

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXIII.—No. 15

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 1913

PRICE TWOPENCE

*The immoral book is the book which hides Truth and creates a Fool's Paradise.*

W. R. PATERSON (Benjamin Swift).

## The Pathology of Conversion.

THE physician whom Voltaire described as knowing a little about everything—even about medicine, might be matched by clergymen who know a little about a variety of subjects, and who sometimes know a little about religion. Unfortunately, their number is very small. What the vast majority understand by a knowledge of religion is a certain familiarity with religious formulæ and doctrines. For a knowledge of religion, such as will help one to understand its real nature, one must forsake those professional theologian altogether, and turn to those who have pursued the study of religion in exactly the same way, and by use of the same methods, as they have pursued other studies. The professional theologian, and the professed apologist for religion, doom themselves to sterility from the outset. Instead of taking religious phenomena as a part of phenomena in general, and by seeking in what way and in what manner the part can be affiliated to the whole, religion is treated as a thing apart. It may affect other departments of life but it does not belong to them. The result is, that what are called religious studies move round and round the same circle of ideas, and a revolution is mistaken for progress.

What has just been said holds with peculiar force of the subject of conversion. While not peculiarly a Christian phenomenon, it is yet one that bulks very largely in the history of Christianity; so much so, that conversion is declared by some theologians to be essential to each individual's religious maturity. The result of this has been that conversion has been emphasised as a cataclysmal epoch in the life of an individual, and professional evangelists have cultivated the art of working upon the emotions of people—quite as ignorant as themselves of the real nature of the forces at work—in order to induce a desired state of mind in relation to religious beliefs. They have spent their lives in officiating at what was a veritable debauch of unreasoning and unreasonable emotion, and subjects more fit for the hands of the physician than for anyone else have been acclaimed as striking evidence of the "workings of the spirit," and in other cases qualities of the mind that should have found a harmless and natural outlet by participation in the larger social life, have been very often injuriously misdirected into religious channels.

During recent years the phenomena of conversion has been approached from a more scientific standpoint. Statistics have been compiled and analysed, with the result that the salient features are apparent to all those who care to study the matter.\* One

\* The most elaborate study of this character known to the writer is Mr. G. S. Hall's *Adolescence*, two volumes. But the bulk of the work is terrifying to some, and its cost prohibitive to many. For the general reader the main facts are well presented in Starbuck's smaller volume, the *Psychology of Religion*. It should be added, that the majority of writings on this and similar aspects of religion seem to originate in America, where—apart from the question of origins—the scientific study of religion appears to move with greater freedom than with ourselves.

outstanding fact of these inquiries has been to demonstrate that what is called conversion is almost exclusively a phenomenon of puberty and adolescence. In a previous article it was pointed out that on taking the period at which illumination or conversion came to well known religious characters, the ages varied between childhood and just over twenty years of age. This list might be greatly lengthened, but it would be little more than repetition. It is worth noting, however, Keim's remark, that although some of the disciples may have been married, most of them were probably about twenty years of age.\* That this coincidence is neither accidental nor spasmodic, more detailed inquiries prove. Thus, Prof. Starbuck made detailed investigations in the case of some 1,300 converts. The result of a scrutiny of the figures was to show that while conversions begin to occur as early as at eight years of age, their most rapid occurrence is between twelve and sixteen, they occur less rapidly after twenty, and very rarely found after thirty. In girls, the period of conversion antedate that of boys by about two years.† Starbuck's conclusion is the perfectly valid one that conversion "belongs almost exclusively to the years between ten and twenty-five," and is a distinctly adolescent phenomenon.

These figures, it may be added, are quite borne out by an examination of the ages of converts in almost any revivalistic mission. At the conclusion of a mission by the notorious American evangelist, Dr. Torrey, in this country in 1904, the *British Weekly* obtained an expression of opinion from a number of ministers in the towns visited, and published the results in its issue for October 27. The ages of all the alleged converts were not given, but one may safely assume that a large proportion of those not indicated fell within the ages stated. The striking feature of the reports was the number of cases in which the youthful nature of the converts were noted. Thus, Rev. T. Towers, Birmingham, records that sixteen out of twenty-five were children. Rev. A. Le Gros, Rugby, reported "a number of our youngest members, especially amongst the young girls, were amongst those who professed conversion." Rev. H. Singleton, Smethwick, says, "the bulk of the names sent to me were children, under thirteen years of age." Rev. W. G. Percival, Lozells Congregational Church, says of the "inquiry" meeting held after the preaching, "the dear little things followed one another for inquiry until the place was a scene of utter confusion." Other reports of a similar nature came from other places. The ages were pointed out quite incidentally, it should be noted; conversions of young men and young women of seventeen or eighteen years of age would not arouse comment in the case of these observers.

Professor James quite accepts Starbuck's conclusion, but accompanies it with the question-begging comment that "Conversion is, in its essence, a normal adolescent phenomenon, incidental to the passage from the child's small universe to the wider, intellectual, and spiritual life of humanity."‡ I hope to

\* *Life of Jesus*, vol. iii., p. 279.

† *Psychology of Religion*, ch. iii. Hall's figures, which agree with Starbuck's, and are based on the reports of a number of investigators, are given in the second volume of his work, pp. 288-92.

‡ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 193.

show that conversion is only normal in the sense that in an environment where religious influences are powerful human nature is normally exposed to it. In this sense, contracting a disease may be normal during the existence of an epidemic. In reality the abnormal character of conversion is indicated by the fact that a large number of people never experience it, and also that where human nature is allowed to develop without special direction from religious sources, conversion does not occur. The truth in James' comment is its association with the passage from "the child's small universe" to the wider life of humanity, but the nature of this association is quite ignored by him, as it is by his religious guides.

Apart from statistical inquiry, the connection between adolescence and religion has been noted from the earliest time. In later times this has been taken as the most favorable time to direct human energy into religious channels because the developing social and sexual life of the individual gave opportunity for a religious interpretation of feelings very inadequately understood. But in earlier times the connection was of a more genuinely religious nature. Puberty did not mark, as a modern religionist would say, the awakening of the religious consciousness, but the direct contact of the boy and the girl with supernatural influences. The consequence is that all over the world we meet with public ceremonies, commencing with the most primitive savages and ending with the modern practice of confirmation.\* Amongst the North American Indians, for example, the following description seems characteristic:—

"When a boy has attained the age of fourteen or fifteen years, he absents himself from his father's lodge, lying on the ground in some remote or secluded spot, crying to the Great Spirit, and fasting the whole time. During this period of peril and abstinence, when he falls asleep, the first animal, bird, or reptile, of which he dreams, he considers the Great Spirit has designated for his mysterious protector through life."†

Much the same ceremonies are described by Livingstone as existing among the South African tribes.‡ In nearly all cases there is an enforced separation of the sexes, much more elaborate in the case of girls than that of boys—the phenomena attaching to girls being of a more terrifying description. Frazer has brought together a very lengthy list of customs of this character, and has shown that in the case of girls the main idea is to guard the rest of the tribe from what is believed to be a most malignant supernatural influence.§ Although these ceremonies centre round the fact of sexual development, it would be quite a mistake to imagine that they are mainly concerned with initiation into what are called "the mysteries of sex." The governing idea is that puberty marks the direct association of the individual with a spiritual world, to the influence of which the functional changes are due. At a later date, when rational ideas concerning the nature of these functional changes exist, other interpretations of the utilisation by religion of the period of adolescence are given. But it may safely be assumed that these later interpretations would never have been fashioned had not the primitive basis been provided. Then we hear much of the development of a consciousness of religion, of the "soul's awareness of God," and similar nonsensical phrases. All of these only serve to disguise to careless or uninformed people the fact that religious agencies seize hold of the developing social nature of each, and give a religious explanation to what is taking place. In this respect all modern religious theories are upon precisely the same level as the more primitive ones. We have the same absence of a rational explanation—in the one case because no such explanation was possible,

in the other because prejudice or self-interest prevents its use. At any rate, the connection of a developing sex nature with a "quickenings" of the religious consciousness can no longer be denied by those who carefully study the facts.

The following opinions are worth noting:—

"Passing over the fact that the period of adolescence is noticeably a period of susceptibility and personal vanity, we may take as an example of the intrusion or persistence of the sexual element in conditions of a non-sexual kind the frequent association of sexual with religious excitement. The appeal made during a religious revival to the unconverted has psychologically some resemblance to the attempt of the male to overcome the hesitancy of the female.....In the effort to make a moral adjustment, it consequently turns out that a technique is used which was derived originally from sexual life, and the use, so to speak, of the sexual machinery for a moral adjustment involves, in some cases, the carrying over into the general process of some sexual manifestations."\*

Dr. Mercier is still more explicit:—

"In connection with normal development a large body of vague and formless feeling arises, and, until experience gives it shape, the possessor remains ignorant of the source and nature of the feeling. If the circumstances are appropriate for the natural outlet and expression of the activities, they are expressed in affection, and are a source of health and strength to the possessor. But if no such outlet exists, the vague, voluminous, formless feelings are referred to an occasion that is vague, voluminous, and wanting in definite form—they are ascribed to the direct influence of the Deity, and assume a place in religious emotion."†

(To be continued.) C. COHEN.

## The Christian Religion.

A FEW weeks ago we discussed the first of the Rev. Dr. Orchard's "Modern Tracts on Religion." From our point of view the second called for no comment; but the third, which appeared in the *Christian Commonwealth* for April 2, and was entitled "The Christian Religion," challenges the closest critical examination. The reverend gentleman starts off by making several candid admissions. One is that "the characteristic expressions" of Christianity, whether in the Catholic or in the Protestant Church, are difficult, if not impossible, to believe. It seems unreasonable to declare that a piece of bread is, or after certain words have been pronounced becomes, the body of Jesus Christ, or that a cup of wine is, or similarly becomes, his blood. It sounds incredible to assert that the man Christ Jesus is "very God of very God." Then comes the admitted difficulty of defining Christianity. Dr. Orchard says:—

"It is the most difficult of all religions to define. After nineteen hundred years of exposition and experience we can still ask, What is Christianity? and get a variety of answers. Many efforts have been made to simplify Christianity into such statements as that it is a personal cleaving to Jesus Christ, or that it is sharing in the spirit of Christ, or that it is believing what Jesus taught about God; only to raise the objection that this is not what Christianity has been in the past. On the contrary, it will be replied, it is a great scheme of doctrine taught by the Apostles and developed by the Church."

Another admission is that "it is the most difficult religion to practise." Instead of "difficult," "impossible" would surely be the more appropriate adjective here. Many of the so-called virtues insisted upon in the Sermon on the Mount are contrary to invincible human instincts. We fail to practise them not because of "our own moral impotence," but because our humanity revolts from them. However, be the cause of the nonconformity what it may, the fact of it is beyond controversy. Says our divine:—

"You stick at the first beatitude. And the efforts that have been made to incorporate Christianity in a

\* Mr. Hall has compiled a lengthy list of these ceremonies, vol. ii., ch. xiii.

† Catlin, *North American Indians*, vol. i., p. 36; also vol. ii., p. 347.

‡ *Missionary Travels*, p. 146.

§ See *Golden Bough*, second edition, vol. iii.; also Hartland, *Primitive Paternity*, vol. i., pp. 90-98.

\* Thomas, *Sex and Society*, pp. 115-16.

† *Sanity and Insanity*, p. 281.

society, whether you think of the Catholic Church, the monastic system, or our modern Christian civilisation, they are nothing so much as magnificent failures."

So far as the facts are concerned we are in complete agreement with Dr. Orchard. They are facts which we ourselves have emphasised and employed evidentially times out of number. We wish to call special attention to the following pregnant extract:—

"Here, then, is a religion to present to a man in a hurry. It staggers his reason, it presents a vast complication, both in thought and history, which it is only a further complication to attempt to simplify or reform; and there is no guarantee that it is ever going to succeed. It cannot be put into a nutshell; it cannot be stated without dragging in all the controversies the mind of man has ever started, and it stands unwittingly alone as the one great religion that has failed. Who has ever met a Christian?"

Once more we express our entire concurrence. What we have here set before us is a number of undeniable truths; but having frankly stated them Dr. Orchard immediately proceeds to set them aside as if they were of no account, and to make the usual apologetic appeal to experience. First of all he gives a wholly imaginary description of the experience of Jesus. He tells us that Jesus was in the world to do a higher will than his own, and that the consciousness of this fact constituted his religious experience; but he also informs us that the higher will "could be done by discharging the most ordinary duties and obeying the commonest impulses of life." Then why speak of it as a higher will? If "human life in time is a fitting expression of the Divine life in eternity," on what grounds can any distinction be made between them, or how does anybody know that there is "a Divine life in eternity"? Is not human life the highest known to us, and is it not true that the highest will-power is man's? On the assumption that the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane actually happened, did it not consist in a conflict between the higher and lower in Jesus himself? He believed that he had a Father in heaven whose will he was doing and to whom he prayed for strength to conquer temptation; but it is not on record that he did anything he could not have done in his own strength, or that many a man before and since has not so done. The appeal to the experience of Jesus is therefore evidentially valueless. The talk about a higher will "moving behind our own" and presenting itself for our acceptance, is the merest religious cant, and at best can only be a misinterpretation of the conflict between the better and the worse in our own character. "Unless one knows something of this experience," Dr. Orchard asserts, "Christianity must remain sealed against all further understanding." The experience which the reverend gentleman so grossly misinterprets is an experience common to all mankind. In every man there are higher and lower tendencies, and the joy of life consists in the triumph of the former.

This is a point of enormous importance, and we feel bound to enlarge upon it. There are thousands of people who have seen the error of the Christian interpretation of the struggle between the higher and the lower in character. For thirty or forty years some of them advocated it as the only satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon. They had a vivid and joy-yielding experience of what is falsely called communion with God in Christ. They prayed in secret and in public, they gave themselves with much enjoyment to the devotional study of the Bible, they were by no means strangers to the consolations of religion, and their love for Christ was a glowing passion; but a time came when they discovered that they had been hugging illusions for realities, and that the whole of their religious experience was as completely a hallucination as any dream of the night. To say of such people that when they write about Christianity and urge their friends to give it up they know nothing whatever about it is to be guilty of bearing false witness against them. This is a charge which we must bring against Dr. Orchard. Some of his opponents do know right well, as the result of years of closest

and most prayerful study and happy experience, what Christianity is, and what ardent faith in it can and cannot do. When doubt first assailed them, they strenuously fought against it, dreading above everything the loss of their faith. Doubt, however, turned out to be but the thin end of the wedge which reason was driving under both their creed and the experience to which it gave rise. The wedge did its work most thoroughly, reason won a glorious victory, and, believing themselves wide-awake at last, they make the solemn declaration, based upon knowledge and experience, that the Christian religion is utterly false, and that those who cherish it are but mental dreamers.

In justification of the last statement let us scrutinise a few of Dr. Orchard's utterances. He talks of "an experience of God which began in Jesus Christ," and then later on says that "God and Jesus Christ are of the same order of beings." The curious thing is that he comes to this conclusion concerning God and Jesus Christ on the testimony of the latter, whom he describes as "a peasant," "an unlearned man," and "one who owed little or nothing to birth, race, training, or singular endowment." How does Dr. Orchard know that Jesus Christ knew God and told the truth about him? He admits that "the attempt to explain why it [the revelation of God] came in Jesus Christ is as futile as the attempt to explain why two human beings fall in love." "Why in Jesus Christ?" he asks, and answers, "Why not?" This looks uncommonly like trifling with a great subject. "It is a case of love," he tells us; "not a matter of argument, but a matter of love." The testimony of the New Testament is entirely ignored, and systematic theology positively despised, the sole appeal being to feeling. Under the guidance of emotion the reverend gentleman imparts to us various items of information. For instance, he startles us by affirming that "the material universe and Jesus Christ are all of a piece; in fact, that to put it symbolically yet in the only adequate way, we do not live in the universe, but in Christ." What an infinite pity that it is all a case of love. A man in love has the reputation of seldom talking sensibly. We are perfectly willing to admit that Dr. Orchard loves Jesus Christ very sincerely; but his love for Christ does not prevent him from misrepresenting the effect of such love upon the lives of men. St. Bernard was one of the great figures of mediæval Christendom, and his love for Christ was an all-consuming flame; but he was the author and instigator of the most cruel persecutions for all that. With what insatiable spite he hunted down the great Abelard. Benvenuto Cellini was at once a wonderfully versatile genius and a passionate lover of Christ; but neither his genius nor his piety held his fiery temper in check; and his crimes were preceded and followed by the most ecstatic spiritual experience, as he himself unblushingly tells us. It is a sheer delusion to imagine that love for Christ transforms character. It creates piety; but piety and character are not necessarily associated. It is simply not true to say that a Christian life is not fortuitous but providential; not a perplexity but an opportunity. We have never known a Christian who did not try his best to be his own providence, or to whom life was not often a terrible perplexity. Dr. Orchard's usual retort is, "You know nothing about it"; but it is a cowardly retort, and quite unworthy of a serious-minded person. We do not doubt the reality and sincerity of the passion for Christ in numerous instances; but we do claim that it is merely a passion for a wholly imaginary person. It is very possible that Dr. Anderson, of Dundee, loves Christ quite as passionately as Dr. Orchard; but the former frankly acknowledges that the Christ he loves is not a historical character, but the creation of the religious imagination. What we maintain is that the Gospel Jesus is worthy of neither worship nor imitation, and that those who profess to love him love not him but a transformed and glorified image of him that lives alone in their fancy.

Like all his brethren, Dr. Orchard cannot eulogise his own religion without vilifying all other cults. "Christianity," he says, "is the only religion which provides a basis for democracy, and secures the sanctity, permanence, and value of personality. Other religions have to get rid of man." Does he really believe that in his heart of hearts? When and in what country has democracy ever thriven, or even existed at all, under Christianity? Which religion tries to get rid of man, and what nation professes it? Has the reverend gentleman never read Professor Gile's *Chinese Sketches, China and the Chinese, or Historic China*? If he has, he knows that what he says is absolutely false; if he has not, he has no right to make such an assertion in the absence of knowledge. The claims he makes for Christianity have never been verified, and now Christianity is dying without ever doing a single thing to justify its existence.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Notre Dame de la Garde.

ON a hill at Marseilles rises a Catholic church, and on the tower of the church stands a gilded image of the Mother of Heaven, and the Marseillaise call her the Guardian Lady,—Notre Dame de la Garde. Now this Lady is the symbol, to us of the new age, of the genius of Humanity, which guards the evening and the morning and the hours of the night.

The lighthouses glow on the rocky capes, and the red and green lamps sentinel the harbors; and the searchlights throw their quivering rays over the midnight waters. Countless miles of streets in the cities of the world are illumined by the labor of the gasworks and electric power-stations, and, amid the shades of millions of lanes and squares and avenues the police maintain their patrol while whole nations slumber. Humanity watches in the gloom, shields the prone multitudes, and wearies not of her vigil.

When dawn blushes, she—Notre Dame de la Garde—quickens, and not slackens her care. She kindles the hearth-fires in hamlet and in city, and spreads the table in ten thousand times ten thousand households; and her ministers are the hands of women. Her spirit guides the ploughing of the furrow, the casting of the seed, the gathering of the crops, and the grinding of the mills. Where the wine is pressed, where the olives are shaken, where the mulberry trees feed the silk-worms, and where the cotton whitens in the plantations, she toils to provide.

The mean garments of the proletariat she bestows with regret and tears, for they are but the squalid tokens of the fair apparelling of the days to come. Through the factories she hurries, and weaves for entire communities; and with the business of her tanneries, and dyeworks, her cutting-out and her sewing, her laundering, and her mending (praise to the loyal fingers of the armies of menders!) the towns throb and hum from the rising of the sun to the mustering of the silver stars.

She chooses helpers from the immense kingdom of the animals; from these countless forms of life,—terrible, tender, uncouth, graceful, venomous, innocent,—she chooses the meek-eyed cow, the spirited horse, the sociable dog, the playful kitten, the homely ass, the milk-yielding goat, the sagacious elephant, the plodding camel; and the fowls peck in her compounds, and the doves fly in and out of her cots, and the bees murmur in her gardens and hives; and by the magnetism of her taming art she enlists these naïve tribes for companionship, for ornament, for the yoke, the burden, and the nourishing of her children. She knows the tragedy that often blots their speechless life, and she raises her maternal arms, and protectingly utters the holy words of mercy,—“for these living things,” she says, “are part of my own soul.”

Nor, for the sake of her children, does she disdain to delve in the crevasses and corridors of the under-

world. Lamp in hand, and with words of sagacious warning against the perils of earth, air, fire, and water, she regulates the industry of the miners, the quarrymen, the sulphur-gatherers. But, as she surveys the wondrous piles of glittering metal and stone, and the treasuries of precious gems, torn from the rock by the energy of searchers in the dark or in solitary valleys, she sighs as only a mother can sigh. “Ah, my sons and daughters,” she says, “reflect, whether you do not place too high a value on some of these jewels, which cost so dear in human life and health; reflect, whether you justly comprehend and justly requite the service rendered by the laboring hearts and arms in the caves of twilight and jeopardy.”

How proudly she smiles over her works of forethought and thrift. On many a mountain slope and on many a mighty plain grow the forests which her sons conserve with scientific skill, and increase by wise plantation; and here is the womb to produce fleets for the sea, and houses without number, and the wealth of household furniture and amenities. These broad fields of rice, she has irrigated them with a network of channels. A massive barrage has been built by her engineers across this flooding stream, and the waters are retained for the blessing of the lands of a widespread peasantry. Carriers of fertility and grateful moisture are her vast canals cut in the arid waste; and her waterways through sand and stone bear the gliding ships from sea to sea.

And she glories in the swift passage of her trains on the steel roads that lie in green landscapes, and thread the depths of hills, and skirt the tide-beaten beaches, and roar through the crowded markets, and knit the far-sundered nations, and take and give the wares of the continents. By starlight and sunlight, her ships, with pulsing engines, convey an opulent commerce, and waft to remote shores the builders of new commonwealths. Aloft, in that crystal sphere whence she draws her vital breath, her venturesome sons launch their air-boats, and gaily coast the heavens.

Health and fitness are in her keeping, and she,—Notre Dame de la Garde,—oversees the sanitation of the planet. She tunnels the soil with drains, spreads the sewage of cities on the sweetening earth, wars on minute vermin, arrests the consumption scourge, beats back the foul malaria and yellow fever, and makes league against alcohol and opium, and the ghastly ills of sex, and the sad lunacy which mocks her genius and her existence. Each century finds fresh purity in the food she draws from the abounding land and water, and more divine is the blood in her veins, and ever more and more she expands her passion for the gracious light, and the quickening air, and the activities of the sportive hour. Blow, winds of the world, upon her mantling cheeks; shine, sacred sun, upon her labors; and surround her, infinite skies, with a silent and harmonious presence.

“My children,” she says (and never was song more wise, more melodious, more mystical), “I climb to the Highest only through you, therefore learn to serve me.” Hence, at her bidding, the schools raise their turrets over the murmuring towns and the tranquil villages; the colleges invite the troops of serious men and women; the universities gleam amid their lawns, and offer a stately roof to the sciences. Youth cons the book, heeds the message of old experience, and scales the rugged and happy path of knowledge; and knowledge and the willing heart consecrate themselves to the service of Humanity. The arts also are summoned to crown the achievements of the craftsman and the scholar. Here is the grotto or the shady pine-wood for the poet; here is the great orchestra for the musician; here is the spacious area for the pile of the architect; here is the canvas spread for the painter; and here the marble awaits the sculptor's touch; and here she,—Mother imparadised by our homage,—presides over the eternal unfolding of truth and beauty.

Hers are the civic disciplines. She assembles the elected ones in the senate and the parliament, dignifies the judge on the bench, and whispers the command of the public law in the ears of citizens as they pursue the daily task, engage in strenuous trade, and mingle in the social throng. Where men and women associate for mutual aid, for the consolation of the suffering, for the strengthening of the weak, the uplifting of the depressed, the awakening of the ignorant and sordid, the establishment of peace, and the revealing of visions, there she lives and strives and hopes.

Noble is her history. She was born in the wilderness, and has been wounded in a thousand tragic ages, and imperilled by embattled hosts of savagery and lust. She is strong in the victories of the past; she is the inspiration of the present; she will pass on—in her children aiding, in her children co-operating, we her children one with her in purpose and ideal,—to the splendid era of love, order, and progress; she—Notre Dame de la Garde; she, the genius of Humanity.

F. J. GOULD.

Gibraltar, March 10, 1913.

### The Voltaire of Germany.

1797—1856.

"The viewless arrows of his thought were headed  
And winged with flame."

—TENNYSON.

HEINE'S genius almost defies analysis. He is, and must ever remain, a problem. He is multifarious, luminous, brilliant, like a diamond giving light from a hundred facets. He appears as a youthful champion tilting against the enemies of humanity; but it seems well-nigh impossible to reach the roots of the man's nature. He is a bundle of contradictions. A Jew who despised money; a convert without zeal; a model of resignation, and yet no Christian; a poet living amidst the sternest conditions of prose; a comedian whose life was a tragedy!

Heinrich Heine gathers in one vivid personality all those influences of his time which are the live forces to-day. He was born at a great crisis in European history. The long and terrible period during which the vampires of Church and State had sucked away the life-blood of the world was rapidly ending, and before his tenth year little Heinrich had lived through, and seen, great events. It was the day of Napoleon, and, as Heine puts it, "all boundaries were dislocated." As a boy, he found it hard to learn Latin declensions, which he was sure the Romans never did, "for if they had first to learn Latin they never would have had time to conquer the world." Young Heine was so troubled that he prayed an earnest but heterodox prayer, "O thou poor, once-persecuted God, do help me, if possible, to keep the irregular verbs in my head."

One memorable day the impressionable boy saw Napoleon ride through Dusseldorf on his famous white horse, and he never quite lost the glamor cast over him by the "Emperor." Republican as he afterwards became, Heine always had a tender place in his heart for the great despot. As he laughingly explained, he always had the gift of "loving both ways." Heinrich was a precocious child, and loved reading. His favorite books were, characteristically, *Don Quixote* and *Gulliver's Travels*. At the age of seventeen a rich uncle at Hamburg tried in vain to induce him to choose a business career; but it was useless. The young poet regarded money-grubbing as an accursed thing. Later he studied law at Bonn, Göttingen, and Berlin, and he fell under the influence of Hegel. Years afterwards he caustically referred to this period as that in which he "herded swine with the Hegelians."

With the appearance of his first volume of poems he began to take his true place. He still talked of becoming a lawyer, but his thoughts were on far other things.

"Red life boils in my veins. Every woman is to me the gift of a world. I hear a thousand nightingales. I could eat all the elephants of Hindustan and pick my teeth with the spire of Strasburg Cathedral. Life is the greatest of blessings."

His energies were devoted to writing and not to pleading. Instead of cultivating his clients he wrote his *Travel Pictures*, a book so full of word magic that it showed Heine to be as great an artist in prose as he was in poetry. Its irony was so mordant, so disrespectful, that it was at once placed on the Index Expurgatorius. As a writer, he never elected to dwell beside the still waters. To think of his career is to think of excursions and alarms, of church calling unto conventicle, of pamphlet answering pamphlet, of recriminations and vituperations manifold, and all the joys of literary battle. With all his love of fighting his enthusiasm ever burned for noble ends. The love of liberty shines through the mist of his dreams. And let a man love Freedom and live long enough, and there is no doubt with whom his place must be at the end.

In *The Romantic School* he lashed out at the literary chiefs of reaction in their tenderest spot. He compared their reversion to mediævalism to the hallucinations of Charenton, the Bedlam of Paris. This is how he ridicules Tieck: "He drank so deeply of the mediæval folk tales and ballads that he became almost a child again, and dropped into that juvenile lisp which it cost Mdme. de Stael so much effort to admire."

There came an inevitable stage in which the poet could no longer

"sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Nedera's hair";

but when the sad days arrived he never complained. For seven long years prior to his death he lay sick and solitary on a "mattress grave," his back bent, his legs paralysed, his hands powerless, his sight failing. His ungrudging nature found excuses for his friends' desertion of his sick chamber in the reflection that he was "unconsciously long a-dying." As Matthew Arnold sings in his fine dirge:—

"Oh! not little, when pain  
Is most quelling, and man  
Easily quelled, and the fine  
Temper of genius so soon  
Thrills at each smart, is the praise  
Not to have yielded to pain."

"God's satire weighs heavily upon me," said Heine.

"The Great Author of the Universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven, was bent on demonstrating with crushing force to me, the little earthly so-called German Aristophanes, how my weightiest sarcasms are only pitiful attempts at jesting in comparison with His, and how miserably I am beneath Him in humor, in colossal mockery."

The untamable humorist kept his most wonderful jest for the last. "God will forgive me," he said; "it is his trade."

Such a nature as Heine's was bound to be misunderstood. The puritanical Carlyle called him a "blackguard"; the pious Kingsley thought him "a wicked man." Thackeray, on the other hand, admitted his "great genius"; and Matthew Arnold regarded him as the mouthpiece of his generation. These different estimates are typical of the general attitude. He kindled enthusiasm or roused repulsion wherever he was read.

If we would seek a comparison, we may find it in Voltaire. Both men championed Liberty, and produced the deepest effects on their generations, and left immortal legacies to posterity. The writings of both ring with a defiant note. They are both inspired by devotion to Freedom as true as ever burned in man's heart.

Heine, after all, was a poet. He is at his best in his verse. His melodies are as various as they are faultless. The cadences are now caressingly tender; now lulling, lingeringly mournful; now resonant as the blare of trumpets. The verse now rolls majestically, now dances airily, now rings like a peal of

fairy bells, now sweeps along with the fury and clamor of a storm.

"O lyric voice, half angel and half bird,  
And all a wonder and a wild desire."

Fundamentally, Heine was a Freethinker, and he hated priestcraft with every drop of his blood. He never wearied of pouring scorn on "the molly-coddle homœopathic soul-doctors, who pour the thousandth part of a pint of reason into a gallon of morals, and send people to sleep with it on Sundays." He loathed that "abortion called State religion, that monster born of the intrigue between temporal and spiritual power." He was not "over partial to anthropomorphism." The bolt of his unerring irony is frequently directed towards the most sacred characters in the Christian mythology. In an oft-quoted passage he says that God is dying, and, in a daring figure of speech, suggests the administration to him of the last sacrament. On another occasion he insinuates that perhaps the parvenu God of the Christians is angry with Israel for reminding him of his former obscure national relations.

In the lambent flames of his sardonic humor he scorched everything that the Christian counts dearest. Writing of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, he says:—

"Since his time Deism has vanished from the realm of speculative reason. It may, perhaps, be several centuries yet before this melancholy notice of decease gets universally bruited about; we, however, have long since put on mourning. Immanuel Kant has pursued the path of inexorable philosophy; he has stormed heaven, and put the whole garrison to the edge of the sword."

Even the idea of immortality did not escape his satire. He mockingly suggests that the notion of living for ever must have first occurred to some lover in the arms of his mistress, or to some worthy citizen sipping his beer in the cool of a summer evening.

As a poet, Heine's fame has attained to that height in which praise has become superfluous; but in the character of iconoclast he has a yet higher claim on the attention of Freethinkers. Heine said he knew not if he were worthy of a laurel wreath. "But," he proudly added, "lay on my coffin a sword, for I was a brave soldier in the war of the liberation of humanity." No one will deny the laurel wreath, and assuredly to Heinrich Heine belongs the sword of a valiant soldier of liberty.

MIMNERMUS.

"I don't say 'tis right, and I don't say 'tis wrong," answered the metaphysical laborer. "But I do say 'tis natural. The bud was no more made for you than the bird. 'Twas made for itself—to take its chance of success, like everything else."

"But 'twas me made it, you might say. 'Twas me, under God, for didn't I grow it, and nurse it and prune it and feed it?"

"You did all this," admitted Birkett, "but you didn't net it, you see, and the Lord would say, if He gave the matter a thought, He'd say, 'Well, old Harry Hawke, you very well knew bullfinches was about, and you very well knew their manners and customs; and 'twas your place as a thinking and immortal creature, to outwit 'em.' But you didn't, and so you won't get not gooseberries this year."

"Like your cheek, Johnson," cut in Pancras Widecombe, "like your cheek telling what the Lord would say, and what He wouldn't. You're as bad as Farmer Dunnybrig."

"Drat that man—I hate un!" cried Nicky Glubb from his corner. "So sure of himself as a donkey, and with just as much reason. The Lord this, and the Lord that! I said to him a bit ago, when he stopped and began to preach—I said to un, 'You mark me, Valiant Dunnybrig, you'll get hoofed from heaven yet, for chattering and taking the word out of the mouth of the Almighty!' He said I was past praying for, the old fool, and I said I'd be a shining angel up high above him some day."—*Eden Phillpotts, "Widecombe Fair."*

## Acid Drops.

We are a little late, but not, we hope, too late, in noticing a comment of the *British Congregationalist* on the Essex Hall meeting for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. The writer admits that, with slight exceptions, "the arguments for the abolition of these Laws were quite sound." He objects to the belief of Atheists "that Christians want the Blasphemy Laws retained as a prop for a weak and tottering religion." Then he adds, "They might be surprised to know how many of those whose beliefs they attack would vote with them for the removal of State protection from a faith which is well able to care for itself." We will not now discuss whether religion is "in a weak and tottering state," we simply ask, "If the Blasphemy Laws are not retained for the purpose of protecting religion, for what other purposes are they retained?" There are no special laws protecting politics, or science, or art, or literature from assault in any form. If a man gets into trouble with the authorities in conducting a crusade against teaching in any of these directions, it is because of his behavior or language, and not because of the thing attacked. And the prosecution completely ignores *what* is attacked, concerning itself solely with the language or conduct. This is really all that Freethinkers are asking for in connection with their crusade against the Blasphemy Laws. They do not ask that in attacking religion a man shall be allowed to do whatever he pleases and use whatever language he thinks fit. All they ask is that the same rules that hold good in controversy concerning other subjects shall hold good for religious controversy likewise.

The claim that a great number of Christians disagree with these Blasphemy Laws is, we feel bound to say, more or less hypocritical. If Christians wanted them abolished they could be abolished at once. While they are retained Freethinkers are perfectly justified in claiming that Christians desire their retention as a means of silencing attacks on their faith. The fact of some Christians being manly enough to support real freedom of opinion cannot relieve the bulk of Christians of responsibility for the maintenance of laws that rest upon a foundation of cowardice and intolerance. The writer's talk of the necessity for "the protection of the public—and of ladies and children in particular—against the profanities, the vulgarities, and the obscenities of the Park Agnostic," is simply puerile. The police have already, apart from the Blasphemy Laws, ample powers to deal with genuine cases of obscenity. Vulgarity is another question, and we do not know that it has ever been proposed to punish a man or woman for being "vulgar" except in attacks upon religion. One may be as vulgar as one pleases in preaching or defending religion, and instead of guarding "ladies and children" against this, they are invited to attend. The real protection against vulgarity must come from the public taste and intelligence, not from the maintenance of laws that elicit torrents of falsehood and hypocrisy whenever they are defended.

The reference to Agnostic vulgarities and obscenities, we must confess, yields us some amusement. So many people have preferred "Agnostic" to "Atheist" because they thought it more respectable, less aggressive, and more likely to disarm opposition. And we always warned them that so soon as Agnosticism became at all troublesome it would be met with exactly the same opposition as Atheism has been met with. Our warning seems fully justified. It used to be the Atheistic vulgarities and obscenities. Now it is Agnostic obscenity against which women and children must be protected. One really gains nothing by bending to bigotry; these Agnostics might just as well have called themselves Atheists at the outset.

It is a pity that people will not restrict their writings to matters with which they have at least a nodding acquaintance. The *Modern Man*, commenting on the demand for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, says that:—

"Under the thinly veiled guise of various creeds there is already far too much of that which borders on the blasphemous to be heard every day in Hyde Park. The repeal of the Blasphemy Laws would result in a veritable tornado of blasphemous oratory. If that is liberty, we don't want it."

This is the kind of paragraph that the average irresponsible scribbler is given to writing, and unfortunately it suits only too well a section of the public against which the better-minded portion really do want protecting. The Blasphemy Laws are not used against "various creeds," but against one "creed" only. Religious people may be as abusive and as vulgar as they please. The man who does not know this,

we should have thought, would have been too ignorant for even the ordinary catchpenny paper. Moreover, Hyde Park is not even the whole of London—and certainly neither the most respectable nor the most intelligent portion of London. If Hyde Park is so disreputable as the *Modern Man* thinks, it can be dealt with in other ways, quite apart from the Blasphemy Laws. We are of opinion that there is a much greater need to protect the public against floods of "spicy" paragraphs, served up in popular journals, than against tornadoes of "blasphemous" oratory.

Sir Hiram Maxim's able and interesting speech at the Essex Hall meeting for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws contained one mistake. He spoke of unbelievers in the fables of the Bible, who said what they honestly thought about them, as "liable to be arrested and imprisoned with hard labor." This is not the case. "Blasphemy" is technically only a "misdemeanor," not a felony; and sentences under them cannot (and never did) include hard labor. Not that this is any great advantage, for the "hard labor" prisoners have the best of the bargain, being better fed and less confined to their cells than other prisoners.

The Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon, of Stamford-hill, speaks of God's sigh, which must be echoed within ourselves, if we are to be acceptable in his sight. But why should God ever sigh? Is it because of his failure as Creator and his non-success as Redeemer? And why should God's sigh have a place in us? Are we to sigh because we pity the Lord; because we are sorry that the works of his hand have turned out so badly?

The Rt. Rev. Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Winchester, has left Farnham Castle for Spain and will be away for some weeks. Christ died on the cross; but some of his followers live on it—very comfortably.

A play entitled "The Sin of David," has been produced at Johannesburg, and has created "a profound sensation." If the production follows the Bible story closely we are not surprised.

Although Mr. Chesterton goes out of his way to attack many Freethought writers in his recently published *Victorian Age of Literature*, he makes an exception in the case of James Thomson, the author of "The City of Dreadful Night." Says Chesterton, "Thompson was a fine poet; but his pessimism, combined with a close pugnacity, does not follow any of the large but loose lines of the Swinburnian age. But he was a great person—he knew how to be democratic in the dark." Chesterton cannot be accurate in the light, for he spells Thomson's name with a "p."

To make certain that he should end his own life, the Rev. James Alfred Nash, Chaplain at St. Marylebone Workhouse, took a dose of poison and shot himself. According to the revivalists, it is only Atheists who commit suicide.

Sir Edwin Durning Lawrence, who believes in the Baconian authorship of the plays of Shakespeare, now contends that Bacon also wrote the Introduction to the Authorized Version of the Bible, and besides that edited and verified it. That Bacon should have edited the "Jew Book" is the unkindest cut of all.

In the good old days people were pretty sharply punished for desecrating the "Sawbath," even though it went no further than kissing one's own wife. There is at least one parson in Britain who regrets that these days have passed for ever. Rev. Pulston Jones told a Pwllheli Free Church Council meeting that he would like to excommunicate any member who bought a paper on Sunday. We quite believe Mr. Jones to be in earnest, and we feel certain that an agitation to revive the old village stocks and place people therein for not attending church would meet with his warm approval.

The *Christian World*, in reviewing one of the numerous works devoted to the reconciliation of science and religion, remarks that it is "greatly to the good" that the author "refrains from buttressing his arguments with textual quotations." Our readers will remember the time when such a work would have been declared suspect had it refrained from this course. Nowadays, even Christians are beginning to recognise that to quote the Bible as an authority for a statement in science is about as helpful as quoting Hans Andersen.

The *British Weekly*, of all papers I is responsible for the following:—

"Beer and the Bible were very prominent in the 1873 election for East Staffordshire, which resulted in the return of Mr. Allsopp, the Conservative brewer, by a large majority.

"In the window of an hotel at West Bromwich, crowded with Mr. Allsopp's agents, appeared a remarkable sketch of two cherub-faced Sunday-school children bearing between them a banner which bore the strange device of a Bible ornamented with a crown and sceptre, with the following lines beneath:—

" ' Holy Bible, Book divine,  
Precious treasure, thou art mine;  
Mine to tell me whence I came,  
Mine to tell me what I am.'

"Then came—

" ' Shall we have this blessing taken from us? No. Then vote for Allsopp.' "

The late Pierpont Morgan has at least two ardent defenders in Great Britain. Both the *Church Times* and the *Guardian* write in praise of the late financier. He was, says the latter journal, "fundamentally a man of high principle and singleness of purpose." He was also "a convinced, if not enthusiastic, Churchman." He did much for the American Church, and "to the day of his death he paid the lighting bill of St. Paul's Cathedral." We recall the name of another financier, Mr. Hooley, who presented a service of gold plate (afterwards, we believe, returned) to St. Paul's Cathedral. Evidently there is nothing in huge financial operations that stands in the way of devout Churchmanship. Rockefeller's piety is also, we believe, beyond question.

During the last ten years Canada has added to its religious capital twenty of what the *Guardian* calls "fancy religions." We see nothing to object to in this. If people will have religions, the greater the variety the better. With so extensive a variety of gods and creeds in the world, it seems remarkable that so many people find nothing in hand to suit them.

The special correspondent of the *Daily Mirror*, describing a bull-fight at Seville, included the following pious item: "All concerned in the actual fight drove to the ring in open carriages, and many made their way to the little chapel at the ringside to kneel at the altar before entering the ring."

Provincial papers are often more outspoken than their metropolitan rivals. Recently the *Southend Standard*, in discussing the decline in church-going, sharply criticised the statement of Canon Reay that such decline was to be attributed to golf, tennis, sea-bathing, and seaside attractions. "Suppose," said our contemporary, "all these agencies effective and operating together, they have no significance or relation to our working-class population, whose absenteeism is nigh to universal." This is a good shot which should cause the Canon to explode.

Miss Marie Corelli has an article in *Nash's Magazine* for April on "The Lordship of Love." In it she describes the militant Suffragettes as "a kind of lost tribe, self-exiled from every Garden of Eden." Members of the "lost" tribe are frequently discovered at country houses and beside pillar boxes. Besides, Adam and Eve were not "self-exiled" from Eden; but "fired out."

Among the recent wills of the poor clergy we observe that of a late Bishop of Japan, £1,596; Rev. E. W. Clark, Notting Hill, £2,399; F. W. Lang, Torquay, £10,184; G. C. Williams, Dublin, £13,031; C. Bell, Prebendary of Salisbury, £13,461; Canon Mrowbray Trotter, £13,717; C. Slingsby, Knaresborough, £18,493; J. Bent, Eastbourne, £26,154; and Rev. Sir W. Honeyman, Shropshire, £89,871. We rejoice to see that so many of the clergy were relieved from the pressure of absolute want during their lives. Nothing so interferes with a due condition of spiritual serenity as taking thought for the morrow, what one shall eat and wherewithal one shall be clothed. Freed from this anxiety, the above-named gentlemen were able, by the dispensation of Providence, to give undivided attention to the spiritual welfare of their respective flocks.

The *Daily Telegraph* sought the opinion of that popular actor, Mr. Forbes Robertson, on the question of the decline of Church attendance. Numbers of clergymen also aired their views in its columns. Why does the editor associate the actor and the clergy? Does he regard them as players?

Professor Samuel J. Jones, of the Gunter Biblical and Literary College, Texas, has published a book of "Mathematical Wrinkles." The volume contains no reference to that prize puzzle in mathematics—the Christian Trinity.

A girl revivalist has been making a sensation at Wimbledon. The papers say that "she spoke for half an hour without ceasing." Thousands of ladies could beat this modest record without "inspiration."

We see from the program description of Dante's "Inferno," as presented by animated pictures at the Albert Hall, Sheffield, that "Simony, in Dante's time, was considered a very serious offence, and was much more *fragrant* than now." We suppose this is a subtle reference to the "odor of sanctity" which often surrounded it.

Some remarkable miracles have been occurring at the Monastery of the Atonement, near Albany, New York. Quite recently the Abbot of the Monastery fed a wayfarer. His features were Jewish and resembled those of the Savior. He was asked to take two buckets and fill them at the well; but one of the sisters, noting that he looked frail, excused him the task. Then the man with the Jewish face departed. But when the Mother Superior stooped to pick up the pails she found them full. So full that "no mortal hand could have filled them so full, as the water would have splashed over the top in the carrying." In another case, three chickens were stolen from the monastery. At once the aid of St. Anthony was invoked, and the next night three chickens, different to the ones stolen, were put back. The Abbot explains that St. Anthony had worked on the thief's conscience to make restitution—perhaps, with someone else's chickens. Who now says that the age of faith is dead? It is a pity that the miraculously filled pails did not keep full, despite all attempts to empty them, or that the three chickens did not grab the thief and lead him to the nearest police station. It is the Abbot's careful abstention from additions of this kind that gives his story such a convincing air of unadorned truth.

A Reigate lady, Mrs. Oxley, was killed on Good Friday while preparing for church. She had gone upstairs, and while in her room was killed by a sudden flash of lightning. We wonder what bearing this has on the doctrine of a particular Providence. Had she been preparing for a Freethought meeting the moral would have been an obvious one.

Complaining of petty thefts in his church, the rector of St. James's, Colchester, says that "even the thermometer has been stolen, and now the verger cannot tell whether the congregation will be boiled or frozen." The virtuous verger is probably on the verge of vitriolic and variegated verbosity.

Christian England may be reassured. "Hubert," the great Hubert Bland, bourgeois Socialist and Catholic infidel, has just told it that it holds the promise of the future. So *that's* all right. "I venture confidently to predict," he says, "that the future of England is a religious, not an atheistic, future." Some people are always *venturing* to *predict*, and they always do it *confidently*. They always predict what their public wants to believe, and the game is worth a good deal to them from many points of view, including the financial. Wise people, of course, remember that prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error. But wise people are always few. Nobody knows that better than Mr. Hubert Bland.

Dr. Alfred Wilson has been telling the members of the Child Study Society that he had seen a human brain "which resembled the brain of a cat, and it belonged to a woman who was an idiot, who ate ravenously like a beast, and who, when irritated, spat like a cat." This medical relic should be of service to Christian Evidence lecturers, who are often hard pressed for proofs for the Design argument.

At the Lancashire Congregational Union meetings last month it was asserted that "the Church of Christ stands as a bulwark against the wilderness." And what a sorry bulwark it is! Though it has been in existence for nearly two thousand years, the majority of the inhabitants of Christendom are "in a waste howling wilderness" still. What has the Church ever done towards solving the problem of poverty? What has nearly always been its attitude to disease? Why, the Church succeeded for fifteen hundred years in arresting the progress of the world.

The *Guardian* still continues its crusade in favor of conscription, under the name of "Universal National Service." It does not believe that the early Christians were generally opposed to war, although it admits a difference of opinion on the subject. At any rate, after Constantine—that is, as soon as Christians as a body could wage war—

"Religious scruples as to the lawfulness of war were no longer expressed. Bishops themselves appeared as leaders in battle, and crusades were preached as holy enterprises. Even the Reformation was followed by wars and massacres and by the mutual slaughter of Christians, and Cromwell could think of himself in his military exploits as a true and heroic servant of God."

Of the truth of this there can, we think, be no "possible, probable shadow of doubt," to use the words of W. S. Gilbert. The only difference between Christian warfare and warfare with other people is that Christians have always accompanied their wars with a perfect deluge of pious cant.

"Concert Supersedes Church" runs a headline in a daily paper, which goes on to say that at the Easter Vestry Meeting at St. Peter's Church, Hornsey, it was stated that the Sunday Concerts at the Alexandra Palace had seriously affected the attendances and collections at the services. That is precisely the reason why the clergy so bitterly oppose all Sunday amusements.

There is to be a Noah's Ark fair at the Albert Hall London, in June, and the animals are to be represented by well-known society people. Whoever represents the ass will not want much "make-up."

"Ghosts" are usually very serious; but, according to the *Evening News*, a spook has appeared at the Vicarage of Weston, Yorkshire, who seems to be gifted with a fine sense of humor. One of the maids saw the figure of a woman carrying a small coffin, and the maid heard the woman humming the hymn, "Peace, Perfect Peace." Then came a terrible noise of the smashing of furniture; chairs were upset, a washstand was broken, and a big wardrobe thrown down. A delightful transformation from perfect peace to imperfect pieces.

In connection with the funeral of Lord Wolseley, the *Daily Mirror* quoted some magnificent lines from Swinburne and Garibaldi's glorious address to his soldiers. When it comes to great ideas, Christians have to call upon the Atheists.

#### THE CURATE'S APE.

A curate had received as a present from a missionary friend in America an ape, which won universal admiration for his domestic talents.

One day, at the time of the feast of the patron saint of the village, the priest was honored by the visit of the bishop; and the curate took pains to exhibit the talented animal to him.

"Just see, your eminence; he imitates me in everything. See how he has decked himself out in my alb and my hat. And he is capable afterwards of kneeling and murmuring a prayer."

"Truly, he is very amusing. And what intelligence! And what precision in his movements! He resembles you exactly, reverend sir!"

"And see now! He sits down with us at the table; and before eating, he makes the sign of the cross."

"Incredible!"

"And he does like me in everything. Before eating the soup, he drinks a swallow of wine; then he adds a pinch of salt to his soup."

"We might think we saw a human creature."

"That is what I say, your eminence. He acts just like me."

During this conversation, the maid comes in with the soup-dish. The ape takes hold of her head, and plants a vigorous kiss on her neck.

The bishop is stupefied. Recovering himself, he turns to the curate with the pertinent question: "And who taught him to do that?"

#### SWEET REVENGE.

Judge: "It seems to me that I have seen you before."

Prisoner: "You have, your honor. I taught your daughter singing lessons."

Judge: "Thirty years."



## Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

### To Correspondents.

**PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.**—Previously acknowledged, £96 15s. 4d. Received since:—John Deacon, 5s. 3d.; H. Kennedy, £3 3s.; C. H. M. Gronn, Australia (per H. Sall), 13s. 10d.; J. F. Aust, 5s.; A. Phillips, 10s.; Richard Johnson, £5; W. H. Harrap, 2s. 6d.; D. Stewart, 5s. *Per Miss Vance*: "Postman," 2s. 6d.

**A. LYON.**—The book dealt with by Mr. Cohen in his pamphlet, *Deity and Design*, is, you will see from the pamphlets forwarded, Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace's *World of Life*.

**C. LOXTON.**—We learn with regret the decease of Mr. Plackett, and congratulate you on the thoughtful and eloquent address delivered over the grave of your old friend. The note of sincerity in such Secular services must serve as useful object lessons to all Christians capable of appreciating their significance.

**H. KENNEDY,** subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, is glad to see we have "jonked the Deil" again. He hopes we shall "get back rejuvenated" to "do battle for the great and good cause" of Freethought.

**ROBSON PAIGE.**—You were treated as Freethinkers usually are treated by the "glorious free press." Your letter would have been inserted otherwise. Thanks for your congratulations and good wishes.

**E. P. (Canada).**—We see nothing in Pastor Russell's utterances calling for special treatment in the *Freethinker*. We think Dr. Talmage was spoken of in the past tense. We know he is not in Brooklyn now—for he has been dead some years. He took all the money referred to when he was living.

**A. STAPLES.**—Humor is not the strong point of the dear *Daily News*. Thanks for your personal good wishes.

**E. B.**—Much obliged for cuttings.

**H. DAWSON.**—There is really only one Coleridge, the Coleridge, Samuel Taylor Coleridge—a great poet, and as Shelley said, with his usual felicity, a "subtle-souled psychologist." The passage you inquire about occurs in his *Table Talk*, a volume included in Bohn's Library.

**L. GREENWOOD.**—Mr. Foote was too ill to write about Mark Rutherford (Mr. William Hale White) at the time of his decease, a few weeks ago, but he may find an opportunity of dealing with that fine writer shortly.

**A. PINLEY.**—Thanks for paper. The immediate source of the rev gentleman's ideas may be as you say; but the idea that the universe has undergone a preparation for man is really an old one. Moreover, it is the central idea of Dr. Wallace's *World of Life*. It is, of course, a pure assumption, absolutely incapable of proof, and quite reversing the logical order of events. Grass does not exist for the cow to eat; the cow exists because it eats the grass. Mr. Foote is, we are pleased to say, making good progress, and we hope to see him in his usual form in good time for the Annual Conference.

**S. RICHARDSON.**—We really do not think that Bergson is worth the time and attention that has been given him. He is enjoying a certain vogue, but in our opinion it is a vogue only. And it is so easy to become fashionable by disguising animistic ideas in philosophic language. Time is the great test, and within ten years we expect to see M. Bergson go the same road as many of his predecessors.

**R. CHAPMAN.**—So John Sanderson is dead! We knew him for more than thirty years. He stood in our mind for all that was manly.

**J. F. AUST.**—You are right. "Mimnermus" should have ascribed the passage to Bassanio instead of Helena. But we all make mistakes at times. Thanks for your good wishes. We note your hope to read our "pages on the Master."

**SPICER.**—We don't recollect it, and fancy you must be mistaken.

**A. PHILLIPS (S. Africa),** subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "My desire is to make it £5 by the end of the year, as a token of my admiration for your grand efforts."

**RICHARD JOHNSON,** subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, says he is "sorry to see how slowly the Fund progresses." "I do hope," he adds, "that those who can afford a 'fiver' or more will hurry up at once." Our old friend, a well known Manchester veteran, says he was "quite upset" by our "Personal" note, and begs us to heed our doctor's warning and take more care of ourselves in future.

**S. NOAKES.**—We are pleased at your efforts to spread the light, and the letter you enclose does credit to both yourself and your convert. We have allocated your P.O. for 8s. 2d. as desired. A selection of pamphlets, likely to be useful, will be forwarded by our shop manager.

**J. W. ROBINSON.**—Your query is answered in our advertisement columns. A letter to this office will secure all the information you require.

**T. C. HOLDEN (U.S.A.).**—Thanks for name of probable new subscriber. Form and paper sent as requested.

**T. M. MOZLEY.**—Thanks for cutting. Mr. Arthur Henderson is a politician and a local preacher—two avocations not very favorable to clear thinking or helpful speech. Responsible people are not likely to take his deliverances on Unbelief or Determinism very seriously. Mr. Foote, as you will see, is fast shaking off his indisposition.

**J. BYRNE.**—Obliged for epitaph, which may be useful later. We are very pleased to hear from one whose acquaintance with the *Freethinker* dates from 1886. That a paper can be read with interest for so long by one person is a high compliment to those that have helped to fill its pages.

**"DORCHESTER."**—The trick of lumping together "Drunkness, gambling, immorality, and infidelity" is a very common one, although Sir Algernon Coote probably thinks it to be original. We should have no hesitation in saying that Christians have nothing to learn from "Infidels" in the shape of drunkenness or immorality or gambling, and if every Christian abstained from all three, what remained would be of a very manageable character.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOME friends are expressing a fear that they may not see me at the N.S.S. Conference on Whit-Sunday. I think they may set their minds at rest on that point. I am on the road to recovery now,—though it is a longer road than I like, for I am not as young as I was and I was very badly shaken. My severe illness put a strain upon the heart, which takes time to get its old tone back; so that I must move gently along a quiet road for a bit. But it is only a question of time now, I think; and if the north-east wind will only give place to something more summery and salubrious (Meredith's "sou-wester" would suit me to a nicety) I should make more rapid progress than I am doing just at present. I really ought to be myself again by Whit-Sunday.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Sugar Plums.

The course of lectures in the Stratford Town Hall opened well on Sunday evening last. There was a good attendance, and the lecture was listened to with close attention throughout. At the close of the lecture, on the chairman, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, inviting questions, a local clergyman did his best, with the aid of a small group of supporters, to create a disturbance. Not content with being permitted to ask questions, he mounted a seat and kept up a series of interjections during the whole of the time that Mr. Cohen was replying. Eventually this ill-behaved representative of the faith was reduced to silence, although we may safely say that none but a Freethought audience would have refrained from forcibly ejecting him. However, as he appeared to have

come for the special purpose of creating a disorder, it was well that he was frustrated. He will probably not try the game a second time.

To-day's lecturer at Stratford is Mr. Lloyd. We hope that local Freethinkers will do their utmost to secure the large attendance he deserves, with as great a sprinkling of strangers as is possible. Mr. Lloyd's lectures are always worthy of close attention, and those who hear him for the first time will certainly not regret their visit. Those who have heard him before will need no inducement to come again. The chair will be taken at 7.30. Tram, train, or 'bus will land visitors at the door of the hall.

Dr. J. G. Frazer, the author of that great work *The Golden Bough*, which has grown under his hands, since the first edition, into so many splendid volumes, is a most indefatigable worker. He has just published, through Macmillan & Co., the first volume of an entirely new work—*The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead*, which will receive attention in our columns presently. Meanwhile we quote the following striking passage, which will be of great interest to most of our readers:—

"Whether other men from a simple contemplation of their own nature, quite apart from reasoning, know or believe themselves intuitively to be immortal, I cannot say; but I can say with some confidence that for myself I have no such intuition whatever of my own immortality, and that if I am left to the resources of my natural faculties alone, I can as little affirm the certain or probable existence of my personality after death as I can affirm the certain or probable existence of a personal God."

The religious papers may be relied upon not to give this important passage a gratuitous advertisement.

One of the leading articles in the April number of the *English Review* is "The Christian Drum," by the editor, Mr. Austin Harrison. It is boldly and vigorously written. "From the year one," the writer says, "this religion of mercy, charity, humility, forgiveness, and repentance has stood as the citadel of conscience and moral government, yet in its name the drum has always beaten fiercer and fiercer to arms and conquest; and there have been more wars waged in the name of Christianity than in all the annals of mankind during the thousands of years previous to the Crucifixion, and there has been more human blood shed for the Cross than for any other cause in history; and now, after nineteen hundred years of warfare, Europe is turned into a drill-ground of utterly wasteful armies of destruction going they do not know where, seeking they do not know what, primed for mutual slaughter in the name of the 'very God,' justified by the supreme hypocrisy of self-defence."

"The Church, Christianity," Mr. Harrison says later on, "will follow the drum as it has always done through the ages. War! It has lived on war. Every battle since the Crusades has been fought in its name. Assuredly there is no hope there, though in England alone last year eight thousand books on theology were written and published."

### The Bible as a Guide.

IN this glorious country of ours we have one book which is considered by Christians to be of more value than all the rest of the literature of the world. It is the Authorised Version of the English Bible. This book is a State-protected book. It is not only alleged to be inspired by God, but it is protected by Act of Parliament, and everybody who dares to criticise it adversely runs the risk of fine or imprisonment in this world, and the glorious prospect of a particularly warm corner in the next. This book is the foundation of the Christian belief, and Christians are so much in love with its contents that they insist upon it being taught in the schools, and moral lessons inculcated from its stories and precepts. Further, it is alleged to contain a true and faithful account of the origin of the universe and of man, and its teachings form the foundation upon which

all the sects have built up their religious and moral theories, upon the right understanding of which, they declare, depends the welfare of the human race. In other words, the Bible is alleged to be a safe guide for man in this world, and the best of all guides for the world to come; for its commands are unerring and its teachings infallible. These, at least, were the teachings of the Christian Church up to a little more than a quarter of a century ago; but they have undergone some changes and modifications in recent years, and it is now doubtful how much or how little of the Bible it is necessary to believe in order to be considered a true Christian. Even now, however, the Bible is considered to be the safest guide for man, although Christians acknowledge that every word of it is not divinely inspired; it nevertheless contains the word of God, although every Christian must discriminate between the mere language of the author and "the direct utterance of the Most High."

In the exercise of his reason, however, the rational thinker finds ample excuse for doubting the capability of this Christian guide to fulfil its claim; he finds its directions deceptive, and its guidance contradictory and mischievous. In fact, the man who would place absolute reliance upon the Bible would find himself being driven hither and thither through a maze of faith, never able for a single moment to plant his foot firmly upon the impregnable rock of science and experience. What, then, is the Bible? It is a book composed of a series of pamphlets written in distant ages, nobody knows precisely when, or where, or by whom. These books or pamphlets express the opinions of the writers upon a variety of topics, and many Christians still credulously regard these opinions as though they were the infallible utterances of an all-wise and all-good God. The Bible contains a history of the cosmogony of the earth and also an account of the alleged creation of man and of the alleged "fall" in the Garden of Eden.

A critical examination, however, of the first and second chapters of Genesis will make clear to any discriminating mind that the writers were ignorant of the most elementary and demonstrable facts of astronomy, geology, and palæontology, and that they had not the remotest idea of the evolutionary processes by which animal life had developed from lowly forms through crustacea, fishes, reptiles, and birds, lower mammalia, up to man.

In fact, upon the face of these documents, they carry no greater authority than the views of persons living in a primitive age and giving expression to the best thoughts of the age in which they lived. Moreover, the Bible, as we have it, is by no means a complete compilation of the books which originally composed its contents; indeed, a large number of books or essays which are mentioned in some of the books are left out altogether.

In Numbers, for instance, there is a quotation from a book called "The Book of the Wars of the Lord." In Judges and Samuel we read of "The Book of Gasher," and among other books that are mentioned are "The Books of the Acts of Solomon," "The Account of the Chronicles of King David," "The Book of the Chronicles of the King of Judah," and "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel." These are only a few of the books which once formed part of the Bible and are now omitted from the Authorised Version altogether; indeed, some writers have declared that the present volume only contains about one-twelfth of the original records which made up its contents. By what process of discrimination have these books been left out? If the Bible at any time contained the "direct utterances of the Most High," if at any time it was, what a former Bishop of Ripon declared, "pure, unadulterated truth—truth without the admixture of error," was it not a gratuitous piece of impertinence on the part of the learned revisers to make thousands of alterations in the text, and leave out records that had hitherto formed part of the holy volume? It is too late in the day for the Christians to try and reconcile the statements of the Bible

with the observed order of phenomena, and to pretend that the primitive guesses of our early ancestors are in perfect harmony with the undisputed facts of modern science. To make any such declaration in these days is only to bring upon the affirmers the ridicule and contempt of the most intelligent members of the Christian world, as well as the whole of the Freethinkers of the country. Some, however, seem to think that a good deal of guidance may be derived from a study of the pages of Holy Writ; and though many of them are aware of the fact that the Bible statements are in many respects unscientific and unhistoric, and many passages distinctly immoral, they nevertheless insist that it is necessary that the children in schools should be taught to regard these things as true, and that no suggestion or hint of the untrustworthy character of such teachings should be allowed to enter the minds of the rising generation. But if we take the narratives of the early books of the Bible, what spiritual guidance can we get from them? There is nothing specially edifying in the story of Adam and Eve's encounter with the talking serpent in the Garden of Eden, and, although we are told that our first parents were very wicked in not resisting the temptation of the Devil himself, who appeared in the form of a serpent, I cannot see how they can be held responsible for their actions on this occasion, when they did not know the difference between good and evil until after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit. It is true that they were informed by Jehovah, according to Genesis, that on the day they ate of the fruit they would surely die, but as they did not die until hundreds of years afterwards, I fail to see that there is any moral or spiritual lesson to be learned from such a narrative. The story of Cain and Abel is interesting enough as a narrative, but I am not able to see what spiritual guidance a good Christian can get from it. Abel was a sincere believer in the Hebrew God, and Cain was a firm believer also; but Abel offered lamb as a burnt offering to his Deity, and Cain, not to be outdone in his homage, offered up "the fruits of the earth," which, to him as a farmer, was the best he had to offer. Jahveh showed favor to the younger brother and frowned contemptuously upon poor Cain. Cain felt this slight most keenly. He could not endure such manifest partiality. His blood was up, and in a fit of rage, instead of laughing to scorn this petty exhibition of a Deity's favoritism, he met his brother in a field, wrangled with him, and in a moment of uncontrollable passion murdered him. Abel was a saint. What good thing he ever did is buried with him in the tomb of oblivion. Cain was a sinner.

But who, having read his story, has not had pity for him. Abel may have been a very provoking fellow. Who knows? At all events, it is certain that Cain would never have assaulted his brother if it had not been for his sensitive nature and the keen feeling of injustice he experienced from Jahveh, to whom we must refer as the primary cause of the murder. What moral or spiritual lesson is to be learned from his story? Is it that we must be careful of the kind of God that we worship—that he is just and upright and impartial in all his dealings with his children? Or must we take care that, if we offer him any sacrifices, we must be careful to ascertain beforehand whether they will meet with his approval? Or is the moral that we must not under any circumstances lose our temper? Then why did God give man such feelings and passions if he knew beforehand that many of them would not be able to keep them under control?

The story of Noah and of the giants who fell in love with the daughters of men and seriously corrupted their morals may form food for reflection for many beside Christians, but I doubt whether they could find from such narratives any serious spiritual guidance worthy of the name. I pass over the absurd stories of the Flood and the Tower of Babel as being so manifestly fairy tales as to be unworthy of the credence of intelligent Christians, and ask

what spiritual guidance they can get from the Biblical stories of the careers of such mythical persons as Father Abraham, "the Father of Nations," Isaac, and Jacob? The story of the early career of Moses is not very inspiring, nor his appearance, with his brother Aaron, before Pharaoh, and the wonderful story of his tricks of legerdemain, in order to convince the Egyptian monarch or potentate that he represented Jahveh, especially when we are told that this God had hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the children of Israel go. The story of the plagues and the terrible sufferings to which the poor Egyptians were subjected may be interesting enough to the untrained imagination of young children, but I fail to see what food for moral or spiritual guidance a good Christian can obtain from the study of such narratives; or what useful purpose is served by insisting that such stories contain an inspired message from God to man.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### What Do Freethinkers Believe?

FREETHINKERS are not Christians; for Christianity is based on dogmas that are repugnant to reason and common sense.

The Bible tells us that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i. 1). This statement, by whomsoever it was first made, is pure assumption. Is it not more reasonable to believe that the universe—that is, illimitable space, with all its myriads of stars and planets and comets—has existed from all eternity than to believe that at some epoch of the misty past it was created by some unknown and incomprehensible Being? One fact is beyond all doubt—that infinite space never had a "beginning," and must, therefore, have always existed.

The Bible tells us that, some 6,000 years ago, God created a man and a woman named Adam and Eve (Gen. i. 27); that he placed them in a garden called the "Garden of Eden" (Gen. ii. 23); that there they disobeyed his commands (Gen. iii. 6); and that then he drove them out of the garden and cursed the ground upon which they walked (Gen. iii. 17-24). And the Christian doctrine declares not only that these statements are true, but that Adam and Eve were the parents of the human race; that the sin which they committed against their Maker has descended upon all their posterity; and that every human being will be burned in the "everlasting fires prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41) if they do not believe in one Jesus Christ, who is said to have been the Son of God.

Are these statements true? They are not. Such persons as Adam and Eve never existed; and mankind has been upon the earth, not a mere 6,000 years, but for tens of thousands of years. The story of the Fall is a story, and nothing more; and, therefore, all the religious dogmas that are based upon it are untrue.

What, then, do Freethinkers believe? They believe in that which is just; in that only which can be proved to be true. They know that the religious dogmas which are taught by the priests of all the numerous sects are born of ignorance and superstition; for, as Whately says, "on those mysterious points which are inscrutable to man, the learned can have no advantage over the ignorant and the simple, for in utter darkness the strongest sight and the weakest are on a level." They know that mankind are the children of nature and the creatures of circumstances.

The Bible teaches predestination—that is that, before this earth was created, God knew and determined what should be the life of every creature upon it; but Christians aver that mankind are free agents, that is, that they can determine for themselves what their future shall be, both here and hereafter, if an hereafter there be. But these statements are utterly

irreconcilable; for *God is Omnipotent and Omniscient, or he is not*. If he be not omnipotent and omniscient, he is a *myth and nothing more*; but if he be, all the woes and miseries and crimes which beset mankind and blacken the pages of history are to be attributed to him and to him alone.

That mankind are the children of nature and the creatures of circumstances is beyond all doubt. It goes without saying that the country in which a man is born, the social status of his parents, his physical powers and mental endowments, and all the circumstances of his environment are due to some unknown power or force, the idea of which can only be expressed by some such word as "Fate." And throughout life every man discovers for himself that he is the creature of circumstances over which he has little or no control. This fatalism is commonly known as "Luck." And so potent is this power or force that the belief in it has been embalmed in the aphorism that "it is better to be born lucky than rich."

But do not Freethinkers believe in an hereafter? Have they no hopes and fears—that is, wishes and desires—regarding a future state of being? Certainly they have! But they differ from Christians in this respect. They have no fears of infinite injustice—no belief in, and therefore no dread of, eternal pain and misery. The Christian doctrine is based on fear—on mortal terror that is engendered by ignorance and superstition. Christians believe in hell, and all its hideous surroundings. They worship an Omnipotent Being who, if their doctrine be true, is an Omnipotent Fiend—an Omnipotent Being who created mankind in order that he might torture the greater part of it in hell throughout eternity. For are we not told that "many be called but few chosen" (Matt. xx. 16); that "straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. vii. 14)? To Freethinkers this belief is a hideous nightmare. If there be one thing of which they feel absolutely certain, it is that in the next world, if there be another world, there is no such place as hell.

To the Freethinker the hereafter means eternal happiness, or eternal annihilation. It means, if the grave be the entrance to another world, that that world will be a world of light and gladness, unclouded by the horror of an everlasting hell. And what sane man will say that eternal annihilation is not preferable to, and more just than, eternal woe and misery? Who can believe in eternal woe? It means, horrible to relate, not eternal death, for that is simply annihilation, but *eternal dying!* It means *excruciating agony that shall last for ever*—a never-ending fiendish miracle; for the tortured quivering flesh of the victim must be re-created even whilst it is being destroyed. Who can believe such a blood-curdling doctrine? Who can believe that such a fiendish doctrine was enunciated by one who, we are told, taught that man should forgive his fellow-man not "seven times, but until seventy times seven" (Matt. xx.)?—which means always. Surely the creature cannot feel and show more pity for, and sympathy with, suffering humanity than the Creator! If there be a Creator, is it not the rankest blasphemy to attribute such fiendish cruelty to him?

The Freethinker feels that such a doctrine is false—feels that it cannot possibly be true. He knows that such persons as Adam and Eve never existed, that the story of the Fall is mere legend; and that, consequently, as there never was such a crime as Original Sin, the pathetic drama that is founded upon it is a tale, and nothing more. Strong in this knowledge, therefore, the Freethinker goes down to the grave in peace—to the grave where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest" (Job iii. 17). For this reason, too, we who are alive sorrow not for the dead, but for the living. Our hearts go out in sympathy with those who have been bereft of their loved ones. We sorrow not with the "dead who know not anything.....for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave" (Eccle. ix. 5-10). To the living we speak

words of comfort; but to the dead, when bending over the grave, we simply say "Good-by!"

The sun hath set;  
But golden beams still linger in the sky—  
Fond memories of the time when first we met;  
Good-by!

The tree is dead;  
Riven by forked lightning from on high;  
But still its green boughs, lifelike, wave o'erhead;  
Good-by!

Never again  
Shall evening twilight glad his weary eye;  
The shadows darken, night comes on again;  
Good-by!

J. W. DE CAUX.

## Freethought Abroad.

THE *London Mail* of February 22 is responsible for an anecdote of the Spanish Monarch which exhibits the royal *gaucherie* in an acute form. The statement, heading and all, is as under:—

### "ALFONSO GETS THE OISEAU.

"The Spanish King's gallant habit of sending round bouquets to the stage door—very often, of course, out of courtesy pure and simple—jarred badly the other night. His Majesty was motoring back to San Sebastian after one of his frequent consultations with Dr. Moure, the Bordeaux throat specialist, and broke the journey at Pau, where he booked a box at the local Opera House. Halfway through the show, 'Kreutzer Sonata,' an A.D.C. was sent behind with a bouquet for the prima donna. He returned with the flowers and clearly agitated. 'Who is she? Why has she refused them?' asked Alfonso, consulting his program. 'The name conveys nothing to me. Find out from the management who she is!' The A.D.C. did as he was bid. Presently he returned, more agitated than before. 'Well, who is she?' demanded Alfonso. 'She is not singing under her real name,' ventured the officer. 'Any fool knows that,' interrupted the King, now thoroughly roused. 'What is her real name?' 'Senora Paz Ferrer, Your Majesty!' replied the A.D.C. And Alfonso was silent, marvelling at his own stupidity. Had not the girl gone on the stage after vainly begging her father's life of the King? Though a first-rate singer, Senora Ferrer finds it impossible to obtain an engagement in Spain."

King Alfonso would have been better inspired if he had placed a penitential wreath on Ferrer's grave.

The report in the English papers (notably in the *Observer* of March 9) of the experiences of an Englishman in a Spanish prison sends the mind back, as our contemporary remarks, to medieval days. The victim was brought before the Leeds Assizes on March 8, and the cross-examination of the Chief Constable of Halifax revealed a horrible state of affairs in the prison in which the man had been lodged. These particulars, as reported, deserve to be placed on permanent record as showing what is possible in a reputedly Christian country:—

"Mr. Waugh, K.C., who defended, questioned the Chief Constable of Halifax, who said he knew that when Robinson was arrested in Spain he was not allowed to put on his overcoat. The cell in which he was kept was a large bare room, the windows of which were in such a bad state that it was full of draughts.

"Do you know," Mr. Waugh asked, "that for five weeks he was subject to the cold of the night without any extra clothing?"

"Witness: Yes.

"Do you know that he was not allowed a change of linen?—Yes. I made application myself and was refused.

"Do you know that the cell communicated directly with a sewer?—I do not know, but it was in an insanitary condition.

"There was an abominable stench?—Yes.

"Do you know that when he was finally taken from prison he was marched through the streets with thumb-screws upon his hands?—I understand that he was marched through the streets. I saw him come aboard with them on."

The private letters (still in my possession) which I received from Ferrer before the royal warrant was signed for his death disclosed even worse abominations as daily and hourly inflicted upon Ferrer during the many weeks of his incarceration in a cold, filthy, and verminous cell. No wonder Senora Paz Ferrer spurned the royal bouquet.

The Rationalist Peace Association has evidently not been launched in vain. In the *Peace Movement* (March 15), the English organ of the International Peace Bureau at Berne, it is announced that a French Rationalist League of Peace has just been founded in Paris. Its avowed intention is to follow in the footsteps of the Rationalist Peace Association, which, as our readers will know, has now been in full working order during the last two years, with Mr. John M. Robertson as President, Mrs. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner as Chairman, and a Committee consisting of Mr. Foote and other well-known Freethinkers.

The names of the Provisional Committee, which has been constituted at Paris, includes several well-known Freethinkers. It is hoped that similar societies will be formed in other countries, and that a close bond of sympathy and co-operation will be formed between these different Rationalist Leagues for Peace.

The strong note of Rationalism sounded by Mr. Norman Angell in his recent Conway Memorial Lecture is a significant indication that there is a distinct need for a purely philosophical and avowedly secular presentment of the peace question.

The *Peace Movement* also contains an interesting notice of the last Annual Report of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs, which was issued last April by the Inspector-General of Customs, Shanghai. The notice is headed "China as a Pacific Force," and its statements confirm the view which I endeavored to present of the New China in my *Freethinker* article of February 16 last. Since that article was written, I have seen Mr. Hain-Jou-Kia again in London, and found him, after journeyings far and wide through Europe founding new Sinophile groups, full of faith in the future peaceful development of the great Chinese Republic. That view finds unexpected and authoritative confirmation in the above-mentioned report, which is signed by Mr. Paul H. King, Statistical Secretary of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs (the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs is a body composed of nearly a thousand Europeans and Americans controlled by an Inspector-General). The following citation from the report is worth volumes as a contrast between Chinese and Christian civilisation, and as such deserves to be placed on permanent record. Mr. King says:—

"So far the revolution has been one of the quietest in the history of the world; and if the new era now dawning should bring, as we all hope it will, increased prosperity to China, it will surely also mean increased prosperity to foreign nations as well. Her undeveloped resources are enormous, and the potentialities of her purchasing power, under favorable home conditions, are sufficient to stagger the imagination. Again, the rise of China into a world power will make for peace. The West has long felt the burden of its armaments; and China may yet be in a position to teach her common-sense view of the folly of war to willing, because exhausted, listeners. Trade in the past has often been despised by the warrior, the aristocrat, the artist, and even by the priest; and the shopman is a type far removed in popular imagination from anything elevated or heroic. Yet trade is the real measure of civilisation in the strict sense of the word; and where civic virtue flourishes, there will be found prosperous and expanding trade. Trade conquers in a peaceful spirit and improves while it conquers. When mankind is better instructed, civic virtue will come first, and in that respect China has ever excelled. Trade makes for life and the means to enjoy it; while many other things—disguised with splendid pomp and circumstance—make for death. Corn fields are better than parade-grounds; cotton

mills than arsenals; and an up-to-date 'floating palace' is a more pleasing sight than a bristling battle-ship. The earth teems with wealth of all kinds, and it may be safely assumed that the new China—with the same fine instinct for commerce which animated the old—will teach all the world to use that wealth for the happiness and not for the devastation of mankind. Poverty has caused war and war caused poverty; but when people are busy with buying and selling, they lose interest in the clash of arms.

"Nothing is more hopeful or of better augury for the human race than to see people making things and growing things and selling things, and the millennium may yet be brought about through the honest trading instincts of man. If we should visualise a great pageant of humanity, there would be many stately and brilliant figures to personify Science, Invention, Art, and so on; but in a correct perspective all those would be seen to circulate round quite a humble-looking masque, Commerce, who served them and used them and paid them. It is not impossible that this masque would be best typified by a Chinese merchant in the new and vigorous Republic of China and of Peace!"

This description of the secular spirit of new China is nobly conceived and very beautifully expressed. A leaven of Freethought is evidently at work in the new Republic. If it were possible to eliminate from the Peace movement throughout the world the Freethought element thinking and working for the realisation of humanitarian weal based on human brotherhood, the Pacifist cause would be brought to a very low ebb.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON APRIL 3.

Mr. Cohen was elected to the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Baker, Barry, Brandes, Cowell, Cunningham, Davies, Leat, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Roger, Samuels, Schindle, Silverstein, Rosetti, Thurlow, Wood, J. W. Wood, and Miss Kough.

A letter was received from Mr. Foote explaining that he had only partially recovered from his recent severe illness, and was therefore unable to be present. The Secretary was instructed to write Mr. Foote a letter of sympathy conveying the unanimous wishes of all present for his speedy and complete recovery.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for the Preston Branch and the Parent Society.

Mr. Cohen reported upon the meetings of the Board of Management of the Scholarship Scheme, and said that a syllabus and list of text-books for the use of candidates was being prepared.

Mr. Brandes reported on behalf of the Sub-Committee elected to deal with the exchange of visits between French and English Freethinkers.

Notices of motion by the Executive for the Conference Agenda were prepared, and Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Davies were elected as the Agenda Committee.

E. M. VANCK, *General Secretary.*

### Obituary.

The remains of Mr. John Sanderson, a veteran Tyneside Freethinker, were interred with every token of respect and sympathy at Jarrow Cemetery last Sunday afternoon. Mr. S. M. Peacock, Vice-President N. S. S., read the Secular Burial Service in the presence of a large gathering of relatives and friends, among others representing South Shields Branch being Messrs. Thos. Lumley, G. White, J. T. Horsman, W. R. Bowe, Chapman, Thos. J. Fothergill, and J. Hannan. Mr. Sanderson was virtually the founder of the Branch, and was secretary for a while. In the early days of the Bradlaugh struggle he was an active and brave-hearted fighter in the ranks of progress. During last year health and strength had gradually declined until finally, on Wednesday, April 2, a man noted with friends for honesty and sincerity of purpose, the stalwart of our Branch in the earlier days, passed away peacefully and firm in the faith at the residence of his son, 158 St. Paul's-road, South Shields.—R. CHAPMAN.

**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, J. T. Lloyd, "What Do We Know?"

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.45, E. Burke, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

INDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Arthur, "The Birth and Growth of Worlds."

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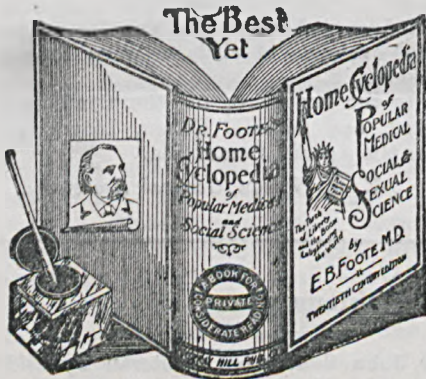
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