his work. He was "not frightened with me because of the evil reputation fixed upon me by orthodoxy." "I admire the fight you are making," Meredith wrote in his first letter to me. "You carry on a brave battle for the best of causes, personally profitless, as you must know it to be, and my good wishes are with you."

MEREDITH'S LAST CHEQUE.

In April, 1909, Meredith sent a cheque "as a contribution to the *Freethinker*." On being asked whether he wished his name to appear, he wrote, on April 23, "As a question of supporting your paper, my name is at your disposal." This was the last letter he ever wrote, but it was omitted by the editor in the official collection. These facts deserve to be recorded.

This article should be widely read.

—Daily Herald, March 9.

UNSOCIALIZED WEATHER.

Lambert Caspers, a Chicago attorney, told this story at a recent Y. M. C. A. banquet:—

A Kansas farmer, a Dane, applied for naturalisation papers. The judge asked him:—

"Are you satisfied with the general conditions of the country?"

"Yes," drawled the Dane.

"Does the government suit you?" queried the judge.

"Yes, yes; only I would like to see more rain," replied the farmer.

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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmen's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, E. C. Saphin, Lantern Lecture, "Proofs that Christianity is Sun-Worship."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

HANLEY, STAFFS (Market Square): Joseph A. E. Bates—Thursday, March 20, at 7.45, "Materialism in the Nineteenth Century"; 21, at 7.30, "Good Friday!" 23, at 7, "Easter and a Shattered Idol"; 24, at 7.30, "Rationalism and Monarchy"; 25, at 7.30, "Death—and Beyond."

STOKE-ON-TRENT (near Monument): Joseph A. E. Bates, Wednesday, March 26, at 8, "Strange Gods."

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