

# THE Freethinker

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*Generosity is first, although it is not in the Decalogue.*  
—“MARK RUTHERFORD.”

## The Victory at Leeds.

THE battle at Leeds is over, and we have to report another victory for Freethought.

Our readers know what the battle was about. But we may as well summarise the situation.

Woodhouse Moor is a place of public resort under the jurisdiction of the Leeds City Council. Meetings of various kinds are held there, and the Council issues “permits” to take up collections and sell literature at such gatherings. This is no doubt a wise regulation in some respects, but there can be no excuse for applying it with partiality to *bona-fide* societies. But this is precisely what the City Council, under the guidance of the Parks Committee, was trying to do. It refused a “permit” to the local Branch of the National Secular Society. No other body had been refused. The Secularists were denied the privilege which all other bodies enjoyed. It was, in short, an attempt to penalise them on account of their opinions. And this is persecution. Call it by what apologetic names you please, it is simply persecution.

It was rather more than insinuated that the Leeds N. S. S. Branch had been refused the “permit” because of its “objectionable literature.” If this meant *anti-Christian* literature it was beside the point, for under the present law—as laid down by Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in 1883, and endorsed by Mr. Justice Phillimore and Mr. Justice Darling more recently—*anti-Christian* literature has the same right of circulation as *Christian* literature possesses. To be valid, therefore, the charge of selling “objectionable” literature would have to carry the sense of being *obscene*. It was easy to disprove that charge, and the phantom of “objectionable literature” vanished as soon as it was confronted.

The Leeds Branch could not be expected to accept tamely such a discrimination against its rights as a body of English citizens. It took steps to defend them. The only way open to them was to challenge the censorship of public meetings by bringing it to the notice of the general public; and this could only be done by defying it, in order that the matter might be argued and decided in a court of justice.

Mr. Ernest Pack, on behalf of the Leeds Branch, sought my advice as the President of the National Secular Society. I tendered it in a long and careful letter, dated July 17, and published in the *Freethinker* of August 8.

A public meeting was held at Woodhouse Moor on Sunday, July 20, and a collection and sale of literature took place without a “permit.” It was a big and enthusiastic meeting, and a resolution against the partisan action of the City Council in relation to the “permits” was carried unanimously. Acting on my advice, only one person (Mr. E. Pack) took up the collection, and only one person (Mr. Jackson) sold the literature. These gentlemen were in due course served with summonses for breach of the bye-laws.

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The summonses were heard on Wednesday, August 27, before the junior Stipendiary, Mr. Marshall, and not before the senior Stipendiary, Mr. Atkinson, as I had hoped. Mr. Marshall was fair and considerate enough from his point of view. He held, as I had foretold might be the case, that he had only to be satisfied that the bye-law had been broken, and to act accordingly. This attitude of his excluded an able speech that Mr. Pack had prepared, of which I have seen the brief. He was told plainly and firmly, but not unkindly, that it was no use trying to argue an impossible case. There was an adjournment for Mr. Pack to think it over. No penalty would be inflicted if he would give an undertaking not to repeat the offence. This he would not do. But he had till Friday to reconsider the matter, and to consult the N. S. S. headquarters—which for this purpose were then at Yarmouth.

Letters and telegrams passed to and fro between Leeds and Yarmouth. I was dead against an “undertaking”—except temporarily with a view to further litigation. Mr. Marshall had refused to state a case. He said that there was no point of law involved. Mr. Pack pressed that there was, and in my judgment he was right, but the magistrate had command of the court.

Happily, a new thing happened. Mr. Pack very wisely got into communication with officials representing the Parks Committee and the Town Clerk's Office. He satisfied them that they had a *bona fide* Branch of the N. S. S. at Leeds, and it was agreed that the “permits” should be issued. And there the battle ended—in an access of good feeling on both sides.

Curiously enough this way out of the trouble was the first suggestion in my letter of July 17. “If,” I wrote, “there is any reasonable hope that a fresh application for the ‘permit’ would meet with a better fate, I think you should make it. Citizens should not flout the public authorities unnecessarily, and if there has been a mistake you should give them an opportunity of rectifying it.” But the Branch committee decided against that suggestion.

I desire to congratulate Mr. Pack on the energy, and good sense, and readiness to take advice from an older soldier in these wars, which he has displayed in these proceedings. I laughed over his amusing account of how the word “mandamus” spread consternation everywhere.

Mr. Pack tells me that although he could not make any use of my letters in Court, they “had very much to do with the final turn of affairs—perhaps everything.” “When you advise,” he further says, “there is not much left to ask a lawyer, and I take this opportunity of thanking you for the care and attention you have given the Branch's case, for which we are all grateful.”

I should be ashamed to quote such things in the ordinary way, but there are times when it is pardonable.

I take this opportunity of saying that no man, and no society, has ever had a battle to fight for Freethought, without commanding (or rejecting) my assistance. Fortunately the pages of the *Freethinker* contain the proof of this assertion. I appeal to them against the calumnies of the day and hour. They contain the testimony of more than thirty years.

G. W. FOOTE.

## God's Children.

AMONG the religious begging circulars delivered by hand or sent through the post, I recently received an appeal on behalf of an institution that professes to care for the welfare of homeless children. The circular makes an urgent appeal for funds, and impresses upon the reader the fact of there being many thousands of children abroad without homes, needing food, and utterly uncared for. I have no doubt that the statement is substantially true, although one must allow a little for exaggeration. In such cases exaggeration seems inevitable, especially when religion is on the carpet. It was a religious charitable organisation that touched provincial readers with an appeal on behalf of poor London children who had never seen a flower or a blade of grass. This in London, which probably contains more vegetation than any other capital in Europe, and where, even in the slums, the love of a back garden is notorious. Of course, with or without the greenery, the case is bad enough. No country is really deserving the title of civilised where children are unfed, unhoused, and uncared for; although, as a matter of fact, it is only in civilised countries that such cases occur. Uncivilised people would be almost unable to realise such a condition of things, and, if it existed, we can be sure the fact would be used as a fresh inducement to subscribe to missionary enterprise. And, curiously enough, it is in Christian countries that the neglect of children is most marked. It is seldom or never heard of among Jews. I have never heard it alleged against Mohammedans. Japan is said to be a perfect paradise for children. And among the Esquimaux Nansen said that he never heard of or saw a case of child-neglect or ill-usage. In England many thousands of such cases are taken up annually by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children; and the need for such a society is surely a clear condemnation of Christianity as a moralising factor in life.

I did not, however, sit down to write with the intention of dwelling upon these aspects of the matter. My attention was drawn by two expressions in the circular. One was that these homeless youngsters were "God's children"; the other was that those who were feeding and sheltering these youngsters were doing a work of God, and this would be helped by every subscription that was given. Everyone who gave a donation would feel that they were fellow-workers with God, and that, it may be presumed, would be ample reward for every religious mind. At any rate, it should be comforting to God that a number of people are able and willing to help him in the work of looking after his children.

Now, I do not deny that these homeless youngsters are God's children; I do not know whether they are or not. If they are not, it is a gross libel on the Deity. No man would like it to be said of him that his children were wandering about the streets without food, or shelter, or clothing. He would not like to have it made public if it were true; he would be naturally indignant if it were false. And even Deity must be expected to possess sensibilities, which ought to be respected. For the circular makes no pretence of proving paternity. It does not say that certain evidence has been given and verified to the end that these children belong to God. It simply collects a number of half-starved and generally neglected children, looks them over, and straightway declares they must be God's. Why? Do they wish the reader to infer that this is an old habit of the Deity? I believe that, in the case of a burglary, detectives are sometimes able to say who is the burglar by the style in which it is done. It doesn't seem good enough. It looks like taking a scandalous and perhaps unwarrantable liberty with one who is not here to defend himself in person. Mark Twain said that in all the attacks on the Devil one heard only one side of the case, and he would much like to hear what Satan had to say in self-defence. Well, we really hear little more from God. And one would

like to hear what he has to say of these professed admirers of his, who, whenever there is an earthquake, or an epidemic, or anything unpleasant happens, straightway put it down to God's account. As an Atheist, I desire justice—even for God.

Suppose they are really God's children. If that is the case, why should any decent body desire to be a fellow-worker with him? Why is helping to feed and shelter these children called a work of God? Of course, in a sense, it is so. When John Smith absconds, and the Guardians have to feed and shelter his family, they may be said to be doing the runaway's work. But in that case we do not find a demand for the poor-rate accompanied by an announcement that we should pay cheerfully because we are doing John Smith's work. Not a bit of it. What we see is a small placard outside the police-station announcing that the Guardians desire to lay hands on the said John Smith and punish him for bolting and leaving his children chargeable to the parish. In this case we are actually asked to praise the author of the children's being for leaving them in the lurch, and told that we should feel honored by associating with him. And the children, when they are got into a charitable institution, will be taught to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven," and thank him for giving them their daily bread. And that when their Father has left them uncared for, and their daily bread is provided by promiscuous subscriptions.

Mind, I do not say they are God's children. I do not know. I am only trying to look at the matter impartially and to be fair all round. All the parents I know are mere men and women. When they look after their families, we say they are good parents; when they neglect them, we say they are bad ones. If my neighbor's children are hungry, it must be because either there is no food in the house to give them, or there is food, and the parents deliberately starve them. And I do not see how we can judge God's treatment of *his* children in any different manner. It is really not fair to punish a man for neglecting his offspring, and to praise God when he throws his children upon the world, dependent on public charity.

Of course, it will be said that God's care for his children is shown by the very circular that lies before me. He helps them by creating instruments to do his will. But the plea will not stand. John Smith might as reasonably contend that he should be praised for creating the necessity that brings a Board of Guardians into existence. There are cases where a woman has actually left a child on the doorstep of a well-to-do person in the hope that the child would get the comforts and attention she was unable to give. And with what result? It was quite useless the woman pleading that she could not feed the child, and that she hoped that in this way her child would be fed. She was charged with child desertion, and punished for it, just the same. A parent, says both the law and common sense, must stick to his or her child, and not desert it under any condition. Is there any more justification for God handing over his responsibilities to a charitable institution than there is for a man handing his over to a Board of Guardians or to some chance individual?

There is the seductive phrase that we are doing God's work, or helping God in his work of running the world aright. But what is God's work? And why should we do it for him, or even help *him* to do it? From all that one can judge, God's work is done in such a manner that it takes man no small part of his time to undo it, or to correct it. God sends diseases and man discovers the antidotes. At the recent Medical Congress the honors of the assemblage fell to Professor Erlich, with his famous antidote for syphilis. For about four hundred years this disease has been a scourge in Christendom, punishing both the vicious and the virtuous, the innocent and the guilty alike. And when the remedy arrives it comes from man, not from God. The same is true of all other diseases. For, note, the diseases are not created by man, but the remedies are. Man does not have to discover the diseases; they discover him.

They are there in God's scheme of work, ready to hand, ready to operate. The remedies do not thus lie ready to hand. They have to be sought out by laborious, painful, sometimes dangerous methods. It took four hundred years to discover an antidote to syphilis. It took less than forty years for it to infect Europe from end to end, and would have operated more quickly had modes of travelling been easier and quicker.

God's work! The best of the world and of human nature is not God's work, but man's. God did not leave the world habitable to a civilised human being; it was man who made it so. God spreads a river over a countryside, and leaves a morass. Man deepens the channel, raises embankments, drains the land, and so creates utility, order, and the possibilities of development. God leaves man a savage, and human association civilises him. God leaves man ignorant, and human inquisitiveness and industry gives him knowledge. God leaves man the prey of brutal passions; men teach each other how to restrain them, or to transmute them into finer feelings. And all the time God is dogging the footsteps of man, providing a new disease for every change in life, punishing every false step with unflinching cruelty, afflicting old and young, strong and weak, good and bad, with impartial malignancy. Man's only protection against Deity is knowledge; and of all the trees in the garden the tree of knowledge was the only one of which he was sternly forbidden to eat.

There is some truth in the statement that we are helping God. That is a game man, in his folly, is continually playing. When we see God's blunders we help him correct them, and then praise his wisdom for providing them. When the deplorable and ignoble character of his ancestry is exposed, we help him by creating a fictitious one. When his character and doings in past ages is made plain, we assist by creating a whole army of apologists to whitewash his reputation. Of course, it is the duty of children to help their parents; but that is mainly because, as the children reach maturity, the parent approaches old age and helplessness. Is that what Christians have in mind when they talk about helping God? I should not be surprised. For God does grow helpless as mankind reaches maturity. He is most powerful when they are in their childhood; most arrogant in his claims when they are most helpless. God and man cannot both grow at the same time. As one rises, the other falls; and a little less readiness to help God might result in the absence of anything to assist.

C. COHEN.

### Christianity and Other Religions.

THERE are such things as foregone conclusions, or conclusions that precede all argument. To believers in Christ the truth of Christianity is a foregone conclusion, and so is the truth of Mohammedanism to Mohammedans, or of Buddhism to Buddhists, or of Hinduism to Hindus, or of Confucianism to disciples of Confucius. This is a rule to which there is absolutely no exception. The Rev. James Hope Moulton, D.D., is a Tutor in New Testament subjects at Didsbury Wesleyan College; and recently he undertook to deliver the Fernley Lecture, choosing for his subject, "Religions and Religion." It was, of course, a foregone conclusion that with him "Religion" meant Christianity. From the very moment of his appointment no one was in the least doubt on the point. The Lecture has just been published, and a review of it appears in the *British Weekly* for August 21 by another theological professor, Dr. Denney, of Glasgow. The title of the review is an amplification of that of the book, and reads, "Religions and the True Religion"; and here again it is a foregone conclusion that, in the leading article in the *British Weekly*, by "the true Religion" can only be understood the religion of Christ. All

this, both in the volume and in the review, is a thing that cannot possibly be otherwise. Even the arguments adduced are so many foregone conclusions. You can tell exactly what they are without reading either book or review. They have positively no originality whatever, except that of re-statement by men of Professors Moulton's and Denney's well-known abilities. Let us look at them for a few moments.

This lecture was delivered in connection with the Centenary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society by "an enthusiast for the propagation of the Gospel." We are not in the least surprised, therefore, at the following statement which occurs in Dr. Denney's article:—

"Professor Moulton is convinced that in his own faith he holds the key to the world's spiritual history, and in the strength of that conviction he welcomes everything in other religions which prepares the way for Christianity, or enables those who have been reared in them to understand the Gospel."

Now, suppose that a Mohammedan scholar had published a book on the same subject, and that another Mohammedan scholar was reviewing it in a Mohammedan newspaper, do you not think that the above extract, without the change of a single letter, could be legitimately applied to the author? We admit that, in all probability, the Mohammedan author would not convince the Christian; but we are fully as persuaded that the Christian author is not any more likely to convert the Mohammedan. A man's religion is a mere accident of birth and country. The devotees of every religion under the sun believe most firmly that theirs is the only true religion, and are astonished beyond measure when they learn that there are people who think differently. Dr. Moulton is spoken of as "an expert in the science of religion," the science of comparative religion; and being a Christian theologian nothing could have been more of a foregone conclusion than that he should sum up his book by saying that "our new science enables us to write a new chapter of the *Præparatio Evangelica*."

Dr. Denney is honest enough to recognise the fact that other students of "our new science" have arrived at an opposite conclusion. He says:—

"There are scholars who use their knowledge of all religions to discredit faith in any. There are scholars, in particular, who use their knowledge of ancient religions to discredit Christianity. There is nothing in it, they tell us, which is not derived from earlier religions; the very figure of Jesus in the Gospel is merely the literary incarnation of ideas which originated no one can well tell how, but which certainly had no basis in history."

All such scholars Dr. Denney dubs "anarchists of criticism," and he seems to think that Dr. Moulton takes them too seriously and treats them with excessive "geniality and good humor." But they have an ever-increasing number of followers. W. B. Smith, Jensen, Drews, F. C. Conybeare, and J. M. Robertson are no longer faint voices in the wilderness. The books which they issue are being read and studied by a growing public, to which Professors Moulton and Denney no longer appeal. They do not all agree, but the faces of all are undoubtedly towards Rationalism. Dr. Denney is of opinion that "it is no exaggeration to say that a mind which doubts the historicity of Jesus is to all historical and spiritual intents an unsound mind." It is really of no consequence what the Glasgow Professor thinks of such a mind, because it would be equally relevant for us to conclude that "it is no exaggeration to say that a mind which believes in and worships a supernatural being called Christ is to all historical and intellectual intents an unsound mind." But let that pass. The non-Christian scholars just alluded to, avail themselves of their knowledge of the science of comparative religion to make two claims, each of which is said to discredit Christianity. The first deals with the idea of the dying God, or the God who dies and rises again for the redemption of mankind. This idea was common to several Oriental religions which had invaded the West and were

competing with one another for supremacy there at the time of the rise of Christianity. Now, the claim made on the basis of that fact is thus stated by Dr. Denney:—

"In some undefined way it is loosely supposed that this prevalent conception of a God who dies and rises again, and whose death and resurrection are ritually celebrated and regarded as of vital interest to the worshipers, has influenced both the New Testament story of Jesus, and the Christian interpretation of the great events in his career. Most of what is written in this line is absolutely uncritical, and can only be perpetrated because the writers have forgotten for the moment that Jesus is a historical person, and that there is historical evidence for what the New Testament says of his death and resurrection."

Has it not occurred to the learned divine that, in the latter half of that extract, he begs the whole question? The critics alluded to have not forgotten, even for a moment, that the Gospel Jesus is a historical character. What they contend is that there is no more historical evidence for the Gospel Jesus than for Attis, Adonis, or Osiris, or, in other words, that they are all alike supernatural beings for whose historicity there is not a single scrap of evidence. What Liberal Christians maintain is not that the Gospel Jesus is historical, but that out of the Gospel Jesus, which they admit to be largely legendary, it is possible to deduce or construct a really historical person, which we seriously doubt.

Now, both Denney and Schweitzer are clearly mistaken when they assert that "a God who comes to earth to die for men and rise again—and nothing but this is a redeeming God—is quite unknown to any of the ancient faiths." There are two eminent Professors who flatly contradict that statement. The one is the brilliant Greek Professor at Oxford, and the other the well-known Professor of New Testament Criticism and Exegesis in Yale University. Professor Gilbert Murray declares positively that the idea of a dying and resurrected God or God-man was a popular article of faith prior to the advent of Christianity. He says:—

"The figure of the Redeemer occurs in two pre-Christian documents, discovered by the keen analysis and profound learning of Dr. Reitzenstein: the Poimandres revelation printed in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and the sermon of the Nassesenes in Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Hæresium*, which is combined with Attis Worship" (*Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 145).

Professor Benjamin W. Bacon, of Yale, bears the same testimony thus:—

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

Professors Murray and Bacon are quite as competent critics as Dr. Denney, and possess a more intimate acquaintance with the period in question; and they are both free from supernatural prejudices.

The second claim of the non-supernaturalistic critics is that the mysteries of the Pagan religions influenced the development of the Christian mysteries, such as the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is not seriously denied by either Dr. Moulton or Dr. Denney; and neither of them succeeds in proving that there is any essential difference between Christianity and the religions with which it was, for some time, in competition in the Roman Empire. We hold that the following extract is as applicable to the Gospel Jesus as to the

mythical beings of whom it speaks. Dr. Denney says:—

"Attis, Adonis, and Osiris are in no sense historical; they are embodiments of the decay and reanimation of natural life year by year. The spirit of vegetation decays, and is quickened again with every revolution of the sun, and human beings are profoundly, and it may be piously, interested in this perpetual miracle in Nature."

Our conclusion, and by no means a foregone one, is that there is no true religion in the sense claimed by these two divines; that while some religions are, in some respects, better than others, they are all equally false on their supernatural or theological side. If the word must be used, the only true religion is the simple, natural one of doing good.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Christianity and the Chinese.—XVII.

(Continued from p. 550.)

"It is practically impossible to convert a Chinaman to Christianity, and leave him still a faithful member of his family, and a loyal subject to the powers that be. Confucianism is so woven in with family observances and political doctrines that if the one is overthrown the rest follow. 'I come not to bring peace, but a sword,' has been but too truly exemplified in this country, and nothing but the weakness of the Chinese enables them to tolerate missionaries as they do."—ARCHIBALD LITTLE, *Through the Yang-tse Gorges*, p. 309.

"The chief difficulty consists in the conclusion to which the great official classes [in China] have arrived—that the missionaries are their most relentless and implacable enemies, calumniating them, and misrepresenting their actions at every turn, and using all their influence and the great means at their command to overthrow their system of government and abolish their rule for their own flagitious purposes. I use the word 'flagitious' because the very presence of missionaries in China, being a cause of the most complete perplexity to the minds of the educated classes, they can see no possible explanation of it, except in some sinister political purpose; the avowed objects striking them as being too puerile for a moment's serious consideration. That foreigners, to whom their country is indebted for unnumbered humiliations, who inflicted opium upon them, and stole the treasures of their Summer Palace, should produce men whose sole aim, under the guidance of a Divine command, is to benefit them, is an idea only to be entertained by children, or by poor, uneducated people beguiled by bribes and unhallowed rites!"—T. C. HAYLLAR, "The Christian View of Missionaries," *Nineteenth Century*, Nov. 1895, pp. 769-70.

How it was that the Chinese endured for so long the accumulation of injury and insult which we have recorded may be explained by the essential tolerance and love of peace inherent in the Chinese nature—a characteristic which is commented upon in almost all works dealing with that race. Mr. Arthur Smith observes: "One of the best traits of the Chinese character is a talent for extreme forbearance with ills which cannot be cured."\*

Sir Robert Hart has told us of his—

"Many talks with Chinese acquaintances on the questions of the day—the doings of the treaty Powers and the difficulties of China—have shown how the situation is viewed by those whose attention it has attracted, and it has always on such occasions been a source of astonishment to observe how they retained their calmness and philosophy while inwardly boiling with indignation and trembling with apprehension. Whether it is their rice diet that is at the bottom of the general calmness of the national temperament, physiologists and psychologists can best determine."†

Time and again our Government had been warned of the consequences of acquiescence in the outrageous proceedings of the missionaries in China. The Tsungli-Yamen (the Chinese Foreign Office) had many times protested, without avail, as indeed had our own Consuls—notably Sir Rutherford Alcock—and others in authority in China, like Admiral Richards. Mr. Michie, an authoritative writer upon Chinese matters, had written a big book exposing and denouncing the methods of the missionaries. Many articles had also appeared in our leading

\* A. Smith, *China in Convulsion*, p. 37.

† Sir Robert Hart, *These from the Land of Sinim*, p. 146.

magazines, like the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly Review*. So the Government could not plead ignorance of what was going on. But the missionary societies were powerful organisations, commanding immense revenues, and the Government were not going to unchain the tiger of Christian intolerance by meddling with their affairs. The only result of these humanitarian efforts on behalf of the Chinese was the issue, by the late Lord Salisbury, of a "Memorandum of Advice" to the leading missionary societies, containing the pious wish "that any endeavor to combat heathen prejudices and superstitions should be conducted with moderation and judgment, and that care should be taken to avoid giving legitimate cause for offence"—a piece of advice which had as much effect as water on a duck's back. Even so long ago as 1888, the late Mr. Archibald Little—who is recognised as one of the best writers on China, after pointing out that the great Taiping Rebellion was the result of missionary propaganda, observed:—

"It is not generally known that a practical people like the Dutch, who hold the larger portion of the Malay race under their rule, forbid propagandism entirely, throughout the whole extent of their vast territories. We cannot, then, wonder at the Chinese desiring to do the like; and in common justice should allow the Government free action in a question of internal economy like this."\*

If this policy had been observed from the beginning by our Government, many millions of lives and untold sufferings would have been saved.

As for the missionary societies, they were utterly callous in the matter of human life. If a missionary was killed, he was straightway hailed as a martyr, and the tale of his sufferings, properly embellished, made it good for the collection boxes. Then there was the indemnity, in blood and money, to be extorted, by the aid of gunboats, which would teach the heathen that they would be forced to have the emissaries of Christ whether they liked them or not.

The Chinese Government were powerless to avert the explosion which they could clearly see approaching. The English Government dare not attempt to deal with the missionary societies, and so events marched on the final catastrophe, which occurred in 1900, and is known as the "Boxer Rebellion," the keynote of which, says Mr. Michie, writing at that time, "may be gathered from the proceedings of the conspirators, from their placards and lampoons, and from their secret correspondence" "is general detestation of foreigners, special enmity to Christianity and its accessories, and aversion to the symbols of material progress." And, as he further remarks, "Nor is the present state of things a growth of yesterday. The ferment has been working for forty years—to go no further back—with many sporadic outbreaks to mark its progress."†

The Boxers—so dubbed by English journalists in the Treaty Ports—whose name would be better translated as "Righteous Harmonists," or "Righteous Fists," represented, not merely one of the many secret societies of China, says Mr. Diosy, "but they represent the feelings of the vast majority of the pig-tailed hundreds of millions in their war-cry, 'Expel the Foreigners!'"‡ And while Protestant missionaries blame Catholic missionaries, and Catholic missionaries blame Protestant missionaries, for a large share in provoking the outbreak, both parties blame the foreign traders in China as well. But Sir Robert Hart, who, from his position as Inspector-General of Chinese Customs, could speak with authority upon this point, says: "The foreign mercantile public cannot fairly be accused of having done ought to outrage Chinese feeling or evoke Chinese ill-will."§ He places the blame wholly on the missionaries who had done so. And although Sir Robert Hart went through all the horrors of the

siege of the Legations, yet he declares that the rebellion "was patriotic in its origin and justifiable in much that it aimed at cannot be questioned, and cannot be too much insisted on."\* He further remarks:—

"The first doings of the Boxer patriots show that their plan of operations was, on the one hand, to destroy Christian converts and stamp out Christianity, and thus free China from foreign trespass, contamination, and humiliation. These are the objects which will be kept in view, worked up to, and in all probability accomplished—with other weapons in their hands—by the children or grandchildren of to-day's volunteers" (p. 53).

After the first successes of the Boxers, they received the support of the official class in China. The Dowager-Empress was wholly in sympathy with them. This is her account of the Boxer risings, as she described it to Princess Der Ling:—

"Do you know how the Boxer rising began? Why, the Chinese Christians were to blame. The Boxers were treated badly by them; and wanted revenge..... These Chinese Christians are the worst people in China. They rob the poor country people of their land and property, and the missionaries, of course, always protect them, in order to get a share themselves. Whenever a Chinese Christian is taken to the Magistrate's Yamen, he is not supposed to kneel down on the ground and obey the law, as others do, and is always very rude to his own Government officials. Then these missionaries do the best they can to protect him, whether he is wrong or not, and believe everything he says, and make the magistrate set the prisoner free."†

No doubt that hundreds of Chinese Christians fell victims to the fury of the Boxers, and their deaths lie at the door of the missionary societies who induced them to leave their faith. Baron von Ketteler, the German Ambassador, was murdered, and the foreign Legations in Peking were besieged. Then came the German Emperor's shout for "Vengeance, Vengeance!" and the Chinese were once more destined to experience the "resources of [Christian] civilisation."

That the foreign Legations in Peking were not destroyed, and the Europeans in refuge there were not killed, was entirely owing to the divided counsels of the Chinese themselves. There were two parties among the ruling officials at Peking; both were of one mind as to ridding the country of the hated foreigners; but the more enlightened party, aware of the power and extent of the foreign nations, knew that China could not hope to contend against them with any hope of success, and that to destroy the Legations would only end in the foreigners invading the country in irresistible force, overturning the Throne, and dividing the Chinese Empire among themselves.

As Sir Robert Hart remarks, the attacks on the Legations "were never pushed home, but always ceased just when we feared they would succeed." Had it been otherwise, he says, "we could not have held out for a week, perhaps not even a day." And they came to the conclusion—

"that somebody, probably a wise man who knew what the destruction of the Legations would cost Empire and Dynasty, intervened between the issue of the order for our destruction and the execution of it, and so kept the soldiery playing with us as cats do with mice, the continued and seemingly heavy firing telling the Palace how fiercely we were attacked, and how stubbornly we defended ourselves, while its curiously half-hearted character not only gave us the chance to live through it, but also gave any relief forces time to come and extricate us, and thus avert the national calamity which the Palace in its pride and conceit ignored, but which someone in authority in his wisdom foresaw and in his discretion sought to push aside."‡

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

\* Through the Yang-tse Gorges, p. 309.

† A. Michie, *The Englishman in China*, vol. ii., p. 443.

‡ Diosy, *The New Far East*, p. 13.

§ Hart, *These from the Land of Sinim*, p. 136.

\* *These from the Land of Sinim*, p. 7.

† Princess Der Ling, *Two Years in the Forbidden City* (1912), p. 179.

‡ Sir Robert Hart, *These from the Land of Sinim*, pp. 39-40.

## Acid Drops.

Lord Guthrie's summing-up at the trial of Albert Wade French, the secretary of the Glasgow Branch of the National Sailors' Union, on a charge of murdering James Martin, of the British Seafarers' Union—resulting in an acquittal—contained a protest against the religious bigotry displayed in some questions put to one of the witnesses by the prisoner's counsel. One question was "Are you a Jew?" and Lord Guthrie inquired "What had that to do with the case?" His lordship added that "An honorable Jew was as trustworthy as any nominal Christian." But this is putting the case very gingerly. Surely an honorable Jew is as trustworthy as an honorable Christian. Another question was "Are you an Atheist?" and Lord Guthrie's comment on this was still more open to criticism. "Counsel ought to have known," he said, "that there were no Atheists; there were Agnostics. A man might have doubts, but for a man positively to believe there was no God was absurd." But the Atheist does not deny the existence of God. The etymology of the term shows that it simply and properly means "without God"—which is exactly what "Agnostic" means as far as it has any sort of definiteness. We will not end this paragraph, however, without congratulating Lord Guthrie on his rebuke of religious bigotry being introduced into a court of justice.

Jack Johnson has invited the Rev. F. B. Meyer to half-an-hour's audience with him before representatives of the press. The Rev. F. B. Meyer says that he never received the letter. We daresay that letter would go astray. Anyway, Mr. Meyer knows of the letter now, and we wonder whether he will have the manliness to say to Johnson's face what he has said behind his back. Johnson is a man of more than average intelligence, from all we can gather, and we should be much interested in the result of the interview. Rev. F. B. Meyer will probably conclude that discretion is the better part of valor, and that to attack Johnson from the pulpit is preferable to meeting him face to face.

Rev. F. B. Meyer continues to outdo himself in the attack upon Jack Johnson. We never saw a more impudent, and at the same time hypocritical, letter than the one of his printed in the *Daily Chronicle* of August 29. He says that the question of Johnson's color has not entered his mind. What else was it then that inspired his denunciation of "this man" when Johnson was here before? "This man" was not allowed to fulfil his boxing engagement in London; it was too brutal and degrading a performance to be tolerated. Yet a precisely similar performance was permitted to take place at the National Sporting Club some three weeks afterwards,—the performers being two white men. Mr. Meyer never opened his lips, as far as we remember, against the "meeting" of the white boxers. He spent all his indignation upon the black-and-white encounter.

Perhaps the rev. gentleman will tell us in a few plain words what is the specific ground of his objection to Jack Johnson? The man is a pugilist,—so are others. He is branded as "immoral," without any definite allegation of immoral acts; moreover, the idea that *his* immorality should exclude him from the music-hall stage, in face of the well-known characters of some white performers on the same boards, is obviously nothing but a disguised objection to his color. Mr. Meyer sneers at Johnson's "serious imputations on American jurisprudence." He has travelled in America, and he must be incredibly ignorant if he does not know how blacks are treated by whites in that country. Has he never heard of negroes being excluded from white men's churches, and Sunday-schools, and Young Men's Christian Associations? Has he never heard of how they are compelled to travel? Has he never heard of accused negroes, some of whom have subsequently been proved innocent, being dragged out of gaol by mobs, and hung up to trees and riddled with bullets, or soaked in paraffin or kerosene and roasted alive? Has he never heard of beastly indignities practised upon negroes' bodies? There are good Christians, but when it comes to "infidels" they are not to be trusted. They do not understand that the "infidel" has any rights whatever. They display, in relation to him, neither common sense nor common decency. In the same way there are plenty of good white men in America, but when it comes to "blacks" they are not to be trusted. Most Englishmen realise this truth, and they will understand the real value of Mr. Meyer's taunt that Jack Johnson is a fugitive from justice. *Justice!* Good God! And this prater about "justice"—from whites to blacks—is a Christian clergyman!

Mr. Meyer's vindication of American justice is positively amusing. "The son of a wealthy white millionaire," he says, "has just been condemned to be hanged in Atlanta, a Southern city, on the evidence of a negro servant." Surely the reverend gentleman's logic is worthy of the imbecile ward of a lunatic asylum? The point at issue is not black men's treatment of whites, nor white men's treatment of each other, but white men's treatment of blacks. But, perhaps, after all, we ought not to be too severe upon Mr. Meyer. He displays the logic of his profession.

The reverend gentleman's last joke takes the biscuit. He calls upon Jack Johnson to go back to America, and submit to be tested by the oath and the examination of witnesses. "The world," he says, "will then be able to form its own conclusion." Yes, but where will poor Jack Johnson be? Doing heaps of time in an American prison. It is too big a price for one man to pay for another's satisfaction. Mr. Meyer takes himself too seriously. He seems to consider himself God Almighty's right-hand man. What we should like to see is an official note of the appointment.

Every movement that brings people of different nationalities into friendly conference makes a little in the direction of peace, but we must confess to inability to join in the very high expectations over the opening of the Palace of Peace at the Hague. Curiously enough, wars have been rather more numerous since the first Peace Congress at the Hague was held than before. Since that event there has been our own South African War, the Spanish-American War, the Russo-Japanese War, two campaigns in the Balkans—to say nothing of a number of small military enterprises. And to these we must add the tremendous increase in armaments all over Europe during the past ten years, with the statements of responsible Ministers that it is hopeless to expect any immediate cessation of this rivalry. The truth is that the delegates at the Hague seem much more concerned in settling the conditions of warfare than providing for its abolition; and in trying to settle the conditions under which wars are to be fought, each nation is trying to steal an advantage over the rest. The fact is that there are no two nations represented at the Hague who really trust each other. Two of the Great Powers of Europe, inspired with mutual confidence, could with comparative ease inaugurate an era of peace. But this condition does not exist.

Of course, the parsons have had to have a hand in the ceremonies at the Hague, although they have never done anything to promote peace, and their religion has been responsible for more wars than any other religion in the world. In this case Dean Hensley Henson preached a peace sermon in the Church of the Embassy at the Hague. Dean Henson professed to find a great improvement because, in deference to the Christian conscience, wars waged to-day for commercial benefit were compelled to cover their purpose with hypocritical pretence of nobler things. Well, we beg to point out that wars never were waged openly for profit, for the simple reason that no army could be held together on those terms. There was always the pretence of national honor, religious duty, and similar shibboleths. The modern world offers nothing new in this respect. And of all wars which satisfied private greed and gave scope to brutal ferocity, those waged in the name of religion have been the worst. The Balkan War—easily the most brutal and greedy of modern times—began in the name of religion, gained the sympathy of Christians by an appeal to religion, and the Christian Allies have even secured a certain measure of silence concerning their misdeeds because speech might have brought discredit on Christianity.

Naturally, Dean Henson could not conclude his sermon without a fling at Atheism. Lamenting the failure of modern civilisation in the direction of a genuine peace, he asks whether it is to sink before "the dismal shapes of the Atheist and the Anarchist." That is so like the parson. Call people names when you can, and if not that, then fix on to tendencies that are admittedly deplorable names that people have been carefully educated to dislike. We might leave the Anarchist to defend himself, since a defence of anarchy forms no part of our work, nor is Anarchism one of our convictions. But what on earth has either Atheism or Anarchism to do with the European inability to maintain a genuine peace? The nations of Europe are not given over to Atheism, and no one can accuse them of Anarchism. Their policy may be anarchistic, but that is a different matter. But Dean Henson knows quite well that the dominant voices in the Councils of the Great Powers are Christian, and he might soon learn, if he does not already know, that the modern peace movement owes far more to the spread of Freethought and to the efforts of Freethinkers

than to Christianity. Still, it is an old clerical game to blame one's opponents for all that is unpleasant in the world, and Dean Henson is a very old hand in the religious business.

The Holy Synod of Russia has appointed September 11 as a day to be set apart for prayer for drunkards. The ceremony is to be annual, so that evidently it is not expected that the prayers will be answered with anything like promptitude and completeness. One would think that if Providence answers the prayer, it would do so by curing every Russian drunkard at once. That would be something like a cure, and would produce a striking impression on the rest of the world. We may also note that the Russian Church has not been, in the past, over-zealous in this matter of sobriety. Quite the reverse. For a long while both the Government and the Church deliberately encouraged drinking. One reason for this was that the Government derived a financial benefit from the sale of vodka; the other, that it kept the villagers free from plots and conspiracies. A vodka-soaked peasant was much more likely to remain a good son of the Church and a loyal subject than a sober one. Both the Church and the Government understood this, and acted accordingly.

Is one day of prayer for the cure of drunkards enough? It wouldn't be so in England, and we understand that Russia is the most drunken country in Europe. Besides, the Christian God is far from being a teetotaler himself—if we are to believe the Bible.

The Sea Dyaks of Borneo are very truthful people. They erect a "monument" to the man who tells a lie. That would never do in any Christian country. It would leave very little "land question" for Mr. Lloyd George to settle in England.

The late Dean Stanley had the audacity to call the Patriarch Abraham an Arab Sheikh. Professor Denney, of Glasgow, tell us that people were scandalised then, and that all sensible people are scandalised now by such an irreverence. In the Church it is a sin to tell the simple truth about the supposed founder of the Hebrew race. Dr. Denney will not allow us to speak of him as anything but "the Father of the faithful, the pattern of those who, through all the trials of life, hold fast to the word of the living God, and find the reward exceeding great." You must not mention that he was a liar, and for selfish purposes passed his wife off as his sister. You must not refer to his cruel treatment of Hagar, the Egyptian maid, and her son. It is only as an ideal servant of Jehovah that we are permitted to think and speak of him. Such is the condition of our being regarded as "sensible people."

In Professor Denney's opinion, it is equally irreverent to speak of Jesus as "the Carpenter of Nazareth." "The whole interest of the Church in Jesus is that he is the Son of God, that he receives sinners, that he is the Savior and the Lord of men." He may have been a carpenter, it is true, but it is indelicate and impious to allude to so earthly a fact in so heavenly an institution as the Church.

Whatever should we do without the Bible? After some weeks' discussion of the Parable of the Unjust Steward, the *Guardian* comes to the conclusion that "Possibly we have to wait for the true exposition, and the key to it may be lying in some buried papyrus." That is the beauty of having an inspired record. A non-inspired writer would have said what he had to say, and his readers would in all probability have understood him. But an inspired writer sets down his message, and, after nearly two thousand years' commenting and puzzling, it is decided that we must wait for the accidental recovery of some non-inspired writing to find out what the inspired writer meant. Perhaps the biggest joke of all is that the editor of the *Guardian* is quite oblivious to the humor of the situation.

A portentous announcement is made in the *Daily Telegraph*. Mr. G. Currie Martin, B.D., is publishing a volume of lectures on Inspiration. "The author's object," we are told, "is to show that inspiration is not primarily enshrined in books, but is the touch of the Divine spirit upon personality." This must mean, at bottom, that the touch of the Divine spirit is laid upon Mr. Martin. According to his definition, it is only the inspired that can discern inspiration; which is a beautiful conclusion—for the inspired, who have everybody else at their mercy.

"Wanted—More Humor in the Church" is a thick-type heading in the *Christian Globe*. Are they going to start a

Punch and Judy, and lay the cross and the Man of Sorrows on the shelf?

Canon Newbolt must be a very simple-minded man if he really believes that "goodness can only be attained through the Gospel of grace." If that statement, recently made in St. Paul's Cathedral, were true, it would inevitably follow that all Christians are good, while all non-Christians are bad; but this conclusion, thoroughly logical though it be, is so monstrously false that not even Canon Newbolt has the temerity to adopt it. And yet the reverend gentleman can stand before a congregation in the heart of the City of London and unblushingly teach the most damnable heresy ever invented, namely, that goodness is obtainable only through grace, and grace alone through the Sacraments. Any fool who keeps his eyes open can see at a glance how utterly irrational, because absolutely untrue, such a creed is.

The Canon says that "man is trying to save society by human means and is utterly failing to achieve his purpose." Here, again, the facts are dead against him. During the last forty or fifty years pure Humanism has brought about several social reforms; but the grace of God has done practically nothing for society during the vast period of nearly two thousand years. The Canon tells us that "the Gospel of the blessed God is a very real and vital thing," and so it is—to the preacher; but to the world at large it has always been, and is, the most real and vital fraud imaginable. The priest has lived and fattened on it, but at the expense of starving the laity.

Canon Newbolt has been going for those people who at this season of the year "take a holiday from God." The people indicated are those who, when away at the seaside, neglect church-going, and so "give God a holiday." We have often observed the fact, and have taken it as an indication of how little conviction lies behind the practice of church-going. The fact is that, while church-goers represent only a small proportion of the entire population, a large proportion of these go as the result of mere social convention. It is a part of the social fashion, and it requires more self-assertion than the average British citizen possesses to break a practice that is labelled as respectable. But at the seaside the social bond is loosened, to the extent that one is unknown; and for a time one may indulge one's inclinations with impunity. Exactly the same thing occurs when people move into a new neighborhood or emigrate. Some of the Churches have created a machinery for keeping "removals" shadowed. No one has yet suggested the same thing for holiday-makers. Perhaps that is coming.

Dr. Ryle, Dean of Westminster Abbey, falls back upon the old, unverified and unverifiable theological hypothesis that "there has been something more, something nobler, in the history of mankind than the mere warfare of fighting organisations, the mere instinct of survival and mastery, the mere ingenuity of clever invention," and by this "something more" he means conscience, or the moral sense. He even refers to Darwin in confirmation of such a view; but the great Newton of biology never gave the slightest support to this theological dogma. The one object of his *Descent of Man* is to show that man does not possess a single faculty or sense which is not present, on a lower scale, in the animal. The moral sense is exercised by all gregarious beings, at whatever stage of development they may be.

Where the Dean goes hopelessly astray is in assuming that conscience represents a relation between man and God, whereas, in reality, it is purely a social faculty, a faculty that owes its very existence to social life. It is a theological fallacy to maintain that conscience "points man towards his Creator, the Personal Spirit Supreme of the Universe." Does Dr. Ryle imagine that the five hundred millions of Buddhists, all of whom are Atheists, have no conscience? Has he the hardihood to assert that the myriads of Confucians in China, who are taught to pay no heed to the Deity, are destitute of a moral sense, when we are assured by those who know them best that they are morally our equals, if not superiors? The very reverend Dean is evidently under the dominion of the usual invertebrate Christian prejudices.

Every institution that prevails in Christendom has its justification in the Christian religion. Militarism is as fully Christian as brotherly love, in fact much more so. Militarism is the most conspicuous and dominant fact in every Christian country, whilst Christian charity is a rarity under the sun. We are not surprised, therefore, at the Dean of Durham's statement that "the soldier takes his place in the scheme of a Christian State by the same title as the policeman, the judge, and the moralist." We agree; but we hold

that if Christ reigned on earth, as Christians say he does, not one of the officials mentioned would have the ghost of a title to a place in the scheme of the Christian State. Militarism is the complete negation of the Christianity of the New Testament. That Christianity is a farce is amply demonstrated by the simple fact that the King is at once the Defender of the Faith in the United Kingdom and the head of our Army.

One benefit of competing religionists quarrelling is that a certain amount of truth-speaking is likely to crop up during the fight. We have called attention on several occasions to the large exodus from the Church that is taking place in Germany. Whether the Church happens to be Lutheran or Catholic, the exodus goes on; and last year, in Berlin alone, the number is said to have reached one hundred thousand. Dr. Clifford, with his customary "slimness," has pointed to this phenomenon as a triumph of what he calls the "free church principle." He wishes his readers to infer that these people are simply disgusted with a State Church, and are still good Christians on Free Church lines. We haven't the least doubt that Dr. Clifford knows the facts to be quite the contrary of this; and at any rate the *Catholic Times* blurts out the truth. It says that "a very large proportion of the losses of the Government Church is due to religious indifference and absolute unbelief." The *Christian World* has also been honest enough to say the same. It is left for Dr. Clifford—who has been so long playing fast and loose with terms in connection with the Education question that it seems to have become a habit—to ignore and misrepresent facts that even his fellow-Dissenters have been compelled to acknowledge and place in their true light.

Nothing is more amusing than a parson with a high and mighty air of patronising science. He will praise it and its work, but he is careful to say, or to imply, that, after all, the poor scientist is only groping imperfectly after truths that he is already acquainted with. Thus, the Rev. Dr. Scott Lidgett graciously informs the world that evolution is not an explanation, but only a description. It does not explain the origin of the universe; it does not explain the "primal impulse" from which the whole movement proceeds. "It does not explain the particular forms and laws that are impressed upon the universe." And so on through a number of other things that Dr. Lidgett is good enough to inform us that evolution cannot tell us, but by inference he can. The poor, plodding, uninspired scientist must take a back seat when the Methodist preacher comes on the scene. It is all very amusing, and also very characteristic of the parsonic tribe.

Of course, evolution is a description. Properly understood, it is a formula descriptive of certain general modes of operation. That is all; but that is all that any scientific law is or pretends to be. Of course, it does not explain the "primal impulse"—one wonders what on earth Dr. Lidgett conceives this venerable bogey to be like—for the simple reason that it knows nothing of any such phenomenon. A primal impulse is primal nonsense. It does not explain the laws that are "impressed upon the universe," because the "laws" are inseparable from the universe, and are, in fact, nothing but a scientific description of the movements of the universe. And, of course, it does not bridge the "apparent" gulf between mind and matter. If it is only apparent, there is no gulf to bridge. At any rate, it will be time enough for anyone to try and bridge the gulf when it has been shown that a gulf is there. At present, all we can say with certainty is that there is a gap in our knowledge; and Dr. Lidgett and his kind are the last in the world likely to help in filling that gap. Finally, science does explain one rather important thing: it explains Dr. Lidgett. Our knowledge of the evolution of the medicine-man enables us to explain how a member of this species, with no special knowledge of the subject in question—offering, indeed, a plentiful absence of available information—can give himself airs of superiority over those who have made natural phenomena their life's study. This has been characteristic of the medicine-man throughout human history. It is the badge of their tribe. Dr. Lidgett is merely an interesting survival of a very primitive social state. Such survivals are useful enough in their way, but it does not do to take them too seriously.

How amazingly intimate and minute is the knowledge of God possessed by "J. B." of the *Christian World*. He can tell us exactly how the Divine Being feels in any given circumstances. For example, when he "finds a good Jew, a Mohammedan of pure life, he feels a thrill of love and infinite pity for him." Thus the narrow prejudices of a Christian are ascribed to the Deity. To be sure he loves "a good Jew," or "a Mohammedan of pure life," but he "feels a thrill of infinite pity for him," because he has the

misfortune not to be such an one as "J. B." is. Has it never dawned upon the brilliant essayist of the *Christian World* that by an orthodox Jew or Mohammedan even he may be looked upon as a legitimate object of the infinite pity of Jehovah or Allah?

The *Christian World* complains that a certain P. S. A. secretary received a circular from a Turf Society in Switzerland, inviting him to take shares in a St. Leger sweepstake. It says that the address of secretaries are published in the Brotherhood Year Book, and this makes them a target for such communications. The *Christian World* is indignant; we are a trifle suspicious. If P. S. A. secretaries receive circulars of this character, it looks as though the promoters of the sweepstakes expect to do business in this quarter. If they continue to receive them, it looks as though they have done business. Certainly, the Turf Society would not continue to work through the P. S. A. Year Book unless it brought grist to its mills.

The Pope is in a funk about nothing. He has issued a condemnation of Bergson's philosophy. Protestant clergymen generally regard Bergson as essentially a supporter of religion. But the Papa of the Catholics denounces his "false theories" and "poisonous errors," which are all the worse for being "sugar coated" and thus rendered "subtle" and "seductive." The Papacy must be in a very shaky condition to be frightened with false fire in this way. The only effect of Sarto's denunciation of Bergson will be a good advertisement for Bergson, who already announces that he will reply to the Vatican in a series of winter lectures.

The following resolution of the Southern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland with regard to the late Cadder disaster is taken from the report in the *Glasgow Herald*:—

"The Southern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland observe with sincere grief the very painful visitation of Divine Providence at Cadder coal pit which happened on Sabbath, August 3, and feel it to be their duty to God and their fellow-men to protest against the practice of the Carron Company, inasmuch as it now appears that they employ their men to work on the Lord's Day, and also against the action of the men themselves, who deliberately work on the Sabbath in defiance of the Lord's command to the contrary. The Presbytery would strongly urge upon employers and employees, whether in connection with this company or elsewhere, the great importance of abstaining from such transgression of God's law, as Sabbath desecration is a grievous sin which will not escape punishment in time and in eternity. The Presbytery would extend their deep sympathy to the bereaved families and dependants of the men, who have been so suddenly and unexpectedly overtaken with such a dire calamity."

According to this rigmarole there will be no accidents in mines if Sunday labor is abolished. If the Presbyterian gentlemen who drew it up really believe it they are several centuries behind the times. It had better be regarded as a professional manifesto.

"God tells me I must do so," said a ten-year-old school-boy, named Robert Beedell, of Newton St. Cyres, Devonshire. Then he committed suicide by falling under a railway express at a level crossing. The jury found it a case of "suicide while of unsound mind." Hearing God speak is pretty good evidence of insanity nowadays. Formerly it was good evidence of inspiration. Look at the Bible, for instance.

"The Lord is such a long time taking me," said little Doris Cotton, of Forest-road, Shapshed, Leicestershire, to her father. She was fourteen years of age and had suffered for eighteen months with consumption, growing weaker and weaker. "Dad," she said, "lift me up to the window, so I can throw myself out." Soon afterwards—and it was Sunday morning—she managed to do this for herself, and her dead body was found on the causeway below. We suppose there is a Christian moral in this, if one could only dig it out. Perhaps it illustrates the consolations of religion.

From one morning's "Latest Wills." Rev. Marmaduke Alan Prickett, of the Junior Conservative Club, Albemarle-street, left £10,167. Rev. Charles Edward Bentley, College Green, Gloucestershire, left £10,194. Rev. Canon David Bruce Payne, of Deal, left £10,363. Rev. Percival George Willoughby, 81 Onslow-square, left £26,051. Very Rev. Sir James Cameron Lees, of St. Giles, Kingussie, Invernesshire, left £27,068. "Blessed be ye poor!"

Here are more of them. Rev. Henry Brembridge, of Winkleigh, Devon, left £34,015. Rev. George Feather, vicar of Glazebury, Lancashire, left £13,927.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements**

September 21, Leicester.

October 5, Birmingham Town Hall; 19, Manchester; 26, Stratford Town Hall.

**To Correspondents.**

**PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1918.**—Previously acknowledged, £171 9s. 9d. Received since:—An Old Worker, £1; A. Galpin (U.S.A.), £1; W. H. Harrap, 5s.; Andrew Shiel, 10s.; Admiral (Reading), 10s.; Robert Stirton and friends (quarterly), £1 1s.

**FREETHINKER.**—The word "Atheist" did not "creep into" the Dictionary. It has been there for any length of time. If there is any "creeping in" at all, it is to be laid to the charge of the word "Agnostic," which was coined by the late Professor Huxley. We have referred to Lord Guthrie's protest in this week's "Acid Drops."

**ADMIRER (Reading).**—Sorry for the delay. See this week's list. Pleased to have your acknowledgment of "many moments of pleasure" derived from reading the *Freethinker*.

**A. R. MACKENZIE (S. Africa).**—We are for free speech everywhere, of course, but we cannot do much to defend it in any other country than our own. Neither can we deal with purely political questions anywhere. We think you will see, on second thoughts, that this is our proper and most useful policy.

**B. EVANS.**—Shall be sent as requested. Thanks.

**T. HIBBOTT.**—The book arrived all right. Please accept our thanks.

**W. H. H.**—We have none at present, but may have some before very long.

**W. MARTIN.**—We should hardly care to reprint it in the *Freethinker*. Eulogies of Bradlaugh by Mrs. Besant, written in the old days, have lost their grateful flavor now. Our best wishes go with you on the journey you are taking.

**T. H. ELSTON.**—Thanks for your appreciative and encouraging letter. We will try to oblige with "More."

**E. B.**—Thanks for cuttings.

**J. FERGUSON.**—Letters posted at Glasgow on Tuesday cannot possibly be dealt with in "this week's *Freethinker*." Monday is the latest day for ordinary matter, and Tuesday morning for anything really urgent. We print early on Wednesday, and are on sale in the afternoon. A paragraph on the cutting will be found in this week's "Acid Drops." Glad to receive your thanks for "the very great pleasure" you derive from "being a constant reader" of this journal.

**ANDREW SHIEL** writes: "Mrs. Shiel and I have both read your paper from the first issue, and seem to enjoy it better all the time; in fact, we can still enter into a sort of struggle as to which of us shall have the first look through when Thursday comes round." This correspondent congratulates us on our "sustained and almost superhuman effort to keep the old flag of freedom flying."

**T. FOWLER.**—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.

**M. MARTIN.**—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

**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. Vanoc.

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.

**Sugar Plums.**

Having had three fine days and three dismal days, as far as the weather is concerned, with his old friend J. W. de Caux, J.P., at Great Yarmouth, Mr. Foote is seated in the editorial chair of the *Freethinker* again and seeing this issue through the press.

Mr. Foote does not intend to lecture every Sunday for some time. He has booked a few provincial engagements by way of trial, and in each case the Branch or Society has

been informed that the engagement may be cancelled if it turns out that he has resumed platform work prematurely. He has been strongly invited to open the new session at Glasgow, but he thinks it imprudent to undertake such a long journey just at present. He hopes, however, to meet his Glasgow friends again at a not too distant date.

The Pioneer Press has several new books and pamphlets nearly ready for publication—including a cheap edition of Mr. Foote's *Bible Heroes*, and some fresh issues of the "Pioneer Pamphlets" series. Other writings of Mr. Foote, and some of his more immediate colleagues, will be announced very shortly. The Pioneer Press intends to be very active on the publishing side this coming winter. Special efforts will also be made to push the circulation of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. F. J. Gould sails on the White Star liner *Adriatic* for New York on September 25. He will be spending several months in the United States, where he will visit many places under the auspices of the Moral Instruction League, but not in connection with the American Ethical Union, as in 1911. He will give moral teaching, in his well-known way, at the request of School Boards and other such bodies; the whole program being arranged by Professor F. C. Sharp, of Madison-square, who does it *con amore* and non-commercially. Mr. Gould's late visit to India, on a similar mission, was in every way successful. Besides public recognitions, Mr. Gould has received a token of thanks from the Gaekwar of Baroda in the form of a silver vase. Before leaving England for the United States this month Mr. Gould has passed the pages of a new volume from his pen entitled *Pages for Young Socialists*, with Prefaces by Mr. H. M. Hyndman and Mr. J. Keir Hardie, and pictures by Mr. Walter Crane. We may add that Mr. Gould promises us what he calls "scraps of the usual sort" during his wanderings in America. Our readers will appreciate these "scraps" as they did before on the occasion of his visit to India.

The Positivists are the most insular people in the world and this characteristic is reflected in the *Positivist Review*. Nevertheless we like calling attention now and then to that publication; and we take this opportunity of repeating that we have every respect for its able editor, Mr. S. H. Swinny. The September number contains some interesting articles, and a beautiful funeral address by Mr. J. Carey Hall, the happy translator of Pierre Laffitte's *Positive Science of Morals*. Perhaps the article that attracts most attention is Professor Gilbert Murray's review of Mr. Marvin's *The Living Past*. Professor Murray calls upon Mr. Marvin to "justify the vast importance he attributes to Shakespeare." "Of all great men of genius," he adds, "I can hardly think of one who contributed so little to human progress." He even blames Shakespeare for not understanding the Puritans. Surely this is Professor Murray in a new vein. Perhaps he will explain what he means by "progress." Meanwhile we venture to think that it is Gilbert Murray, and not William Shakespeare, who fails to understand the Puritans. Shakespeare saw that they brought no new truth for the world, but a most unlovely temper. One can sympathise with the American humorist who said it was quite true that the Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock, but it might have been better for the world if Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers.

An American "saint" writes us as follows:—  
"As an old reader of the *Freethinker* I regret to see the President's Honorarium Fund grows so slowly. To obviate that, as far as old age and decreasing income will permit, I take pleasure in handing you a slight contribution (£1). I hope many others may do likewise."

It is pleasant to find that we have good friends in all parts of the English-speaking world.

Canon Newbolt has been condemning society novels and the Salome dance. Considering what noses for indecency the clergy possess, it is remarkable than none of them ever notice the "nauseous unreserve" of the Bible. As for the dance of Salome, it is distinctly less sensational than David's *pas-de-seul*.

A story is going the rounds that one of Mr. Cook's lady patrons, recently returned from a lightning trip on the Continent, boasted that when she was in Italy she "saw so many people in the garbage of monks."

The Salvation Army has been holding an anti-drink crusade. One intoxication fighting another.

## The Gospel History a Fabrication.

### THE PREFACE TO LUKE'S GOSPEL.

THE form of dedication which Luke has prefixed to his Gospel (i. 1—4) has for three centuries been a source of misunderstanding to Bible readers, many of whom, misled by the wording of the English translation, have believed the writer to have lived in apostolic times. In the Revised Version several unimportant alterations are made in this paragraph; but the misleading portion is allowed to stand. Thus, Luke, in referring to the pre-existing narratives relating to Jesus, is made to say:—

"even as they *delivered them unto us*, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word."

Luke was one of the "us"; but he was not an "eye-witness" or a "minister of the word." The passage should read:—

"even as they, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, *delivered them unto us*" [*i.e.*, handed them down to Luke's day].

No one, from the latter statement, could mistake Luke for an eye-witness, or even the companion of an apostle: and it was for this reason that our priestly revisers would not put the words "delivered them unto us" in their proper grammatical position. The whole paragraph, as amended, reads:—

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, delivered them unto us, it seemed good to me also, having traced all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed."

From this dedication we obtain a glimpse of Luke's time. We see, in the first place, that several other Christian scholars had already compiled or edited a series of Gospel narratives; and it is clearly implied that any educated Christian was at liberty to do so; "inspiration" for such a purpose had not then been thought of. The Gospels to which Luke referred as recently compiled were those "according to" Mark, Matthew, John, and Marcion.

Next, Luke says that the matters contained in the Gospels had been "fulfilled" among them; that is to say, were a fulfilment of so-called "prophecy." Chief among these would be the destruction of Jerusalem, the prediction of which event was composed after its occurrence, and piously placed in the mouth of Jesus; to which Luke himself contributed some additional circumstances which he knew had actually occurred (Luke xix. 43, 44; xxi. 23, 24). From this Preface, again, it would appear that Luke really believed that the primitive Gospel from which he and the others took their accounts, had been written by "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." There was, we may suppose, a tradition to that effect; but this did not prevent him from making alterations wherever he thought he could improve the narratives, not even in the sayings ascribed to his Savior.

The next point is, that Luke states he had "traced all things accurately from the first": a statement which is simply untrue; for in the age in which that compiler lived, it would be impossible for him, or for anyone else, to collect evidence concerning the sayings and doings of Jesus Christ. But Luke records several events which are said to have occurred thirty years before the ministry of Jesus (Luke i., ii.). How did he "trace accurately" these matters? He relates, for instance, a speech (of eight verses) made by the angel Gabriel to the priest Zacharias in the temple, no other person being present (i. 18—20); also, another speech (ten verses) by the same angel to Mary the Virgin, no one else being present (i. 28—37). He records an address (four verses) by Elizabeth to her cousin Mary, in a private interview, and an ecstatic declamation (ten verses) uttered by Mary in reply (i. 42—55), no other person being present. He records, again, an outpouring of the

spirit (twelve verses) by Zacharias (i. 68—72), and a short speech (three verses) by an angel to some shepherds (ii. 10—12). How did Luke "trace accurately" these circumstances? As a simple matter of fact, he could not; and he did not trace anything. The Virgin Birth story is a Christian fabrication which Luke added from apocryphal writings of his time, and all the foregoing events in connection with it are of the same fictitious character. Luke simply selected the narratives which he thought most credible from the Christian writings known in his time. By "tracing things accurately" he meant his searching through Josephus for names or events to fix the time when Jesus was born, and when he and the Baptist commenced to preach.

Luke, again, records a number of parables which were unknown to the writer of the primitive Gospel, and of which, apparently the compilers Matthew and Mark had never heard. These are: the Good Samaritan—the Servants watching—the Barren fig-tree—the Great Supper—the Lost piece of silver—the Prodigal Son—the Unjust Steward—the Rich man and Lazarus—the Importunate Widow—the Pharisee and Publican—the Ten pieces of money—and several others. Where did Luke get all these? Where, also, did he find the account of the raising of the Widow's son to life, of which the other editors appear never to have heard? The answer is, Nobody knows; but there can be no doubt whatever that they are all Christian fabrications. The evidence for this fact, though inferential, is sound and conclusive. We have, in the first place, no evidence that the sayings or discourses in the Gospels were ever uttered by Jesus; but, assuming that they were, they were not taken down at the time, and could not be remembered by hearing them spoken once. The alleged "divine inspiration" of the writers is a modern assumption which the Gospels themselves disprove. Where, then, did all these sayings come from? There can be but one answer: they were fabricated by some of the more cunning and unscrupulous scholars (probably teachers) among the early Christians. Those recorded only by Luke were fabricated at a later period than the others.

Again, if, as I have twice shown to be the case, the public ministry was a Nazarean fraud, then Jesus did not utter any of the sayings ascribed to him in the Gospels: we thus arrive at the same conclusion.

### MOST EXCELLENT THEOPHILUS.

Who was the "most excellent Theophilus" for whom Luke wrote his Gospel? Respecting this great personage all Christian commentators and Biblical critics profess entire ignorance. There can be little doubt, however, that he was the Theophilus who became bishop of Antioch about A.D. 168. This Christian bishop and Luke's Theophilus were both persons of distinction, and both had been "instructed" in the Christian faith. There was also a tradition (referred to by Eusebius and Jerome) that Luke was a native of Antioch. From his *Letters to Autolycus* we learn that Theophilus of Antioch was a convert to Christianity late in life, and would therefore know less of the Christian writings than one brought up in that faith; and, being an educated man—he had read the works of Josephus, whom he names—he would naturally require a copy of the Gospel soon after his conversion. Apparently, the one in use at Antioch did not satisfy him; hence, Luke, an educated Christian of long standing in that church, compiled a revised Gospel for his especial use, and borrowed his *Josephus* for reference to historical matters. This Gospel was, no doubt, commenced shortly after the conversion of Theophilus, which would be many years before that personage was promoted to the office of bishop—say, some year after A.D. 150. This bishop of Antioch is the only Theophilus known who in any way answers the Theophilus of Luke's Preface. Luke's Gospel is first mentioned by Irenæus about A.D. 185.

### THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

A few brief comments are necessary respecting this second book of Luke. Like the Third Gospel, it

was compiled for the use of the "most excellent Theophilus," and is from beginning to end pure fiction. Luke, it is true, was not the fabricator; that editor merely combined and put into shape some narratives from three apocryphal writings concocted before his time. We know from various sources that there were in circulation in the second century a number of fabulous stories relating to Peter and Paul, among which were the Acts of Peter, the Acts of Paul, the Travels of Peter, the Travels of Paul, and the Travels of Peter and Paul. Luke has simply selected, combined, and revised the narratives which he considered most credible in these writings, and has added names of procurators and other matters from *Josephus* to make the narratives appear more historical. Moreover, the long speeches which he has placed in the mouths of Stephen, Peter, and Paul have been shown to be his own composition.

The importance of the Book of the Acts is, in one sense, even greater than that of the Gospels; for not only are the miracles, ministry, and crucifixion of Jesus repeatedly referred to as historical facts, but the book is assumed by all shades of Christians to be a reliable account of the promulgation of the Christian religion by the so-called "Apostles" of Jesus, and even hostile critics sometimes accept it as such. Hence, it is used to fix all dates of the early history of the Church at Jerusalem, and also of the propagation of the gospel in other places by Paul. Now, if we carefully examine the Pauline Epistles, we shall find nothing in them—no name of emperor, king, tetrarch, procurator, etc.—to indicate when the writer lived. This period is obtained from the unhistorical "Acts," though the accounts of Paul's doings in that book are flatly contradicted in the Epistles.

That the narratives in "the Acts" are fictitious is beyond doubt: they simply require to be read to be recognised. In chapter i., for instance, is narrated the ascension of Jesus, with the apostles watching until he passes beyond the clouds: then two angels appear, and say that he will return in like manner. In chapter ii. we have an account of the descent of the Holy Ghost with "a rushing mighty wind," and tongues "like as of fire" alighting upon each of the apostles; after which these spirit-filled men are able to speak every known language. Next, on the day of Pentecost, all the foreigners in Jerusalem "hear them speak every man his own language," which is followed by a speech from Peter which converts 3,000 persons. And we are asked to believe that Peter would be allowed to address such a multitude, in Jerusalem, and at one of the three great festivals, and to set the city in an uproar, by preaching a new religion, without let or hindrance. Where was the procurator? and why did he permit such an innovation? And what were the armed Roman soldiers within the city, who were on the lookout for innovators, doing? The writer of the Pauline document from which Luke took chapter xxiv. knew that no such innovation would be permitted in Jerusalem; so he represents Paul as saying (xxiv. 12, 18):—

"and neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd.....they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd, nor yet with tumult."

I have no space here to go into any more absurdities. It is true that the account of the propagation of the gospel by Paul appears more rational; but it is not historical. He is a miracle-worker in the Acts; but he has no such power in his Epistles. He works in harmony with the apostles in the Acts; but he denounces them and their interference in the Epistles. He is called "Saul" in the Petrine portion of the Acts (i.—xii.), and "Paul" in the Pauline portion (xiii.—xxviii.), the explanation being that Luke found the name "Saul" in the *Acts of Peter* and the name "Paul" in the *Acts of Paul and Travels of Paul*, and, believing they referred to the same person, changed Saul into Paul in the first Pauline chapter (xiii. 9).

We are told by orthodox critics that Luke was the companion of Paul during certain journeys in he

Acts which are recorded in the first person, in which the writer employs the words "we" and "us"—meaning himself, Paul, and other co-workers—but this is an apologetic perversion, and assumes that Luke was one of the "ministers of the word" in apostolic times, which his Preface tells us he was not.

As regards the "we" narratives, Luke has simply incorporated in the Pauline portion of the Acts some narratives relating to Paul which he took from another source—the latter being written in the first person. It is the writer of this document that employed the words "we" and "us." These portions of Paul's journeys are the following: Acts xvi. 9 to 18; Acts xx. 5 to xxi. 19; Acts xxvii. 1 to xxviii. 16. If the first two of these sections be read carefully, it will be seen that the writer was not a follower of Paul, and that when he said "we" and "us" he referred to himself and his own travelling companions, not to Paul and his colleagues: whence it may be inferred who this "we" writer was believed (in Luke's time) to be. I leave these questions as a little problem for critical readers. ABRACADABRA.

### Creation Myths.

REFERRING in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* to the Genesis cosmogony, the eminent Leipzig Assyriologist, Professor Heinrich Zimmern, remarks that, "To seek for even a kernel of historical truth in such cosmogonies is inconsistent with a scientific point of view."

In the light of the fact that present-day science is unanimous in regarding the existing universe as the result of an orderly process of development, the myths and legends of savage and semi-civilised peoples are now relegated to their proper anthropological province. But although they are quite valueless to the geologist and the astronomer, these myths nevertheless retain their importance to the students of comparative psychology and comparative religion.

There is no longer any doubt that the Babylonian tablets preserve a far older account of the Creation than that recorded in the Book of Genesis. Still, although the Hebrew myth bears unmistakable evidence of its indebtedness to the earlier Babylonian epic, each story must be regarded as a comparatively modern rendering of the vastly older creation fancies of prehistoric man.

The story of the slaughter of a huge dragon at the commencement of the world's history is met with in many lands. Nearly all the authorities agree that the oldest known versions of this myth are those of Babylonia and ancient India. The Babylonian story informs us that at the Creation the mighty god Marmuk slew the terrible dragon Tiamat, and, having vanquished this creature, he created the heavens and the earth by "splitting the huge carcass of the monster into halves and setting one of them up to form the sky, while the other half apparently he used to fashion the earth." Upon this Babylonian myth is based the so-called Mosaic cosmogony. In the words of Professor J. G. Frazer—

"The account of creation given in the first chapter of Genesis, which has been so much praised for its simple grandeur and sublimity, is merely a rationalised version of the old myth of the fight with the dragon, a myth which for crudity of thought deserves to rank with the quaint fancies of the lowest savages."

The Indian variant is embodied in the ancient Vedic hymns. We gather from these that the brave and mighty Indra fought and defeated a colossal dragon named Vrtra, which had so dammed up the waters that they no longer flowed in their appointed courses. After Indra had slain the baleful dragon with his thunderbolt, the springs once more discharged their waters, which, filling up the dried river-beds, resumed their suspended flowings and somewhere reached the sea. But Indra's mighty

\* *Golden Bough*, "The Dying God," pt. iii., p. 106; 1911.

achievement only terminated the conflict for the time being. The warfare between Indra and his satanic adversary is periodically renewed. At certain seasons it may be said that the dragon that was slain now liveth again, and is at his old mischief. This myth refers not so much to the Creation as to a "regularly recurring phenomenon." As we shall see, this Indian myth, like its Babylonian counterpart, is colored by its native surroundings. In its present form it must be viewed as a fanciful description of the commencement of that season of storm and lightning which succeeds the prolonged heat of the tropical summer.

"At such times all nature, exhausted by the drought, longs for coolness and moisture. Day after day, men and cattle may be tormented by the sight of clouds that gather and then pass away without disburdening themselves of their contents. At last the long-drawn struggle between the rival forces comes to a crisis. The sky darkens, thunder peals, lightning flashes, and the welcome rain descends in sheets drenching the parched soil and flooding the rivers. Such a battle of the elements might well present itself to the primitive mind in the guise of a conflict between a maleficent dragon of drought and a beneficent god of thunder and rain. The cloud-dragon has swallowed the waters, and keeps them shut up in the black coils of his sinuous body; the god cleaves the monster's body with his thunderbolt, and the imprisoned waters escape, in the form of dripping rain and rushing stream."

The myths of different peoples express in various ways the seasonal changes which the revolving years bring round. The legends of George and the Dragon, and of Apollo and the Python, certainly seem to symbolise summer's triumph over winter's darkness and decay. In the Babylonian myth of Marmuk, the solar divinity, and his conflict with Tiamat, the dark dragon, the yearly change which transforms the Euphrates valley from watery dreariness to the floral splendors of spring is symbolically portrayed. All through the winter the broad Babylonian plain is hidden by its liquid covering, and presents the appearance of a sea. With the coming of spring the sun recovers its lost power, the clouds break up, the waters slowly subside, and the solid earth, arrayed in its green mantle once again, returns to gladden the hearts of men. The sombre dragon Tiamat personifies the dark cloud-masses, the waste of waters, and the constantly falling rain; Marmuk, on the other hand, represents the vernal and summer sun which banishes the reptilian powers of darkness and deluge.

Lower stages of human culture provide innumerable examples of a kindred character. Among the north American Indians, for example, most weird and wonderful Creation stories, in which animal gods figure as the world's begetters, are constantly met with. But to return to the resemblances between the Babylonian and the Hebrew Creation Myths. By common consent these resemblances are so striking that no candid inquirer any longer disputes that both have arisen from a common source. The Babylonian cosmogony is many centuries older than the legends contained in the first chapter of Genesis. Both accounts postulate water and darkness as the sole existences at the beginning of things; in each cosmogony the creation of light marks the commencement of the world's career. In both accounts the appearance of the heavens is the outcome of the deity's division of the waters of the primeval chaos so that the upper waters form the heavens and the lower ones the oceans of the earth. "In the Babylonian epic," writes Canon Cheyne, "this division of the waters of the flood is in the closest relation to the battle with Tiamat; nor can we doubt that a parallel description once existed in the Hebrew myth of creation."

A comparison of the Babylonian with the Jewish arrangement of the several separate creative acts is both interesting and instructive. The following lists give the order of the acts of creation as presented by the cuneiform tablets and the inspired volume respectively.

## BABYLONIAN TABLETS.

1. Heaven
2. Heavenly bodies
3. Earth
4. Plants
5. Animals
6. Men

## FIRST CHAP. GENESIS.

1. Heaven
2. Earth
3. Plants
4. Heavenly bodies
5. Animals
6. Men

As is evident at a glance, the uninspired version is eminently the more scientific of the two. Nor need this awaken astonishment. The Assyrians and Babylonians—not to mention the ancient Egyptians and other contemporary races—were far more highly cultured and civilised than the Israelites of old. The Chaldean astrologers and astronomers were keen observers of the sun, moon, and stars. As a consequence, a much better case could be made out for the divine origin of the Babylonian cosmogony than for that recorded in Genesis. In any case, the former myth more closely resembles the history of the evolution of the present phase of the visible universe which modern science has disclosed than the cosmogony so generally and so falsely attributed to Moses.

The semi-nomadic Israelites learnt much from the more advanced races with whom they came into contact; and from the Babylonians, we have many reasons for thinking, they learnt most of all. But the Hebrews not only borrowed their cosmogony; they also muddled it in the borrowing. The Babylonians apparently realised that the creation of the heavenly bodies was a necessary preliminary to the appearance of vegetable life on the earth's surface. But to the less philosophical Israelite the presence of plant life without the all-essential light and heat of the solar orb seems to have caused no surprise. This glaring absurdity alone—one, however, out of many—is sufficient to stamp the Genesis story as utterly valueless from a philosophical or scientific point of view. And with reference to the divine claims still sometimes urged on behalf of the Genesis myth, it may be remarked, once more in the words of that distinguished ornament of the Church of England, Canon Cheyne, that "all available evidence points to the direct or indirect borrowing on the part of the Hebrews."

Closely allied to Creation Myths are the very numerous legends concerning the deluge of waters. The two flood stories blended in the Book of Genesis—for separate legends have been more or less skilfully combined in the narrative—were also adopted by the Hebrews from their Babylonian masters. The Babylonian legend itself survives in two forms. One is preserved in the fragments of Berosus, an ancient Egyptian priest, who compiled a history of Babylon. The other may be studied in the cuneiform tablets preserved in the British Museum, and first translated by the late George Smith in 1872. Of these two accounts, the first mentioned is of small importance, but the second is of priceless value to the archæologist. The legend itself is of great antiquity, and is regarded by experts as at least as old as 3000 B.C. This circumstance alone puts all claims of Hebrew priority out of court.

The great Assyriologist, Professor Zimmern, is of opinion that the harmony between the narrative and the local conditions of Babylonia justifies the conclusion that that country is the birthplace of the story. "It is more difficult to determine," he writes,

"whether any real historical event lies at the foundation of the narrative, or whether we have to deal with a mere myth. In itself, it would, of course, not be inconceivable that in days of yore an unusually extensive flood from the Persian Gulf, combined with continuous rain, burst upon the Babylonian lowlands, and destroyed countless human lives; that a dim tradition of this event was preserved; and that the Babylonian Deluge Story was a last deposit produced by this genuine occurrence. Judging, however, from what is known of the growth of myths, especially among the Babylonians, we think this is far from probable."

As in the myth of Marmuk and Tiamat, the native conditions of the country color the story. The Chaldean Deluge myth bears every appearance of a nature legend. The flood story may be safely

regarded as a poetical description of the rain which descends so copiously during the Babylonian winter. The hero saved in the ark or ship was in all probability the sun-god.

The views advanced in the foregoing paragraphs command the assent of our own great Assyriologist, Professor A. H. Sayce, who writes as follows:—

"The sacred tree of Babylon, with its guardian 'cherubs'—a word, by the way, which seems of Accadian origin—as well as the flaming sword or thunderbolt of fifty points and seven heads, recall Biblical analogies, while the Noachian deluge differs but slightly from the Chaldean one. Indeed, the Jehovistic version of the flood story in Genesis agrees not only in details, but even in phraseology, with that which forms the eleventh lay of the great Babylonian epic. The hero of the latter is Tam-zi or Tammuz, the 'sun of life,' the son of Ubaratutu, 'the glow of sunset,' and denotes the revivifying luminary of the day, who sails upon his 'ark' behind the clouds of winter to reappear when the rainy season is past."

T. F. PALMER.

### The Touch of Truth.

In the pilgrimage of life, as Christians sentimentally call our unceasing warfare against the bedevilments of God, we often notice Truth, her face radiant with merriment. She is no perpetually solemn mistress; for there are times when the comicalities of opposing things awaken a glee within her as strong and as overwhelmingly jubilant as her knowledge of her own power.

A laughing Truth gives an electric thrill to the mind. A merry Truth is the salt of the intellect. And those whose brains have been fashioned into weapons for "the best of all causes" are rewarded by a happiness others do not enjoy. They see the disappearance of the mist men's wasted breath has caused to rise about the face of Truth; and they see her laughing with a contagious abandon that makes the heart young, and fresh, and fragrant. With every burst of merriment another idol is shattered, another god dies, another superstition goes slinking into the forgotten past, another tyranny cringes, curiously, away into the dusty museum of solemn shibboleths. There is a sharpness about the air they cannot abide. Freedom means a virile happiness; if it does not signify that it is nothing.

The book I was reading contained sermons. The title-page was amissing, and so author, date, and name were unknown. Nevertheless, the title might well have been *Hell-Fire Contributions*; the writer's name, Godfrey Helinuff; and the date a century ago, in the days when the world was not wicked.

The preacher was a Scottish Calvinist, with a particularly keen sense of God's selective power. At heart the man was really a lover of his fellows: he left no stone unturned in his endeavors to take all his congregation with him to Heaven, where he could, for evermore, dwell in peace with them, his brethren.

To accomplish this, he had developed a remarkably strong capability to denounce the shortcomings of his flock. Many of the sermons were individualistic trouncings. They made direct references to members of the congregation, whose lives, the pastor considered, were not such as to entitle them to accompany him on his homeward way.

One man had not kept rigidly to the commandment that refers to maid-servants; and his evil doings were submitted to a searching investigation. Nothing was hidden by the worthy administrator of God's holy rod of correction. The verbal flames of punishment flickered, and flashed, and burst forth in volcanic luridly. The man's sin was so expatiated upon; the results were so minutely portrayed; the detail so closely followed, step by step, that the congregation must have experienced a regular eruption of obscenity. The blue flames were not, assuredly, extinguished, so far as visibility goes, by those of amber and red.

Another member of the congregation had dared to quote, from Burns, a passage that related in some suspiciously irreverent manner to the previous Sabbath's castigation. According to the author, the fault, bad enough in that sense as it was, actually lay in the quoting from such an impious book on the Lord's Day. The transgression deserved nothing less than the complete cancellation of the sinner's claim in paradise; and by the time the minister had finished his non-stop flight the religious criminal's literary leanings were suffocated in the fumes of sulphur.

The son of a douce elder of the Kirk had so far forgotten his father's responsible position that he had allowed himself to be caught, and by the minister, too, in the act of sneaking, on a Sunday, into the garden where the gooseberries grew. Notification was given by the minister to his congregation that the boy had already expiated the offence at home; now it was the father's turn. Failure properly to carry out parental duties anent the observance of the Sabbath meant Hell for the child and Hell for the parent; and the righteous old warrior in the pulpit spared no pains to make it as hot as he could.

And so, sermon after sermon, individualistic faults were made the bases of discourses on the awful reality of Hell, its proximity to people, their liability to be received in its ever-open and welcoming mouths, and the frightful punishments that awaited them therein. No quarter was given; no mercy shown. Considerate sensitiveness to the feelings of others was a triviality compared with the love God's inspired castigatior had for his congregation and his attempts to lead them home to heaven. Public ridicule was, by the grace of God, a good and necessary thing. Detailed information of private faults and failings was, by the grace of God, a gateway from sin. Ministerial opprobrium was, by the grace of God, the wrath of God.

And since then no Scotsman, bred in the hamlets of his country, has ever been known to be anything but pure, upright, noble, possessing a "deep-rooted soul," his face reflecting the glory of the God of the Calvinists, and his whole life one great irrefutable argument of the existence of that God!

The last sermon was very quiet and restful, in comparison to the others, as if God's apostle had become a little tired of his labors as public chastiser, and longed for peace; and his farewell remembrances of the horrors of Hell were weak and weary in every sentence. So must have thought the man who had possessed the book before me; for between the last two leaves was a pamphlet cutting which read:—

"And it came to pass that the hills did not budge, nor did the mountains skip like kittens; for the glory of the Lord is such that it is woven in the mists, which the winds disperseth to all the airts; and even to the cleverest fools there cometh a time when their heart of hearts giveth the lie to the memories of their minds. Their tongues stammer in their perplexity; the bravest hide their heads, and the cowardly cry as a child new-weaned. Be ye assured that the hottest flame of Hell will, in the days to come, melt; and men will laugh at the folly of their fathers, and their laughter will chase the gods from the skies and the priests from the earth."

It was the only touch of Truth in the book.

ROBERT MORELAND.

According to the *Daily Sketch*, most members of the Royal Family are on the 'phone. From the fuss the clergy make, one would imagine that the King of Kings was also connected up.

"Hurricane of Red-Hot Bricks" reads a scare headline in a recent issue of the London *Daily Chronicle*. To our surprise, it has no association with the place mentioned in so many pulpits, but refers to a paltry boiler explosion.

An order for a quarter of a million tons of coal has been placed with the Carlton Main Collieries. The order has no theological significance.

## 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.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, L. Gallagher, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30, W. Davidson, a Lecture.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, E. Burke, "Is there a Hell?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Jas. Rowney, a Lecture. Finsbury Park: 6, J. Hecht, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, W. Davidson, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 7.30, E. Burke, a Lecture.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

PRESTON BRANCH N. S. S. (B. S. P. Rooms, 7 Market-street): 7, G. Glaister, B.A., "The Marriage Bond."

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