

# THE Freethinker

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*To be wholly devoted to some intellectual exercise is to have succeeded in life.*—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

## M. Jean Dons.—In Memory of an International Freethinker.

THE cause of Freethought in Belgium and of international Freethought throughout the world have suffered an irreparable loss in the death of Monsieur Jean Dons. At all the International Freethought Congresses, from Madrid in 1892 to Munich in 1912, he was the central but silent figure of the organisation, a man with absolutely no pretensions as an orator, but with the mighty energy of a cheerful, untiring worker. Personally, I feel all but crushed under the discouragement of this unexpected blow, which has happened so soon after the lamentable death of that other great Belgian worker for Freethought, Professor Eugène Monseur, both of whom I loved and admired. The loss of two such men, happening within a few short months, might suffice to ruin any other national movement of Freethought; but, happily, the cause for which Dons labored so long, and to which Monseur gave his genius and splendid courage, is rich with men of first-rate capacity and unrivalled devotion amongst the sturdy Rationalists of Belgium.

At his death, at Saint-Gilles, Brussels, on March 2, our excellent friend Dons was 67 years of age. Born on December 30, 1845, he was barely 18 years of age at the foundation of the Brussels Freethought Society, which has just celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its glorious existence. Already, at that early age, he had made application for admission as a member of the Society, but in accordance with the rules as to terms of membership had to wait for his majority before his desire could be gratified. He waited, but worked for Freethought in the meantime in the junior section.

In 1880, acting on the initiative of Dr. César Paepe, he organised Freethinkers throughout the world founded at Brussels an International Federation. Jean Dons' name figures amongst those of other founders of that organisation, which ultimately achieved the great triumph of the Rome Congress and moved the conscience of modern civilisation when the Church and the bigots thought they could murder Ferrer with impunity. Jean Dons, who loved the international side of Freethought with all his strength, became the Treasurer of the International Bureau at Brussels, and occupied that position at his death.

Five years later, when at the National Congress held at Charleroi in 1885, it was decided to form the Belgian Freethought Societies into a National Federation, Dons was appointed General Secretary, and remained in the discharge of those important and onerous functions at the moment of his decease. According to the recent report presented by M. Dons on the state of the Freethought movement in Belgium, the number of federated Rationalist Societies now amount to 370, and the roll of membership of these several groups shows more than 26,000 personal adherents. These statistics, which are the silent witnesses to strenuous labor continuously pursued, and

which compare so favorably with the figures of 25 years ago, when the federated groups amounted only to 35 and the total members to 2,000,\* reflect in no small degree the embodied results of the energy and intelligence with which our friend Dons watched over the operations of Belgian Freethought.

In 1893 Jean Dons took part, with others, in founding the *Orphelinat Rationaliste*, and ultimately became the administrator, the Treasurer, and constant friend of that admirable institution. He loved the happy orphans more than most fathers love their natural offspring, and on his retirement in 1911 from his honored career as an official in the Railway Department of State in Belgium, spent the major part of his leisure in attending to the details of the Orphanage management. The last time I saw Jean Dons was in November, 1911, at the Orphanage, where I spent some time discussing with him and the teachers the different educational and practical aspects of their eminently secular work. The smartness of the children (they are 70 in number), their general bearing, and especially their affection for M. Dons, were touching proofs of the humanitarian principles on which this well-kept, handsomely situated Rationalist Orphanage is conducted. Madame Dons, who survives her husband, identified herself with all his Freethought aspirations, and especially with the work of the Orphanage. English and American Freethinkers, on their visit to the beautiful Belgian capital, should not fail to make a pious pilgrimage of love to the white house in the Chaussée d'Alseberg (at Forest-Uccle, just on the outskirts of Brussels) in order to see the Orphanage for themselves. They will receive a hearty welcome, and find that some of the teachers can speak to them in very good English.

Side by side with the pick-and-spade work of direct Freethought propaganda, our friend Dons recognised that the social, literary, musical, and artistic appeal has also to be made, perhaps, in certain cases, more effectively, by the indirect attack on the orthodox entrenchments of superstition. Many years ago he and other Freethinkers in Brussels founded the *Cercle des Soirées Populaires Rationalistes*, under the auspices of which the largest halls in Brussels were, and are, taken and crammed Sunday after Sunday during the winter months to hear the best artists, the finest singers, and the best orators in the capital. On one occasion the Cercle held a most successful gathering at the Theatre de la Monnaie—answering in Brussels to our Covent Garden Theatre. In this way the social influence of the movement spread, and gained fresh adherents, and among the signal achievements of the Cercle is the number of young people who become attached to Freethought and escape, by civil marriage and the secular recognition or naming of their children, from the entanglements of theology.

All these tasks and achievements during 46 years or more of devoted and disinterested attachment to Freethought won for Jean Dons a wide circle of friends and admirers at home and abroad. His name is known wherever organised Freethought forms its phalanx against superstition and stretches out its hands to kindred spirits who are fighting the same foe in other lands. To thousands of militants

\* See *La Libre Pensée internationale* (ed. 1912), by M. Eugène Hins, p. 17.

who remember that quiet and determined organiser at our periodical gatherings in different parts of the world, a sense of deep loss will come and a pang of bitter privation.

My first remembrance of Dons was at Paris in 1902 at the International Congress. In 1903 I travelled with him and Madame Dons—his invariable companion on these distant pilgrimages—from Brussels to Geneva, in order to attend the Congress held at the University. I had many, and pleasant, opportunities during our journey, first to Strasbourg, and during our visits over that fine old city, and later, on our way to Berne and thereafter for about a week at Chamounix, and in different parts of Switzerland, to appreciate his great goodness of heart and his keen, active intelligence as a Freethought worker. Pleasant memories of these forays for Freethought and in search of the curious and picturesque have in these last few days risen unsummoned in my mind, the ghost of the past rising, as it were, to admonish those who would mourn, that the emptiness of death is but a mirage as compared with the fullness of life when the fascinating beauty of high ideals and the imperishable glory of art and natural loveliness have poured forth their treasures for the enrichment of our experience of men and things.

If ever the funeral of Freethinker demanded and deserved pomp and circumstance to bespeak admiration of the honored dead, it was due in the case of Jean Dons. And right royally—and with deeper sincerity than most royalty can elicit—did Freethought in Brussels mark its appreciation of our friend Dons when the parting came and death paid its tribute to earth. At the mortuary Dr. Hector Denis read a moving discourse in the name of the International Bureau, and M. Emile Royer spoke a touching address on the Orphanage. The funeral cortège then started on its journey, led by the flags of the National Freethought Federation, followed by those of all the Rationalist Societies in Brussels, those of Liège, Mons, etc.; and then came the Orphans, who immediately preceded the funeral car, which was literally buried under floral crowns and wreaths. An immense crowd of delegates from provincial societies and a considerable number of députés, sénateurs, municipal officers, bourgemestres, town councillors, etc., followed the hearse. At the cemetery five addresses were delivered in honor of the deceased, depicting his life in summary.\*

And so the procession moves on its way; the warriors of the good fight fall down, smitten in the battle; but the living follow after, and the wreaths and flowers, and the young generations; renewed hopes and fresh inspiration spring from the open grave; and death is swallowed up in victory.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

## Religion and Sex.—V.

(Concluded from p. 195.)

If we turn from biographical narratives to manuals of devotion, we find the same kind of evidence. As examples of this I may cite, first of all, from a collection of old English Homilies, dating from the thirteenth century:—

"Jesus my holy love, my sure sweetness! Jesus my heart, my joy, my soul-heal! Jesus, sweet Jesus, my darling, my life, my light, my balm, my honey-drop! .....Kindle me with the blaze of thy enlightening love. Let me be thy leman, and teach me to love thee..... Oh, that I might behold how thou stretchedst thyself for me on the cross. Oh, that I might cast myself between those same arms, so very wide outspread..... Oh, that I were in thy arms, in thy arms so stretchedst and outspread on the cross."†

Or this, from the same collection:—

"Sweet Jesus, my love, my darling, my Lord, my Savior, my balm, sweeter is the remembrance of thee

than honey in the mouth. Who is there that may not love thy lovely face? Whose heart is so hard that may not melt at the remembrance of thee? Oh! who may not love thee, lovely Jesus? Jesus my precious darling, my love, my life, my beloved, my most worthy of love, my heart's balm, thou art lovable in countenance, thou art altogether bright. All angels' life is to look upon thy face, for thy cheer is so marvellously lovable and pleasant to look upon.....Thou art so bright, and so white that the sun would be pale if compared to thy blissful countenance. If I, then, love any man for beauty, I will love thee, my dear life, my mother's fairest son" (p. 268).

Although this kind of language is more plentiful in Roman Catholic books of devotion than elsewhere, it is not peculiar to them. In illustration of this we may take the following outbursts from one of Wesley's female converts, as given by Southey in his *Life of Wesley*:—

"Oh, mighty, powerful, happy change! The love of God was shed abroad in my heart, and a flame kindled there with pains so violent, and yet so very ravishing that my body was almost torn asunder. I sweated, I trembled, I fainted, I sang. Oh, I thought my head was a fountain of water. I was dissolved in love. My beloved is mine, and I am his. He has all charms; he has ravished my heart; he is my comforter, my friend, my all. Oh, I am sick of love. He is altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand. Oh, how Jesus fills, Jesus extends, Jesus overwhelms the soul in which he lives."

In the following canticle, composed by St. Francis of Assisi, it is simply impossible to distinguish any substantial difference between it and frankly erotic poetry:—

"Into love's furnace I am cast,  
Into love's furnace I am cast,  
I burn, I languish, pine, and waste.  
Oh, love divine, how sharp thy dart!  
How deep the wound that galls my heart!  
As wax in heat, so, from above,  
My smitten soul dissolves in love.  
I live, yet languishing I die,  
While in thy furnace bound I lie."\*

The erotic note is here clear and unmistakable. And it would be possible to furnish exact parallels from volumes of secular verse that would be strictly taboo among those who see no harm whatever in these verses when used in connection with religion, and who quite fail to recognise that their attractiveness really lies in their erotic character, as they owe their origin to the strong sexual feelings of the writers. Moreover, we are dealing here with more than language selected because of an artistic perception of its fitness to express strong feeling, and so far symbolic. It is the spontaneous expression of strong sexual feeling in its most natural form. That the object of devotion is a heavenly instead of an earthly person matters not. Psychologically, we are dealing with the same kind of feeling, springing from the same kind of organisation; and whether this feeling expends itself in the one direction or the other is a sheer environmental accident. How is it possible to resist the implications of the following from a French devotional work widely circulated amongst the women of France:—

"Praise to Jesus, praise his power,  
Praise his sweet allurements.  
Praise to Jesus, when his goodness  
Reduces me to nakedness;  
Praise to Jesus when he says to me,  
My sister, my dove, my beautiful one!  
Praise to Jesus in all my steps,  
Praise to his amorous charms.  
Praise to Jesus when his loving mouth  
Touches mine in a loving kiss.

Praise to Jesus when his gentle caresses  
Overwhelm me with chaste joys.  
Praise to Jesus when at his leisure  
He allows me to kiss him."†

As a parallel to this we may take the following hymn sung at an American camp meeting of some

\* See *La Pensée* of March 15.

† From a collection published by the Early English Text Society; 1868; pp. 182-4.

\* G. A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 210.

† From *Les Perles de Saint Francois de Sales*; 1871. Cited by Bloch, p. 111.

thousands of persons between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five:—

"Blessed Lily of the Valley, oh, how fair is He;  
He is mine, I am His.  
Sweeter than the angels' music is His voice to me;  
He is mine, I am His.  
Where the lilies fair are blooming by the waters calm  
There He leads me and upholds me by His strong right arm.  
All the air is love around me—I can feel no harm;  
He is mine, I am His."\*

The chief significance of this last quotation lies in the age of the congregation. Fourteen to twenty-five covers the years during which distinctive sexual qualities are developed; and in place of these receiving a quiet and regular direction into social and harmless channels, we have the contagious excitement of a revival meeting. It is no wonder that observer after observer have complained, sometimes with wonder, that instead of the religious gatherings being followed by a decrease of sensuality, the reverse has been the case. The whole atmosphere of such gatherings is sensual in the highest degree, and one ought not to be surprised if the normal consequences follow. It should be the most obvious of truths that the attractiveness of such, with the keen delight taken in the pictures suggested, lies in their yielding—all unknown, perhaps, to the singers—satisfaction to feelings that are frequently imperious in their demands, and are astonishingly pervasive in their influence.

Much light is thrown upon the subject by a study of human behavior in cases of actual disease. Of late years a flood of light has been thrown upon normal psychology by a study of abnormal mental states,† and in cases of unmistakable disorder it is possible to see very clearly how readily the sexual feelings find expression in religious phraseology. If the reader will turn to Sir T. S. Clouston's *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases*, he will find on p. 584 of that work an example in point. The author quotes there a poem written by one of his patients, and which is reproduced in order to illustrate "the common mixture of religious and sexual emotion." I forbear reproducing it because of its grossly obscene character; and yet it is not, in its mingling of religion and eroticism, substantially different to many of the citations already given. In such cases disease helps to an understanding of human nature in its more normal aspects. We are able to trace the operation of tendencies and qualities unobscured by the disguises and restraints forced upon them by social convention and education.

Professor Granger, who at times very nearly hits on the truth, says:—

"There is something profoundly philosophical in the use of *The Song of Songs* to typify the communion of the soul with its ideal. The passion which is expressed by the Shulamite for her earthly lover in such glowing phrases becomes the type of the love of the soul towards God."‡

One fails to see the profoundly philosophic nature of the selection. *The Song of Songs* is a frankly erotic love poem, and but for the accident of its being in the Bible, would never have been selected at all. There can be no question that, had it appeared in the religious books of a non-Christian people, we should have had it cited as evidence of the moral inferiority of their religious writings. And as a matter of fact, similar effusions have been cited by Christians from non-Christian writings to that end. But being in the Bible, its use has been sanctioned, not really because it typified the union of the soul with God, but because it gave expression to feelings that were diverted from their normal channels. The true lesson of the selection is that sexual feeling cannot be suppressed; it can only be diverted or disguised. Some expression it will find—here an open perversion in outbursts of vice, there an obsession that results in an insane asceticism, and else-

where the creation of the unconsciously salacious, with an unhealthy fondness for dabbling in the question of the illicit relation of the sexes.

"One of the reasons why popular religion in England," says Professor Granger, "seems to be coming to the limits of its power, is that it has contented itself so largely with the commonplace motives which, after all, find sufficient exercise in the ordinary duties of life." Here, again, is a striking obtuseness to a plain but important truth. For the truth is that religion, whether of the popular or other variety, will always lose power as soon as the nature of the forces it utilises is recognised and the proper channels opened for their expression. This has been the case right through human history. We see it in the gradual emancipation of the physical sciences from religious control. We see it also in the growing liberation of sociology and morals. In each case human activity expressed itself in a religious form only so long as the religious idea was associated with a particular subject. If men think of the planets as living beings or as controlled by spiritual powers, their reasoning on astronomy cannot escape a religious form. While moral impulses are regarded as due to supernatural inspiration, ethics is a department of theology. Given more complete knowledge, both the scientific and the moral impulse find gratification apart from religion, which weakens accordingly. And I have tried to show in these articles that exactly the same principle holds true of the play of the sexual impulse, in both its normal and abnormal aspects, as well as in the case of obscure nervous diseases. Here also we find enlisted in the service of religion, phenomena that must admit of a thoroughly non-religious explanation. It is not a question of religion losing power because it has contented itself with commonplace motives, and because these find satisfaction in the ordinary duties of life. It is really a case of providing a scientific explanation of the whole of human nature, in its most complex as in its most simple phases, and a consequent dismissal of the religious theory as a mere survival of the most primitive savagery.

C. COHEN.

### Fanatics.

WHEN we call anyone a fanatic what do we mean? Do we intend to bestow praise or blame upon the person so described? Etymologically a fanatic is one moved or inspired by a deity. In Rome there used to be people who attended the temples and fell into what we in modern times speak of as trances and became mediums through whom important predictions were supposed to be made. In Latin, *fanum* is the word for temple, and it naturally follows that *fanatics* is a term applied to people who are temple-mad. In the French *fanatique* is often used interchangeably with bigoted. Thomas Fuller, writing in 1660, says:

"There is a new word, coined within a few months, called *fanatics*, which by the close sticking thereof, seemeth well cut out and proportioned to signify what is meant thereby, even the sectaries of our age."

Generally speaking, by fanatics we of to-day understand people who harbor and express wild, extravagant views on any subject, but chiefly on that of religion, or people who are governed by imagination, or emotion, rather than by judgment or reason. Moore says:—

"But Faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast  
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last."

Fanaticism denotes the sovereignty of unreason, the supremacy of superstition. You cannot argue with fanatics, the art being utterly unknown to them. If you ask them calm questions they fly into a passion and pelt you with vulgar abuse. If they had their way people who differ from them would never be permitted to open their lips. They are the only people who *know* because they are guided by right

\* Davenport's *Primitive Tracts in Religious Revivals*, p. 29.

† See, for instance, Coriat's *Abnormal Psychology* and Boris Sidés's *Psycho-Pathological Researches*.

‡ *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 178.

feelings. One of them addresses himself to a Sceptic, who has seen many sorrows, thus:—

"Hold! I challenge you in the name of the Lord. I bid you listen in the name of the crucified, glorified Christ. And I tell you that your good will not stay in any tomb; you could not make it do so, no matter how hard you tried. I tell you that there will be a glorious resurrection. That which has been worthy to know a Calvary shall know an Easter morning. You may not believe me now, but you will believe me by and by."

Such an appeal can only issue from one whose intelligence is in slavish subjection to his religious emotion; and you can no more conduct an argument with him than with a house on fire.

In our judgment all Christians are fanatics, and cannot be anything else. When a telegram was handed to the President of the Duma announcing the fall of Adrianople there ensued a wonderful scene of wild rejoicing. According to Reuter's message from Petersburg, M. Krupensky stepped into the tribunal and cried out, "Adrianople has fallen! Hurrah!" "The deputies and the public rose as a man, and for a long time the hall echoed to their cheers. The sitting was then suspended." Here was an assembly of unreasoning fanatics beside itself with joy because the Cross was rapidly driving the Crescent out of Europe. The bloodshed had been horrible, but what mattered that when the victory was Christ's? To break faith with Infidels has ever been a Christian virtue, and this is what the Great European Powers have done with the Turks. They gave their solemn word that whatever the result of the war might be there would be no geographical changes, and that word they have conveniently ignored. Pierre Loti, in his admirable little book, *Turquie Agonisante*, expresses the strongest detestation of such conduct. Writing in December, he used these words:—

"Alas, as the events precipitate themselves, which we contemplate with supreme emotion, the European nations, Prussia in particular, their ex-friend, show a facility in disowning the given word and an easiness in deceit which are more and more stupefying" (p. 60).

The wish to see Europe entirely Christian overmasters every other sentiment, and honesty and fidelity and truth are of only a secondary importance. What is this but fanaticism of the deepest dye?

Fanaticism blinds the eye of the mind so that its victims cannot see the truth. Christians never hesitate to put the Bible, with all its contradictions, absurdities, atrocities, immoralities, indecencies, and obscenities, into the hands of innocent, little children. The theatre is of the Devil, but the Bible is of God. The dance is indecent, and no genuine Christian can take part in it without injury to his piety, but the perusal of Bible stories tends to elevate and ennoble the moral sense. Everybody knows that there are chapters in God's Book which cannot be read in public; but that fact is no hindrance whatever to its being enlogised as Holy Writ. There are plenty of persons about still who boast of their ability to accept every sentence in it as God's truth. Is not this fanaticism at its lowest and worst? There are even men of learning who, while acknowledging that the volume contains much mythological and legendary stuff, still persist in declaring it to be a perfect revelation of the Supreme Being, and of the way of salvation through faith in Christ. Only the other day, a Vicar, preaching in Halifax Parish Church, Yorkshire, said that we owe a debt to the Bible which we can never pay, and part of this debt was indicated by the statement that this Book teaches us to look away from ourselves, even to despise our own faculties, and to glorify God by putting our entire reliance on him. According to this principle, self-reliance is the sin of sins, and any man who tries to find refuge in himself is utterly lost. For this glorious teaching, the good Vicar assured his hearers, we are indebted to the Bible alone. Then he added:—

"In the writings of Buddha [*though it is well known that Buddha never wrote a line!*], for example, the central idea is to throw man back for all ultimate help

on to Nature, or on to himself. Listen to the revelation given by Gotama many ages ago, 'Be ye lamps unto your own selves, be a refuge unto yourselves. Betake yourselves to no other refuge, the Buddhas are only teachers, look not for refuge to any beside yourselves.' This is the heart of the Buddhist theology [*though it is well known that Gotama frowned upon all theologies*].— 'no Divine love save the love of man for man, no All-Father, no Savior, no angel-guardians, no possible refuge save in ourselves.'"

We boldly avow a decided preference for the condemned but rational teaching of Gotama; nor are we ashamed to affirm that the world owes a much bigger debt to it than to the Bible.

Another instance of the blindness of fanaticism is furnished by the estimate which Christians form of and the attitude which they maintain towards all non-Christians. According to the New Testament, the sin that damns a man absolutely and for ever is unbelief. It was "an evil heart of unbelief" which kept the Israelites wandering aimlessly for forty years in the wilderness, concerning whom Jehovah said, "I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." Then the author of Hebrews concludes, "We see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief." With this fact in mind, we are not surprised to discover that Christian teachers are very fond of expatiating upon the evils that follow in the train of unbelief. The Rev. J. T. Forbes, M.A., minister of Hillhead Baptist Church, Glasgow, describes unbelief as a sin for which there can be no justification, which is another way of saying that to differ from Christians is to be wicked. Mr. Forbes says:—

"The inexcusableness of it comes from this, that at bottom, when you get to the true man, beneath all motives that temporarily sway the soul, there does remain in hearts a persuasion that Christ is right, that Christians have the best of it; that because Christ is right, he has right over lives, and that because he is the truth he is king."

We pass an exceedingly light censure upon that kind of talk when we characterise it as being essentially impudent and rude. What right has Mr. Forbes to think and publicly say that in his heart of hearts every man is convinced that Christ is right and that Christians have the best of it? We deliberately hold the opinion that Christ is wrong and that Christians have the worst of it, and we defy Mr. Forbes to disprove this conviction. Did not the Gospel Jesus discourse almost exclusively about God and our relations thereto, about heaven as the abode of post-mortem bliss, and about an impossible kingdom in which poverty, mourning, hatred of relations, non-resistance of evil, and the use of the sword would be accounted virtues? We venture to express the view that nobody, in any age or country, has ever spoken, with a single scrap of knowledge, of God and heaven and a future life, and that, therefore, only fanatics can possibly preach the Christian Gospel, and condemn those who refuse to believe it. Unbelief in such a Gospel, if at all intelligent, is a sign of mental strength and independence. As a rule, unbelievers are intellectually the superiors of believers, and morally at least their equals.

Our chief objection to Christian fanatics is that they are shameless busybodies. "We know you far better than you know yourself," they tell everybody; "and we are ready to prescribe for your malady, which otherwise is incurable. You try to make out that you are an Atheist and an opponent of Christ; but in reality you are only the victim of moral cowardice. You are afraid of your own conscience, and to silence it you attempt to banish the thought of God and hell-fire from your mind. Man, you are deplorably self-deceived; you are no more of an Atheist than we are; and in the central deeps of your being you reverence Christ." Holding such views, they officiously sit in judgment upon all who differ from them, and thrust themselves and their wares upon them. All heathen countries are perishing for lack of the special knowledge of which they claim to be the heaven-appointed custodians. But at last their day of reckoning is dawning; and instead

of the Gospel of Christ, which history has long ago discredited, we are promised the Gospel of Humanity, which will concern itself with the Kingdom of Man and his righteousness. For the speedy and full coming of this Kingdom may we all faithfully and strenuously labor.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Shakespeare and the Bible.

"Shakespeare was in the genuine sense, that is, in the best and highest and widest meaning of the term, a Freethinker."—SWINBURNE.

SHAKESPEARE is the supreme genius of literature. Compared with him, Homer nods and Dante stutters. And this man, who was "not of an age, but for all time," is England's greatest son. There is nothing new to be said of his genius. The whole world has acknowledged it for many generations. The most exhaustive criticism has been brought to bear upon his writings. The whole vocabulary of eulogy has been used in praising his work. But there is one point, which, though recognised by many of his ablest critics, has not been brought into sufficient prominence. Shakespeare was a Freethinker. A great moralist he is universally admitted to be; but the popular idea associates morality with the orthodoxy of the moment.

There have been many guesses, founded mainly on passages in his plays, concerning the speculative belief of Shakespeare. Credulity has represented him as an evangelical Christian; a Churchman of the type of that buffoon, James I.; as a Protestant bigot; as a Spiritualist; and even as a member of what Carlyle calls "the great lying Catholic Church." Shakespearean commentators are adepts in bringing startling meanings out of a Shakespeare text, as a conjurer brings eggs, ribbons, and rabbits from an empty hat. But these attempts to prove Shakespeare a bigot or a crank leave real students of the Master's work unconvinced.

Shakespeare was a world too wide for any theology. He never fretted and fussed about the salvation of his soul. He was no more a Christian than Lucretius or Omar Khayyam, Montaigne, or Rabelais. Indeed, Shakespeare never hesitated to make his characters jest as Biblical subjects, or to treat with indifference, and even irreverence, the most sacred features of the Christian faith. The sceptical note is not confined to raillery, it finally merges in iconoclasm. He puts plenty of Biblical allusion in the mouth of Sir John Falstaff. Listen! "In the state of innocency Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in a state of villainy." Bardolph's face reminds him of hell-fire and Dives that lived in purple, and of the devil's kitchen where he does nothing but roast malt worms. Then Sir John ridicules hell-fire, "I think the devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that is in me should set hell on fire." When Falstaff dies, trusty Bardolph exclaims, "Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or hell," and Mistress Quickly replies, "Nay, sure he's not in hell; he's in Arthur's bosom," substituting, with subtle sarcasm, the legendary English hero for the mythical Jewish one.

Mrs. Page tells Mrs. Ford to dispense with such a trifle as going "to hell for an eternal moment or so," thus casting derision on the eternity of everlasting punishment. The clown in *Measure for Measure* burlesques St. Paul's ideas of the subordination of women:—

"Come hither, sirrah. Can you cut off a man's head?"

"If a man is a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a married man, he is his wife's head, and I can never cut off a woman's head."

King Richard compares himself to Christ, and even exalts his own misery above that sacred person. He has "three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas." So Judas did to Jesus, "he, in twelve, found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none."

The Royal Hunchback in Henry VI. sippantly says, "For you shall sup with Jesus Christ to-night." In the same play the Duchess of Gloster remarks:—

"Could I come near your beauty with my nails,  
I'd set my ten commandments in thy face."

In *Twelfth Night*, when Olivia says of her brother, "I know his soul is in heaven, fool," like a sword-thrust comes the rude answer, "The more fool you, madonna, to mourn for your brother being in heaven."

Shakespeare, like Huxley, ridicules miracles. In the scene in *Twelfth Night* between Malvolio and the Clown, he caricatures the idea that madness is occasioned by demoniacal possession, and is curable by exorcism. Not contented with iconoclasm, Shakespeare explains miracles:—

"No natural exhalation in the sky  
No scope of Nature, no distempered day,  
No common wind, no customary event,  
But they will pluck away his natural cause,  
And call them meteors, prodigies, and signs,  
Abortives, presages, and tongues of heaven."

The explanation is the more forceful by being put in the mouth of a Cardinal of the Catholic Church.

Helena, in *All's Well*, says:—

"In religion  
What damned error but some sober brow  
Will bless it and approve it with a text."

Timon tells us caustically that gold "will knit and break religions," and elsewhere Shakespeare warns us in lines of Lucretian bitterness:—

"Our remedies oft in themselves do lie  
Which we ascribe to heaven."

The dying words of Hamlet, "The rest is silence"; the speech of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, whilst silencing Claudio's imaginary fears of death,—

"Thy best of rest is sleep,  
And that thou oft provokest,  
Yet grossly fear'st  
Thy death, which is no more."

—also indicate Shakespeare's heterodoxy.

The Master took the beliefs and superstitions around him as his material. Ghosts, fairies, witches, gods, and goddesses, the mythology of the Ancients, and the *dramatis personæ* of the Christian religion, are but the machinery for appealing to the popular sentiments. When they have served their turn they appear no more. The permanent direction of his thought was towards Secularism. On the deeper grounds of religious faith his silence is most significant. Often as his questionings turn to the riddle of the universe, he leaves it an enigma to the last, disdaining the common theological solutions. He makes Prospero say:—

"We are such stuff  
As dreams are made of, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep."

Sleep before birth, sleep after death! What Christian could have written it? Take *King Lear*, the tragedy "too deep for tears," touching the root-springs of human nature. The whole tragedy is an impeachment of Providence, and is summed up in the biting lines:—

"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods—  
They kill us for their sport."

The same iconoclastic note sounds in *The Tempest*, when Miranda says, while viewing the shipwreck:—

"Had I been any god of power, I would  
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er  
It should the good ship so have swallowed, and  
The freighting souls within her."

Serenely the great dramatist leaves human nature to expound in its own being the mystery of existence. His philosophy is taken from the heart of life:—

"Nature is made better by no mean,  
But nature makes that mean."

Had we only his plays to refer to, it were sufficient to prove Shakespeare's heterodoxy. Fortunately, we have another source from which his views may be drawn. In the sonnets the Master "unlocks his heart." Throughout the whole series, in which the subjects of love strong as death and the bitter irony of destiny are treated with fullness, allusions to the

Christian mythology are absent. Orthodox dogmas are thrown to the winds. The Voltaire of Persia might have written the following lines:—

"When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone bewep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself and curse my fate."

It is in the very spirit of that "large infidel," Omar, and who but a Freethinker could have written "deaf" before "heaven"? No other immortality is suggested but that through offspring:—

"And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence  
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence."

The epitaph on Shakespeare's eldest daughter clearly implies that the Master's life had not been one of piety:—

"Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,  
Wise to salvation was good mistress Hall;  
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this  
Wholly of Him with whom she's now in blisse."

Shakespeare deals in his masterpieces with the deepest issues of life and conduct, but he never points to the Cross as a solution. In an age when religious wars and schisms were convulsing Europe, and in England when the old faith was in its death-struggle with the reformed religion, it is remarkable that Shakespeare turned his back on Christianity.

When we compare Shakespeare's works with the Bible, the absurdity of supposing that the world's greatest poet drew literary inspiration from that Oriental medley is apparent. The Bible comes from the same Eastern background as the *Arabian Nights*, and the characters of the latter are mere puppets and their stories are a mere succession of incident and event, unbroken by any attempt at characterisation. This is true of the Bible. When the clergy boast of the unparalleled literary value of the Scriptures, it is well to remember this fact, and to enter a strenuous, and, if possible, a serious protest. Compared to the great master of literature, Shakespeare, the anonymous authors of the Bible are poor of resource, limited of range, commonplace in execution. These Orientals mostly pour out floods of lust, anger, and pietism; largely utter hoarse cries of fear, revenge, and worship. Wit and repartee were closed doors to them. From the first error in Genesis to the final absurdity in Revelation, there is not a spark of humor. Much of their best work is only mellifluous prurience presented in exotic forms of verse. At other times their verse is filled with the turmoil of battle, the champing of horses, the flashing of spears. Only on rare occasions does the still, sad voice of humanity make itself heard. Thus, in the last analysis, the Bible simply contains the ordinary stock-in-trade of almost all Oriental writers. Compare the elementary barbarisms of the Bible with the opulent originality of Shakespeare. Place side by side *Romeo and Juliet* with the Song of Songs; *Lear* with Job; and the songs and sonnets with the Psalms. Confronted further with the masterpieces of Homer, Sophocles, or Dante, the books of the Bible become merely the works of minor writers. If they had not been associated with a very heavily endowed system of religion, they would, centuries ago, have consumed to nothingness in the echoless temple of universal silence.

MIMNERMUS.

The late Mr. Clifton Bingham, the popular song writer, who died last week, wrote quite a number of lyrics about dying children and angels, which caught the public fancy. At length he tried the patience of Mr. Cowen, the composer, who, in a pleasant letter, asked the author if he did not think that between them they had killed enough little children. Mr. Bingham agreed and afterwards chose happier subjects.

The Bishop of Winchester, preaching at St. Paul's Cathedral at the Livingstone Memorial Service, referred to such biographies as that of the famous missionary as being "the best shot in the Church's locker, the best tonic in her store." So one of the latter-day functions of the Church of Christ seems to be either to blow you up or buck you up.

## Acid Drops.

Mr. Foote's *English Review* article on Meredith has roused the ire of an anonymous writer in the *Antidote*, a publication of the existence of which we have only just become aware. We can only guess the writer's personality, and, whether we are right or wrong in our surmise, we beg to congratulate him on having at least the grace to refrain from disclosing his name to the world. Had he pursued the same policy with his article, the public—or the small portion of it that reads it—would have been all the better for the suppression. The larger part of the article is taken up with Mr. Foote's contribution to the *Review*, and we may be pardoned suspecting that it is Mr. Harrison's publishing this that inspires the general attack on his editorial policy. The wisely anonymous writer in the *Antidote* does not deny that Meredith was a Freethinker; he does not challenge any of the facts stated about Meredith by Mr. Foote; he has not the wit, or knowledge enough of Meredith's work, to even suggest a different interpretation of the facts. His is an undisguised appeal to the snobbery, the pseudo-morality, and the intolerance of the British public. And after reading it, we feel that what we need is not an antidote, but an emetic.

The writer twice drags in the name of Lord Roberts, whom he assumes will not "be less disgusted than ourselves" at finding his contribution in the same issue as an article "by no less a literary luminary than Mr. G. W. Foote, who himself informs us that he was prosecuted under the Blasphemy Laws on account of the *Freethinker*, and that a Roman Catholic judge sentenced him to 12 months' imprisonment." We do not know whether Lord Roberts will be disgusted or not, and we can assure everybody concerned that we do not care. For Lord Roberts' own sake we hope that his character is less contemptible than the *Antidote* writer (who naturally sees the world reflected in the mirror of his own mind) imagines. We can hardly picture him risking imprisonment for the sake of an opinion; hence his inability to appreciate the character and conduct of those who do. Had Jesus Christ escaped from the hands of his captors after a term of imprisonment, we feel sure that people like the writer we are dealing with would have warmly protested against an ex-prisoner being tolerated by decent society.

The real offence of the *English Review* seems to lie in its being allowed to say in its pages that Swinburne and Meredith were Freethinkers. The *Antidote* quotes Mr. Foote's comments on the funerals of the two men, and then proceeds:—

"Happily neither Swinburne nor Meredith will sleep the less soundly in consecrated ground.....It will take more than Swinburne's youthful blasphemies, and than Meredith's mature cheque for the *Freethinker*, to make reasonable people cry 'Scandalous!' because these great men were given Christian burial. There should be grace enough in the sweet heaven for both of them, and the *English Review* does an ill-service to letters when it allows them to be dubbed Freethinker and Anti-Theist."

We pass this cowardly falsification of facts with the bare comment that Meredith's favorable attitude to the *Freethinker* was not confined to a "mature cheque"—his endorsement of Freethought covered many years of his life; nor were Swinburne's "blasphemies" (if by that is meant his Anti-Theistic opinions) confined to his youth. Swinburne and Meredith will, indeed, sleep as soundly in consecrated ground as elsewhere—that lies beyond the control of even the bigotry of the *Antidote*. The issue is not one of the dead sleeping soundly, but of the living acting honestly. And Mr. Foote's protest was against the horrible and disgusting farce of reading over a man's dead body opinions and doctrines that he repudiated when living. We agree that it will take more than has been said to make some people ashamed of this practice of religious body-snatching; but we have good reason for believing that even among Christians many are ashamed of these tactics. In any case, Mr. Foote's protest was intended for those with some sense of honor and honest dealing with the memories of the dead, and from that category the *Antidote* writer stands self-excluded.

It is not an "ill-service to letters," but the best of all services to letters and to life, when an editor places within reach of his readers all sides of the character of those who worthily represented while living the higher life of man. It has always been one of the disgraceful features of English journalism that it has systematically suppressed the truth about the opinions of prominent men. For once in a way this cowardly game of silence, and dishonest work of misrepresentation, has been rudely broken in on by the more

manly policy of the *English Review*. We welcome the change, quite apart from the fact that Mr. Foote happened to have written the particular article under notice. We should have been none the less pleased had the truth been told by someone else. We quite appreciate the alarm of characters such as the writer in the *Antidote* at this innovation. For with truth comes enlightenment, and with enlightenment comes breadth of view and sanity of vision. And with these comes not only the decay of worn-out institutions and baseless ideas, but the disappearance of that army of scribblers whose pens are always at the command of any interest that cares to purchase them directly or indirectly.

Dr. Orchard says, "That Jesus has been so entirely appropriated by the Western world, where animosity to the Jews is still only faintly concealed, is the measure of his triumph. The modern world has managed to forget that Jesus was a Jew." The reverend gentleman is entirely mistaken. To the Christian world Jesus has never been a Jew, but always the Son of God, or the God-man, and the Jews have been so violently hated and so cruelly persecuted throughout the centuries in Christendom because they rejected and secured the crucifixion of the Savior of the world. Until they disowned their own Redeemer and got him removed they were Heaven's Chosen People. Hatred of the Jews is a product of Christianity.

Mr. and Mrs. Carleton Wolsey Washburne, a young couple of Los Angeles, California, were married by a clergyman some seven months ago; but after the ceremony they published a contract they had entered into, in which they agreed to join together in a seven months' trial of matrimony, and to allow each other full liberty for other alliances the moment their love grew cold. It was an odd experiment, but it has turned out all right as far as the lady is concerned, as may be seen by her letter to the newspapers. "I am my husband's equal partner," she says. "I have my separate bank account and a half of all his earnings. I am in no way subject to my husband's will. Our love is absolutely without bonds. The result is that there has been no ripple on our married life." Was there ever a marriage founded on a less romantic basis? "I have half his earnings and a bank account of my own." How pretty! We might add how petty! And when offspring come, and the real basis of marriage asserts itself, what then? We are rather glad that these people are religious.

"I cannot conceive," writes a pious *Daily News* correspondent, "that Christian England will really agree to a decision which finally bars the Allies from Constantinople, and leaves Sophia a Moslem mosque." This reminds us of the reverend gentleman who, at the outset of the war, said that he was happy at the thought that the flag of Christ would soon be flying over Sophia. That was enough to compensate for all the bloodshed, suffering, and misery.

In reply to protests against the forcible conversion of Albanian Catholics to the Orthodox Greek Church, Montenegro replies that she has a right to do what she likes in conquered territory. Such are the soldiers of the Cross! And if anybody can point out how they are at all better than the soldiers of the Crescent we should be glad to see him do it.

At the recent meeting of the Free Church Council one speaker exclaimed, "Ours is not to reason, but to obey Christ." That is the pulpit style to perfection. If a man reasons he cannot possibly be a Christian. At the bar of reason Christianity completely breaks down. Leaving reason out of it altogether, who ever obeyed Christ? Who ever put the Sermon on the Mount into practice? Christians are notorious for their systematic disloyalty to what they believe to be Christ's teaching. Their obedience is an emotion which never materialises into deeds.

Two articles recently appeared on the Resurrection of Christ, one in the *Baptist Times and Freeman* and the other in the *Christian Commonwealth*. The former came from the pen of the Rev. F. C. Spurr, of Melbourne, and the latter from that of the Rev. J. Bruce Wallace, both Christian ministers; but the amazing fact is that Mr. Spurr believes that Jesus rose from the dead and Mr. Wallace does not. We can quite understand Mr. Spurr's position, though we could never occupy it; but to comprehend the New Theology doctrine of the Resurrection is absolutely impossible. The body of Jesus never left the tomb; and yet in some mysterious manner Jesus convinced his disciples that he was still alive; and it is upon that conviction, so produced, that the

whole fabric of Christianity rests. Each of these ministers prides himself upon having within him the Holy Ghost, whose mission is to lead them into all truth concerning Christ; and yet there is a fundamental difference between them on so all-important a subject as the Resurrection of their Lord. Despite all this, the marvel of marvels is that there are people wicked enough not to be Christians.

The Rev. J. Phillip Rogers is an exceedingly knowing gentleman. He is able to tell us that "the whole material universe is brought into being, and prepared through countless ages, in order that it may be the habitation of man." This is an item of knowledge which the greatest scientist living does not possess, and we should very much like to be told when, where, and how Mr. Rogers acquired it. The reverend gentleman has made another startling discovery, namely, that the man for whose comfort the whole material universe was brought into being and so carefully prepared, "has a body, but is a spirit." Again, we ask him for his authority. What is a spirit? Has Mr. Rogers ever seen one? But the reverend gentleman's amazing store of rare knowledge is not exhausted yet. He is evidently exceptionally intimate with God and the animals, as well as with man. He informs us that "there is a kinship of being between God and man which does not exist between God and the brute creation." This is rather rough on the poor animals, and looks so utterly unfair that we must request the preacher to give us his authority, and inform him that until he does so we shall regard him as a barefaced quack, whose object is to bamboozle the public.

Mr. Harold Begbie, who has been busy of late making an exhibition of himself in a number of small volumes, perpetrates the following in his most recent effusion:—

"Religion must sweep out of Parliament the wasteful, discredited, and now nearly exhausted system of party faction. She must organise the constituencies and send up to Parliament men whose one object is to realise in the national life those central facts of the Christian revelation. God's Fatherhood and Man's Brotherhood. She must not ask a man whether he is a member of the Carlton Club or the Reform Club; she must challenge him to say whether he believes the teaching of Christ. And when she has won the constituencies, as she could do at the first assault, she must go up and down the land, without cessation, proclaiming the existence of God and the peril of a life lived contrary to the Will of God. She must prepare a Christian nation for a Christian Parliament."

That is all! All candidates for Parliament, and we presume elsewhere, are to be asked, "Do you believe in Christ?" None but Christians need apply. Lord Morley, John Burns, and Mr. J. M. Robertson, not to mention others, must be pushed out. What a happy place England would be if men like Mr. Harold Begbie really had their way. That is, if Mr. Begbie really means what he writes. The probability is that he has not even troubled to think out what it means. He just writes it. And so long as such writing pays there will be no falling off in the supply.

"J. B." of the *Christian World*, says that "there is neither priest nor sacerdotalism in the New Testament." As everybody knows, *priest* is but a contracted form of the Greek *presbuteros* and the Latin *presbyter*; and naturally *priesthood* simply means the office and character of a *priest*. It is unfortunate, however, that in the Authorised Version of the New Testament *presbuteros* is translated into *elder*, though *elder* is, etymologically, its English equivalent. In Acts xi. 30; xvi. 4; 1 Tim. iv. 14; v. 1, 17; Titus i. 1; 1 Peter v. 1-5; James v. 14; 2 John i. 1; 3 John i. 1, and numerous other passages that might be cited, where in English we have *elder* or *elders*, in the original it is *presbuteros*, or *presbuteroi*. Sacerdotalism, again, signifies the system or order of the priesthood, *sacerdos* being the usual Latin word for *priest*.

A truce to etymology. "J. B." will retort by claiming that he only intended to affirm that the Catholic and Anglican conception of priest and sacerdotalism is not found in the New Testament. But even on this point he is clearly wrong. The priestly and sacerdotal idea is in the New Testament with a vengeance. A preacher, according to Paul, is a specially appointed officer who *mediates* between God and mankind. The Gospel, that apostle tells us, is God's power to save the lost; but an essential condition of salvation is that the saving message must be heard and believed. To be heard it must be preached. For some unknown reason God cannot preach it himself; therefore he must have a vicar or vicegerent who will preach it for him. Is not this the essence of priesthood and sacerdotalism? We recommend "J. B." to read carefully and inwardly digest Romans x. 3-15.

The Rev. Pulford Williams, B.A., of the Willesden Presbyterian Church, finds fault with Theosophy because it has no place for divine forgiveness. The funny thing is that just before blaming it for that omission, he had bestowed praise upon it for its doctrine of the *Karma*. "*Karma*," he said, "is an immutable law of Nature; it relates cause and effect in the actions of men. In the New Testament language, it asserts, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' It seems never to have occurred to this man of God that *Karma* flatly contradicts the Gospel of forgiveness. If forgiveness means anything at all, it teaches that a forgiven sinner shall not reap what he has sown. His sins are remitted, the laws of cause and effect in his case set it aside, his evil past is blotted out, like a cloud from a morning sky; and though his repentance be delayed till the very last hour of a long and entirely bad life, he is assured of a free entrance into the bliss of Paradise straight away. This is the most detestable and damnable doctrine ever heard of; but it constitutes the very essence of Christianity. We will have none of it."

A number of more or less silly letters have been published in the *Daily Telegraph* on the subject of "Is London Pagan?" As usual, Christians are having a good innings, but nothing of any consequence appears on the other side. Those who say that London is Pagan, and those who say it isn't, are equally defenders of religion—mostly of the Christian variety. There is, in fact, a general expression of regret that London is not more Christian than it is. Now, we can hardly believe that this absence of letters from those who are Pagans—to use the *Telegraph's* own descriptive term—and who are proud of it, is due to their not having contributed to the correspondence. In fact, we know it is not. The correspondence is, as usual, carefully edited, and the letters selected so that the readers of the paper will get the impression that if London is losing its religion this is a thing greatly to be regretted, but that, after all, there is no clear proof that such is really the case. The correspondence is, in brief, as hollow as it is intellectually inept. The outstanding characteristic is the poverty of the religious intelligence.

The correspondence, useful enough if it were only sanely conducted and pursued, took its origin in an interview with a returned missionary. After twenty-three years' absence, this gentleman returned to find that "the Londoner has ceased to read his Bible," and that London "has become frankly a pagan city." On this the *Daily Telegraph* wrote a leading article in its most flatulent manner, and opened its columns to letters, and interviewed parsons and others. Of course, the parsons could not agree that London was non-Christian. To admit that would argue little for the effectiveness of their work. Rev. Richard Free offered two striking proofs of how religious London still was. He was preaching in the East End, and someone came along and attacked him for believing in God. The audience "confounded" the intruder by saying "Mr. Free is quite right. There is a God and we believe in 'im. You shut up." After that brilliant episode, no further proof was needed; but Mr. Free piles Pelion on Ossa by telling how, when he was passing some young men playing a lively tune on concertinas, so soon as they caught sight of him changed the tune to "There is a happy land." Sarcasm is evidently wasted on Mr. Free. Rev. J. T. Philips does not believe that there is a lack of interest in the Bible among "thoughtful men," but when a boy comes home from school and says, "Please, my teacher says the incarnation of our Lord is a debatable question," it is not surprising the Bible is not where it was. Mr. Philips probably thinks the incarnation beyond controversy.

Some of the clergy cited the largely attended Good Friday meetings as proof that London was not Pagan. This was very neatly capped by a correspondent who gave the Good Friday admissions at a few football grounds. These were:—

Chelsea.....	70,000	West Ham ...	15,000
Tottenham ...	33,000	Watford .....	6,000
Clapton .....	13,000	Brentford .....	6,000

It should be added that these paid for admission.

Mr. Forbes Robertson, interviewed, said that in his opinion Atheism was not spreading. This opinion was endorsed by Rev. Watts-Ditchfield, who said that there "was decidedly less Atheism of the theoretical character than there was some years ago. The great mass of working men are not Atheistic." We really are at a loss to know on what ground Mr. Forbes Robertson asserts that Atheism is not spreading. We are not aware that he has any means of telling whether it is so or not. Playing in *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* hardly gives one the right to express opinions on the subject. The statement of Mr. Watts-Ditchfield that there

is less Atheism now than some years ago is simply not true. Atheism was never so prevalent as it is to-day, and we really have much better means of knowing this than either parsons or actors. That the mass of working men are not atheistic may be true; but we are not aware that they ever were. Atheists have always been in the minority, and are so still. And to both Mr. Forbes Robertson and others we would recall the words of Coleridge: "Little do these men know what Atheism is. Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist. I repeat it. Not one man in ten thousand either has goodness of heart or strength of mind to be an Atheist."

The International Sunday School Lesson for to-day is exceedingly savory. It is found in Genesis xxvii. 22-34, and is entitled "Jacob and Esau." Judging by the expositions of it which have appeared in various religious journals, it is clear that the scholars will be instructed to regard Jacob and Esau as wholly historical characters. Even the violent struggle between the two prior to their birth is treated as a literal incident. It is well known that many Christian scholars look upon Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as eponymous names; that is, names of tribes rather than individuals; and most of the incidents related are depicted as mere traditions, or legends. On the supposition that the story of Jacob and Esau is true, what a sad picture it presents of Hebrew family life in primitive times, and also of the strange relation that existed between Jehovah and his people. Not one of the characters alluded to is worthy of imitation; and, on the whole, most readers would prefer the frank, straightforward and generous, though profane, Esau to the very pious but deceitful Jacob of the narrative.

The Bible teems with contradictions. Here is one: "I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. x. 23); "A good man shall be satisfied from himself" (Prov. xiv. 14). The one verse gives the lie direct to the other; and both cannot possibly be true. And yet no man of God will admit that there is any discrepancy between them at all. As a matter of fact, when a clergyman's attention is drawn to them, he will instantly say, "Is this a contradiction? On the contrary, we have here the two halves of a whole truth." Now, join these so-called two halves, and tell us what the whole truth is. No sane man can do it. But, says the preacher, if you only read the second verse properly—"A good man's way is from himself"—you will see how beautifully it harmonises with the first. "A good man. Now, the Master says, 'There is none good but one, that is God.' Then if a man is good, it is God who has made him so. The root meaning of 'good' is 'God.' A good man is God's man." How easily and beautifully the trick is done. Who will dare hint, after this, that there are contradictions in the Bible? Why, they exist alone in the uninstructed and unilluminated imagination of wicked Atheists!

Some excellent stories are told of the late Father Stanton, who died last week after fifty years' service at St. Alban's, Holborn. He was an advanced Ritualist and had no sympathy with milk-and-water Christianity. A visitor to his church once complained of the stink of the incense. "I am sorry," said Stanton, "there will be only two stinks in the next world—incense and brimstone—and you must choose between them." Once, a bishop said "I don't like your incense, Father." "I regret that, my lord," replied Stanton, "it's the best I can get and costs 3s. 6d. a pound."

Amongst the recent wills of departed servants of the Lord we notice that of the Rev. W. West, London, who only held starvation at bay with a reserve of £5,650, and the Rev. R. S. Blacker, Northampton, better protected with £25,773. Canon Greenside, Carnforth, Lancs., ran this Mr. Blacker very close with £25,059, while the Rev. H. M. West, Wokingham, came in an easy first with £60,859.

The Rev. F. Dormer Pierce, the Vicar of Southend-on-Sea, speaking at the Easter vestry meeting, said he hoped that the church debt could be cleared without using "squalid methods of mendicity." One cannot call the clergy absent minded beggars.

Referring to the correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph* on "Is London Pagan?" the *Record*, the organ of the Evangelical party, says, "It is not the first time that this great journal has rendered distinct service to the cause of faith." Probably Lord Burnham does not wish to hear the sentence, "Burn 'em," when he goes to another place.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

### To Correspondents.

**PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.**—Previously acknowledged, £86 12s. 4d. Received since:—A. D. Corrick, £1; William Stevens, £1 1s.; Blackheath, 5s.; J. Roeckel, £1 1s.; A. E. Maddock, £5; H. C. B., 6s.; S. C. Cudmore (Brazil), £1; P. H. F. Vincent, 5s.; J. Palphreyman, 5s.

**WILLIAM STEVENS.**—Thanks for good wishes. We want them just at present.

**A. D. CORRICK,** subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "Any hint or rumor that you are ill gives me a personal shock. Personal because it was principally through you I gained my mental emancipation; and also because I realise your priceless value to the Freethought movement..... Many congratulations on your *English Review* article. I am looking forward to your book on Shakespeare. I sincerely trust the circulation of the *Freethinker* is increasing."

**S. G. BEARDELL.**—Thanks for cutting, which has been utilised. Far from "boring" us, correspondents who send serviceable items of local news render valuable assistance in our work.

**H. R. WRIGHT.**—The entrants for the examinations are confined to members of the N. S. S. The matter is under consideration, and each candidate will be communicated with as early as possible giving the course of reading recommended.

**SPICER.**—The words "as might be expected" refer solely to Carlile. We do not discuss Socialism or other politico-social theories in the *Freethinker*. Our work is a crusade against superstition—including the superstition that superstition is dead. We regret we cannot recommend a book dealing with "sex problems" as you desire.

**A. E. MADDOCK** (Ceylon), subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "I hope the Fund will meet with fuller support this year than it did last. Anyhow, the distant and widely scattered addresses of some of its supporters show how widespread is the sympathy with the Freethought movement as represented by the N. S. S. and with yourself as its leader."

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

**T. H. ELSTON.**—Pleased to have your very sympathetic and encouraging letter.

**J. PARTRIDGE.**—The Birmingham Branch's unanimous vote of sympathy is very welcome.

**F. T. JONES.**—Much obliged for the suggestions in your letter, which will receive our careful consideration. Pleased to hear that during the past year you have secured seven new readers and induced eleven friends to attend lectures. Such practical help as this is of the utmost value to the movement.

**A. DAVIS.**—Have handed your letter to the person you refer to. Doubtless he will write to you.

**J. TOMKINS.**—Thanks for cuttings.

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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.

MY recent illness was almost as bad as it could be, and once or twice I wondered whether my work in the world for "the noblest of causes" (as George Meredith called it) was over. Happily that was not the writing of "the Moving Finger." My naturally strong constitution, with the aid of a sound doctor, asserted itself again to good purpose. I turned the corner, as Burns told the Scottish clergy he would, when they said the Devil was after him, and escaped. One can joke about it afterwards, but it

was no joke then. I felt the truth of my doctor's verdict; I was dreadfully run down, for I had been overworked, and to some extent overworried, for a considerable time. I must heed that warning when I am once more myself. Meanwhile I must recover my strength to a great extent at home before I can go further afield. I sleep badly anywhere, but better in my own house than in any other; and hotels and lodging-houses at this time of the year, and in unpropitious weather, are sad resting-places for a sensitive invalid. My old friend, Mr. J. W. de Caux, says "Come to us at Yarmouth, and drink in our life-giving breezes." He means it; he is as hospitable (to me, at any rate) as his body is broad and his heart is big. I have no mistrust of him, but I have of the Yarmouth breezes at this time of the year. There is too much "east" in them for my taste and requirements. In the summer, I grant you, Yarmouth air takes a lot of beating.

I was cheered on Sunday by a visit from Miss Vance. She came to talk over some matters of imperative business. But not for that only. She wanted to satisfy herself that I was really mending. I found her visit a tonic. There are few women like her, and not many men. Her coming added light to a sunshiny day.

I have again to thank Mr. Cohen for occupying the editorial chair in my absence, and Mr. Lloyd and "Mimnermus" for continued assistance.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Sugar Plums.

We hope that London Freethinkers—particularly those living in the East End—will do their best to make the present course of lectures at the Stratford Town Hall a complete success. The meetings are well advertised, but the best of all advertising is that which takes the shape of Freethinkers bringing along those who have never been in the habit of attending such meetings. Stratford Town Hall is easy of access; tram and 'bus both passing the door. Mr. Cohen opens the course on Sunday evening (April 6) and will be followed by Mr. Lloyd and Miss Kough. Admission is free, but there will be the usual collection. The chair will be taken at each meeting at 7.30.

We trust that N. S. S. Branches are making preparations to secure a good representation at the Whit-Sunday Conference. There are many reasons why a special effort should be made this year to secure a good gathering of delegates, and those who wish to combine pleasure with business might easily find a worse place than London at Whitsuntide. The business meetings will take place at the Clavier Hall, Princes-street, Regent-street. The evening (public) meeting will be held in the Queen's (Minor) Hall. Other arrangements in connection with the Conference will be announced later.

We are asked to state that the Partridge Testimonial Fund will close on Sunday, April 20. Those desirous of subscribing will oblige by kindly sending in before that date to Mrs. Annie Bolt, 68 Brougham-street, Lozells, Birmingham.

The *Truthseeker* (New York) of March 15, contains a reprint, with acknowledgment, of "Mimnermus's" article on "A Pioneer Schoolmaster," contributed to our columns.

Some 268,486 persons of British origin left this country during 1912, the larger part of this total coming under the head of emigrants. And one may safely assume that these emigrants include some of the best types of our industrial population. Indeed, emigration agencies assure us that only the better types are desired or sent. The idle, the drunken, the wastrel classes are left behind to recruit the home population. It is impossible that the full danger of this should not be seen by people at the head of affairs, and it is significant that little or nothing is said concerning it. Anyway, a country that goes on year after year denuding itself of the most desirable portion of its industrial population is really committing political suicide.

### Mr. Yoshio Markino and the Missionaries.—III.

(Concluded from p. 197.)

"My own conviction, and that of many impartial and more experienced observers of Japanese life, is that Japan has nothing whatever to gain by conversion to Christianity, either morally or otherwise, but very much to lose."—LAFRADIO HEARN, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japa.*, Preface.

"This question of missionaries is a delicate one. The most sensitive feelings of a large number of people in England and America are so liable to be hurt. I have seen the subject gag the mouths of diplomats, politicians, prominent army officers, and in all manner of high official positions. If the sympathisers and supporters of missionaries in America were not such a strong body as they are, some leading American politicians and diplomats I have met would not be afraid to ventilate the sentiments which I know they entertain on this subject. It is curiously interesting what different opinions you hear expressed in private by sensible men throughout the East compared with those which appear in any of their public utterances, printed or otherwise."—GEORGE LYNCH, *The War of the Civilisations*, 1901, pp. 254 4.

THERE are many different Christian missions in Japan—Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and many others—and Markino tells us "They were all mocking, fighting, and attacking each other. They often told us, the schoolboys, about some bad thing of their own brothers and sisters in the different sects. It was simply sickening."\*

Then, in money matters, their behavior was still worse. For instance, a ricksha ride, for which Japanese gentlemen paid 15 to 20 sens, and even the poor schoolboys paid 12 sens,—

"those missionaries always engaged rickshas without settling the payment, and when they got off they paid only 10 sens, and banged the door and went into their house. The ricksha men shouted 'Tarimasen, Tarimasen!' (Not enough, not enough!) They would knock the door. The missionaries never took any notice of that. I often heard some rough ricksha men shouting, 'O you Hon. Foreign thieves! Fancy you treat us like this, and then on Sundays you preach with crying voices in the Church! Who would believe you, the Hypocrites?'"†

Markino says it was unbearable for him to listen to, and he several times begged the missionaries to pay the proper fare, but it was quite hopeless. The only reply he got was "You too noisy."

Then the head missionary imported a wife from America. Now, the Japanese consider it very vulgar and rude for married people to display their affection in public. They are much more particular in these matters than the Western nations are. But the average missionary knows nothing of the manners and customs of the people he comes to teach, and Markino observes of the missionary and his wife:—

"Their awfully sticky behavior was too irritable to Japanese eyes. During the lesson hours in the classrooms the wife was always sitting on her husband's lap, and they embraced each other and were kissing all the time, so busy to kiss that the teacher could not answer to the questions by the students. Some schoolboys were very indignant. They said, 'It is beyond the words. They must be thinking us, the Japanese, no more than cats or dogs, because before the humans they ought not to show such behavior.' Most of them began to strike, and left the school altogether.

"I said, 'Let them think we are cats and dogs if they like. At the present moment I myself find no other way to study the English lessons, so I shall persevere.'"‡

At last the missionary told them that he was going to close the school, as he came to Japan only to preach, and he could not find time to teach English. "That," says Markino, "was the end of everything, and I had to go back and join to my father and brother in a deep mountainous village" quite out of the world. But in two months' time he had a letter from Mr. Iinuma to say that they had decided to reopen the school, and Markino returned.

The missionary required a copy of his "preaching-book" in Japanese. It was a book of about ninety

pages, and he suggested that Markino should do it for a few sens, and he wanted it done within a week. Says Markino:—

"I thought a whole week lessons were far more valuable than a few sens. But I could not refuse because my head was quite Japanese then, and I thought I must be very loyal to my Hon. teacher. Yet I could not waste a whole week. Therefore I decided to get rid of it in a night. I started my work at five or six in the evening, and I tried to write as quick as possible for all night. The whole book was done by eight o'clock next morning."

Mr. Iinuma was amazed, and said: "My dear child, you must not kill yourself." He took that book to the missionary. The missionary said quite thoughtlessly and heartlessly, 'If Markino could work so quickly, let him do more copies.'" But Iinuma was very indignant, and explained what the boy had done, saving him from another task. Notice, too, the unconscious irony of that line, "I could not refuse because my head was quite Japanese then." What have the Japanese to gain from Western teaching?

A few months later they received the good news that some more American teachers were arriving. "But," says Markino, "those new American teachers were disappointing, for they were quite uneducated, ignorant people, as usual" (p. 117). They did not understand the books they had to teach from, and were the laughing-stock of the young Japanese.

Markino says that he always had a great objection to the prayer-meetings. He argued that if God is Almighty, he ought to know our wishes before we express them.

"Then why," he asks, "should we waste our precious time for such prayer-meetings so often? Nay, not only wasting time, but I found out most grievous fact in the prayer-meetings. Those so-called earnest Christians secluded themselves in the churches, and began to leak out loudly all their own private troubles. They started with these words, 'O Almighty God,' etc., etc., in their crying voices. But in fact they were not praying to God, but only to buy others' sympathies. Indeed, I heard more than once some of them talking thus, 'Did you hear Mr. So-and-so's prayers to-night? He must be suffering very much. Let us help him.'

"I said, 'Certainly not. He was praying to God only. That was all. If he needs our help he ought to come to us and beg our help.' How coward! How hypocrite! I was awfully angry. Our beautiful 'Bushido' teaches us to persevere all difficulties in silence. And now this Christian prayer-meeting was giving terrible injury to Bushido. I exclaimed, 'Surely the prayer-meeting will make our nation into weak-minded hypocrites who don't know the word 'shame.'"

The missionaries also enjoined them never to touch alcohol or spend money on Sundays. But Markino discovered that they did not observe these rules themselves.

To these hypocrites must be added the vice of cowardice. For when the first shock of the great earthquake of October, 1891, occurred, a native Japanese teacher was reading the Lord's Prayer to the kneeling congregation; but he calmly continued, although the walls were falling. A young friend of Markino's, hearing someone moving about, lifted his head in time to see the cowardly missionary sneaking out, and leaving his flock to perish! Mr. Iinuma forbade him to repeat it for fear of bringing trouble upon the mission from the outside world.

What a different picture from that of the heroic martyrs, braving hardships, privations, danger, and death, we hear so much about at missionary meetings and in missionary magazines! Mr. Markino's revelations fully bear out the statement made by Sir Henry Norman in his *Peoples and Politics of the Far East* (1900), who says the Protestant missionary,

"in a majority of cases, looks upon his work as a career like another; he proposes to devote a certain amount of his life to it, and then to return home with the halo of the Christian pioneer. He has, in most cases, his comfortable house, his wife, his children, his servants, and his foreign food; and it is even stated

\* Yoshio Markino, *When I was a Child*, p. 109.

† *Ibid.*, p. 169-10.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 111 2.

\* *When I was a Child*, pp. 126-7.

that his stipend increases with each addition to his family.....He is jealous of his Protestant rivals, between whom and himself there is a perpetual warfare of pious intrigue to secure converts. So far as education goes, both men and women among Protestant missionaries are often quite unfitted even to teach at home, where there would be little danger of serious misunderstanding; in their present sphere of work they are often not too hardly described by the phrase which has been applied to them, 'ignorant declaimers in bad Chinese.' (Pp. 305-6.)

Mr. Markino's strictures on the Christian religion are "frequent and free." He does not mince matters. When the missionaries explained to him the parable of the Rock of Ages, "where one woman is climbing up the Cross of Rock, while her sister was washed away by the waves, simply because the former had faith while the latter had not," he says:—

"It sounded to me awfully selfish religion. For the Christianity is always persuading you to individual salvation. That is to say, you must save your soul, notwithstanding about your parents' or children's or wife's and husband's souls at all. It naturally sounds very selfish to the Japanese, whose heart is far too mutual to accept it.....The (Japanese) tradition says some filial son was sent to the Paradise after his death. He was eagerly searching his own mother there. But he was told that his mother was so wicked, and therefore she was sent to the Hell. He preferred the Hell with his mother than to stay in Paradise alone, and he went into the Hell. Such is the ordinary Japanese idea. To my childish mind, the Rock of Ages was simply shocking. I believe it was not only myself alone, but there were many Japanese who shrugged their shoulders about this parable. I believe this spirit makes us so patriotic."\*

And so, he tells us,—

"I could not become a Christian at all. For I am keeping myself most sincere to my own conscience, which forbids me to call myself a Christian. I may be able to deceive my neighbors if I want to, but I cannot deceive my own conscience."

And, as he further remarks, Europe has been Christian such a long time that Christianity and reverence for the Bible has become an instinct with Europeans, it is bred into their flesh and bones. But to him who had never heard of the Bible until he went to the missionary school, it was different. He says:—

"The Bible to me is no more than Byron is to you. You cannot stop me putting many 'why's' to every page of the Bible. For it seems to me so many unnatural, illogical, and impossible things are written in it—especially about the salvation of our soul by the blood of 'Emmanuel,' and his resurrection," etc., etc. (p. 237).

Again, he says, he has carefully observed the conduct of Christians for the last eighteen years, and he asks, who really practises the Sermon on the Mount? As he points out, "Christians modify the words of Christ conveniently to themselves." And at church, he says, he has heard the clergyman—

"trying hard to explain all those superstitious words in the Bible in a 'scientific' way, saying that those miracles were merely allegorical. I was rather amused and curious about his cleverness. But there are many of this sort of man in Japan, too" (p. 239).

Christians, he observes, derive much comfort and consolation from their belief in the Bible and in religion, and in this respect he compares religion with chloroform as an anodyne for the pains of life, but adds:—

"I must say that the chloroform called religion does not suit my conscience; therefore I shall have to go through all my life in this world without it, even if I suffer more than those religious people. I cannot be intoxicated with any religion. I am always quite sober and ready to persevere any pain with the full sense" (p. 244).

So in the end Mr. Markino abandoned all religion, Eastern and Western, too. As Lafcadio Hearn has well said—and it should be remembered that Hearn

became a naturalised Japanese, married a Japanese wife, and lived in Japanese style:—

"Those who hope to substitute their own Western creed in the room of one which they wreck by the aid of knowledge borrowed from modern science, do not imagine that the arguments used against ancient faith can be used with equal force against the new. Unable himself to reach the higher levels of modern thought, the average missionary cannot foresee the result of his small teaching of science upon an Oriental mind naturally more powerful than his own. He is therefore astonished and shocked to discover that the more intelligent the pupil, the briefer the term of that pupil's Christianity. To destroy personal faith in a fine mind previously satisfied with Buddhist cosmogony, because innocent of science, is not extremely difficult. But to substitute, in the same mind, Western religious notions for Oriental. Presbyterian or Baptist dogmatisms for Chinese and Buddhist ethics is not possible. The psychological difficulties in the way are never recognised by our modern evangelists."\*

In conclusion, Mr. Markino observes that several years' travel among other Christian nations has shown him that some among them can lie and deceive no less than Orientals. Upon which he remarks, "I have come to the decisive conclusion that the honesty of the Anglo-Saxon race is not the merit of the Christianity, but it is the merit of their own race itself"; and concludes:—

"Suppose if the Christianity had not invaded into England, and suppose the Buddhism or any other religion had been in England for all those long ages, I feel quite confident that the Britons' simpleness, sincerity, and honesty would remain exactly the same to-day."†

We recommend Mr. Markino's book to all those who are in the habit of supporting Christian missions.

W. MANN.

### Richard Carlile.—III.

LATER in life Carlile degenerated into a kind of Swedenborgian mysticism. Not, indeed, that he discarded his Atheism; he was virtually an Atheist to the last; but he chose to veil it under a delusive nomenclature, and to employ, to express his own Naturalism, the very supernatural terms he had previously discarded. He professed to have discovered "that the names of the Old Testament, either apparently of persons or places, are not such names as the religious mistakes have constructed, but names of states of mind manifested in the human race, and that, in this sense, the Bible may be scientifically read as a treatise on spirit, soul, or mind, and not as a history of time, people, and place." In editing the *Christian Warrior* he professed himself a Christian, defining the appellation as "a man purged from error." His conduct scandalised his friends, who deplored his seeming departure from the old, clear ways, and when he proceeded so far as to take out his diploma as a preacher, their indignation and sorrow knew no bounds. Carlile, however, was not to be deterred from pursuing his own independent course; the same sturdy spirit which impelled him to resist the minions of power in former days induced him now to disregard the adverse representations and reproaches of his friends. And beneath his mystical phraseology there were undoubtedly concealed truths of vast importance. The following passage, for instance, is pregnant with meaning: "Science, thrown into the Church as a substitute for superstition in the education of the people, begins at once to regenerate the people, the institutions, and the throne. It is the substitution of the known for the unknown, the real for the unreal, the certain for the uncertain. Religion is the erroneous mind's chief direction. It must be corrected by and through the medium which it most respects. It rejects all other opposing conditions,

\* Lafcadio Hearn, *Kokoro*, p. 191.

† *When I was a Child*, p. 250.

\* *When I was a Child*, p. 233.

and increases its tenacity for its errors. To reform religion by science is to regenerate fallen man, and to save a sinking country." In this passage he seems to have been straining after some positive conceptions as substitutes for the old negative notions of Freethought, and dimly to perceive that every system claiming human adherence and aiming at extensive, permanent success must satisfy the natural emotions of the human heart, and direct them to some ultimate purpose capable of being apprehended and aspired to.

It is a mistake to suppose that Carlile ever really departed from the Atheism of his maturity. Thirteen days before his death he penned these words: "*The enemy with whom I have to grapple is one with whom no peace can be made. Idolatry will not parley; superstition will not treat on covenant. They must be uprooted for public and individual safety.*" Neither is there any truth in the story of his recantation. He lost his power of speaking long before the near approach of death. The story is simply incredible, and could only have proceeded from the inventive charity of some over zealous religionist.

"Carlile's habits," writes Mr. Holyoake, who can here speak with authority, "were marked by great abstemiousness. Seldom taking animal food, he refused wine when offered a dozen at Dorchester Gaol, preferring good milk. He was morally as well as physically particular. In the rules of the Deistical Society he provided that only persons of good character should be eligible. 'It is important to you Republicans,' wrote he from Dorchester Gaol, 'that, however humble the advocates of your principles may be, they should exhibit a clear, moral character to the world.' He never sold a copy of any work which he would hesitate to read to his children. He expressed a hope, when fairs were popular, that fairs would be put down all over the country. He was one of the first thus to oppose what the pious then approved." His large charity also was conspicuous. He would assist even a struggling and unfortunate foe, and stand by his friends to the last. When George Jacob Holyoake was tried at Gloucester, Carlile sat by his side for fourteen hours, and handed him notes for his guidance. After Mr. Holyoake's conviction, Carlile brought him the first provisions with his own hand. As a speaker, he was direct and perspicuous. Generally he was not eloquent, but occasionally he was as eloquent as the best speakers. Bold as a lion in fight, he quailed before a public audience, and only after long practice was he able to conquer his diffidence. At first his friends believed he never would make a speaker, but by dint of patient cultivation he contrived to falsify their unfavorable predictions.

A few words will be necessary respecting Carlile's domestic relations, and the publication of his *Every Woman's Book*. A tract issued by the Bible Institute charged him with having "exhibited his harlot on the public platform during the lifetime of his wife," and with "having made proposals concerning the thinning of the population, the most beastly that ever polluted paper." These charges, preferred before a public ignorant of Carlile's life and character, are calculated to mislead, as probably the malignant libeller who penned the tract well knew; but they are entirely groundless, and fall away before an impartial examination. Already we have alluded to the disparity of temper between Carlile and his wife. "Their difference in education, in age, in intellectual aspiration, and their opponency in disposition, early converted their union into an intimacy tolerated rather than prized." In 1819 their separation was arranged, but it did not actually take place till 1832, because until then an independent provision for Mrs. Carlile could not be made. They parted in 1832 with mutual consent, and, besides the separate maintenance for the wife, she took with her all the household furniture and £100 worth of books. Afterwards Carlile allied himself with a lady by whom he had two children, and doubtless would have married her if the holy laws of England had permitted him to do so by granting a divorce from his first wife. But

the law refused, and still refuses, to grant a divorce on any ground except adultery; and Carlile very properly observed his own counsel without a legal sanction. He was not the man to *desert* his wife, but when they mutually desired separation he was just the man to burst through the cobwebs of ecclesiastico-political restraint, and even to defy worldly conventionalities. Herein he has the approval of one of the sternest moralists of any age or country—John Milton; who in his tractate on divorce censures the legislators who impose marriage bonds upon mutually rebellious souls, and pronounces the union unholy and desecrate when unsanctified by love. The legislation of England is not yet level with this teaching, which is two centuries old. The reader will now be in a position to estimate aright the accusation urged against Carlile by Christian scribes who are everlastingly maligning our sacred dead in order to bolster up their own creed.

The other charge concerning "beastly proposals" is equally groundless. It refers to Carlile's *Every Woman's Book*, which is a plain statement of his opinions on "the all-important question of population." He believed in Malthus's law of population, which, as Professor Huxley observes, has never been and never will be disproved; and he was anxious to induce his fellow men to adopt means to prevent the bringing of redundant children into life, so as to obviate the slaughter of them afterwards by nature's positive checks on numerical increase. Possessing the courage of his convictions, he set forth his views in print, and described preventive human checks on the growth of families. His intent was humane and pure, and, even if he were erroneous, he could not deserve to be stigmatised as immoral or beastly. He had as much moral right to publish his book as Dr. Acton had to publish a work on Prostitution, or Dr. Bull his Hints to Mothers. Dr. Acton and Dr. Bull were justified by the fact of their being physical physicians; and Richard Carlile was justified by being a moral physician. He had earned the right, by his courage on behalf of righteous causes, to address the public on any question he chose.

"Carlile's death," writes Mr. Holyoake, "took place on this wise. He had come up from Enfield to Bouverie-street, Fleet-street, to live on the field of war, and edit the *Christian Warrior*. While a van of goods was unpacking at the door, one of his boys strayed out and went away. Carlile was fond of his children, and he set out anxiously to seek his child. The excitement ended in death. On Carlile's return he was seized with a fatal illness. Bronchitis, which he was told by his medical advisers would soon destroy him if he came to live in the city, set in, and the power of speech soon left him. Dr. Lawrence, the author of the famous Lectures on Man, whom Carlile always preferred in his illness, was sent for. He promptly arrived, but pronounced recovery hopeless; and Richard Carlile expired February 10th, 1843, in his fifty-third year.

"Wishing to be useful in death as well as in life, Carlile devoted his body to dissection. Always above superstition, in practice as well as in theory, his wish had long been that his body, if he died first, should be given to Dr. Lawrence. At that time the prejudice against dissection was almost universal, and only superior persons rose above it. His wish was complied with by his family, and the post-mortem examination was published in the *Lancet* of that year.

"Carlile's burial took place at Kensal Green Cemetery. He was laid in the consecrated part of the ground, nearly opposite the Mausoleum of the Ducrow family. At the interment a clergyman appeared, and, with the usual want of feeling and delicacy, persisted in reading the Church Service over him. His eldest son, Richard, who represented his sentiments as well as his name, very properly protested against the proceeding as an outrage upon the principles of his father and the wishes of the family. Of course, the remonstrance was disregarded, and Richard, his brothers, and their friends left the ground. The clergyman then proceeded to call

Carlile 'his dear departed brother,' and to declare that he 'had died in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.'

"Carlile left six children—Richard, Alfred, and Thomas Paine, by his wife, Mrs. Jane Carlile; and Julian, Theophila, and Hypatia, by 'Isis,' the lady to whom he united himself after his separation from his wife. Mrs. Carlile survived him only four months. She died in the same house and was buried in the same grave."

Thus ended the life of this sturdy warrior for freedom of thought and speech. It cannot, of course, be pretended that Richard Carlile was a man of great genius, or that his writings are destined to survive; neither can we admit, with Mr. Holyoake, that such workers as journalists, orators, and politicians, who popularise ideas and principles, confer greater good on mankind and more powerfully promote progress, than the great creative minds; for if those minds did not originate ideas it is certain that the writers and speakers of smaller calibre could not popularise them. But this, at least, may be claimed for Carlile, that he spent one-fourth of his mature life in prison as the consequence of his manly persistence in the course of conduct which his conscience approved; that he never once flinched from danger, never temporised with the oppressor, never once looked back after putting his hand to the plough. There was no contemporary publicist who wrote so boldly as he, no one who shrank less from the freest expression of principles the most extreme. The example he set is worthy of emulation; and his courage and endurance, while they give fresh ardor to the wavering, ought also to shame those who are persuaded that superstitions abound, and yet will lift no finger to remove them, who perceive a great work of reformation to be performed, and yet never bestir themselves in any degree to assist it. When Carlile wrote and spoke and struggled he stood face to face with an almost implacable enemy that gave no quarter, showed no mercy. The blows of oppression rained upon his devoted head at every step of his march, and the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune constantly assailed him; but he never quailed before any danger, nor was deterred by any difficulty. His life of incessant warfare deprived him of the sense of literary taste, and occasionally he was guilty of a violence of expression which would be deemed unjustifiable by the present generation. But our censure need not, therefore, be severe. As Mr. Holyoake observes, Christians who persecute with relentless zeal have no right to demand of their victims a perennial delicacy of treatment in return. If Carlile dedicated a volume of the *Republican* to Castlereagh, "who did that for himself which millions wished some honest man would do for him—cut his throat," that statesman had given good cause for public execration. If he dated in the era of "the carpenter's wife's son," the professors of Christianity had done their best to induce in his mind the utmost contempt and hatred of their creed. Society has no right to require soft speech of a man whom it loses no opportunity to ill-use.

At the time when monuments are impartially reared to celebrate public benefactors one will be apportioned to Richard Carlile. The work he achieved for Freethought was impossible of accomplishment by any other man; no other possessed at once so dogged a courage and so clear a conception of principle. "I have accomplished," wrote he just before his death, "the liberty of the press in England, and oral discussion is now free. Nothing remains to be reformed but the ignorance and vices of the people, whose ignorance cannot be removed while their bodies are starved, and their Church remains a theatre of idolatry and superstition." These words both express his own achievement and indicate the reformatory method of those who were to follow him. Theirs is the task to spread knowledge, to uproot error, to destroy superstition, to feed men's bodies before canting about their souls; his was to prepare the field for such labors, to remove obstacles, to make straight and plain the paths. While we do

battle with the noxious evils of society to-day without oppressive sense of personal danger, let us now and then remember the pioneers who went before, who toiled weary and footsore where we now travel so easily, who bore the first shattering brunt of war, and left for us the defeat of an already half-conquered foe.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### PROVIDENCE.

"It will be a surprising dispensation of Providence," says State Secretary Burke to the Governor of Ohio, "if there are not 10,000 dead." Mr. Burke is referring to the awful storm and floods in the United States, and is evidently under the impression that "Providence" will be easily satisfied if content with less than 10,000 corpses. We can make nothing else out of the statement. If there is a Providence, it must be responsible for the death of the 10,000; or if Providence is to be thanked for saving people after the 10,000 mark is reached, one would like to know what is to be said of the long array of corpses that were necessary for it to wake up and get to business. If the loss of life had been due to any State official, he would probably have been lynched. As it is due to "Providence," good Christians go down on their knees and thank it for its activity.

Look at this horror in the news from flooded and fire-scourged Dayton:—

"There are many expectant mothers among the refugees, and their condition after the horrors and privations which they have gone through is critical. No fewer than five babies have been born in the Cash Register building during the past thirty-six hours."

It is enough to make a heart of stone bleed. The worst man on earth would stop this sort of thing if he could. Yet the theologians want us to believe that the Dayton catastrophe was all planned and carried through by a powerful, wise, and good being, who is (as usual) quite proud of his handiwork.

#### THE BISHOP EXPLAINS.

The Bishop of London is not pleased with the papers talking about his praying over the sick girl as "The Bishop's Miracle." He explains that it was not his miracle, but God's. Moreover, he only prayed and anointed the girl after the doctor and nurse had done their part. So the performance was after all a bit mixed, and one cannot be quite certain that it was a miracle. It may only have been the drugs working. Moreover, the Bishop explains that it would not be wise to lead people to depend upon prayer and anointing as a method of cure. He explains that if children were kneeling round a sick mother, and the mother died, it might shake their faith. Quite so. What the Bishop's counsel amounts to is this: Pray over the sick and anoint with oil, but have also a doctor and a nurse. If the patient recovers, proclaim a miracle, and never mind the doctor. If the patient dies, let the doctor take the credit, and say it was not God's will that a miracle should be worked. Heads I win, tails you lose. An old game, particularly in the religious world.

The Rev. Albert Knight, vicar of Christ Church, Hunslet, who disappeared with a lady of his congregation, has been formally deposed from Holy Orders. The pursuit of frocks has led to his own unfrocking.

Mr. W. St. Chad Boscawen, writing in the March issue of the *Open Court* on "The Egyptian Element in the Birth Stories in the Gospels," makes some very significant admissions. Speaking with the authority of twenty years' study of the subject, the distinguished Egyptologist says, "I am convinced that not only these two Gospels (Matthew and Luke) are derived from Egypt; but the same is true of a large element in all Christian teaching." This is laying the axe at the root of the tree.

The Rev. J. Watts-Ditchfield has been unburdening his mind to a *Daily Telegraph* man, and he said that "an exceptionally low percentage of persons is buried without any religious ceremony." The clergy buried Darwin, Huxley, Swinburne, Burton, Buchanan, and a host of other Freethinkers; but they never convinced anybody that these men were Christians. The farcical funeral services only showed that the Christian relatives of the departed Freethinkers did not respect the dead.

A new book bears the curious title, *In God's Nursery*. Evidently we live in stirring times. The last "boy" must be two thousand years old by this time.

**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.**

STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Cradle, the Altar, and the Grave."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Mr. Neary's, 94 Lordship-road, Church-street, Stoke Newington): Business Meeting—Election of Conference delegates, etc.

**OUTDOOR.**

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.45, James Rowney, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Arthur, "What is Morality?"

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April 6.—Mr. C. COHEN:

“The Cradle, the Altar and the Grave.”

April 13.—Mr. J. T. LLOYD: “What Do We Know?”

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“Why Persecutest Thou Me?”

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