

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

It is the practice of the mob first to stone and then to erect useless memorials to their greatest benefactors. All who set themselves to replace ancient error and superstition by truth and reason must lay their account with brickbats in their life and a marble monument after death.—PROF. J. G. FRAZER.

Bible Blunders.

PEOPLE who have given the subject fair attention have long known that the Bible does more than contain inaccuracies; it positively abounds in them. There are hundreds of substantial contradictions, and thousands of formal discrepancies. This fact must have been known, at least to a considerable extent, by the old orthodox divines, who went through the Bible with exemplary diligence, and sprinkled their sermons profusely with well-stocked pepper-dridges of more or less apposite texts. But they never admitted it. They kept on saying that Holy Writ was without a single mistake, and that the man who found one had an infidel squint or was misled by the Devil. Their theory was well expressed by the late Mr. Spurgeon, who once affirmed that every sentence of the Bible was written with an Almighty pen, and every word fell from Almighty lips. Spurgeon said that more than fifty years ago. There is not one leading minister who will say it now.

Bible blunders are indeed an inexhaustible theme. Mr. Gladstone, one of the prosiest and dullest of harmonisers, never touched more than the fringe of the subject. He confined himself to the stock illustrations which had been dealt with by hundreds of writers before him—a fact, by the way, which exemplifies the Grand Old Man's terrible lack of originality. He devoted whole pages to showing, in his peculiarly vague and diffuse manner, that the word "day" in the fantastic Creation Story really meant a chapter, that it had nothing to do with chronology, but was a device of composition. He devoted many more pages to showing that if the narrative were read slowly and carefully, attaching a Gladstonian meaning instead of a dictionary meaning to every word, and adding all sorts of amplifications and qualifications between the lines, that old Creation Story was a magnificent manual of astronomy, geology, and biology, and that all the writings of Darwin (supposing them to be true—which Gladstone would never admit or deny) were but commentaries on the science of Moses. But clergymen like Canon Driver and Dean Farrar laughed at him as politely as possible. They knew it was all nonsense, and that the man who "reconciled" the Bible and Modern Science did not understand either.

The ground taken by the new school of Bible defenders is this. They frankly admit that it contains a multitude of mistakes in science and history, and from the point of view of common sense. They no longer declare that it is the Word of God; they say it contains the Word of God. The revelation is not formal, but suggestive. Somewhere or other within it, if we seek aright, we shall find all that is necessary to our salvation, and that is all it was ever intended for. Its writers were inspired as religious teachers; they were not inspired as scientists or historians; nay, they were not even preserved from

falling into any of the errors, superstitions, and prejudices of their own age and nation.

This theory sweeps away all the common difficulties of the case. It gets rid of the science of Genesis, the inaccuracies of the historical books, the absurdities of Balaam's ass and Jonah's whale, and all the self-contradictions between "In the beginning" and "Amen." It will serve the Church for some time. But it cannot last for ever. It is essentially a transition theory. It marks the progress of clerical surrender up to date. Simply this and nothing more. "Inspiration" cannot be given up all at once. It becomes slowly diluted by reason, until at length there remains but a trace of the original spirit, which finds its expression in the paradox, "That is inspired which inspires me."

The word "inspired" like the word "genius" is fast obeying the common law of language. New words are invented in science and commerce, but old words are generally retained with an altered meaning in politics and religion. "Genius" once meant an attendant spirit; now it means an exaltation of natural faculties. "Inspired" once meant being the medium of divine messages to man; now it means being wound up to a high pitch of performance, as in the poet, the artist, the actor, the orator. We also speak of the performer's "soul" without the slightest reference to anything apart from his visible organisation. Thus do supernatural terms get emptied of their meaning.

The Bible is indeed a blunder altogether. Supposing there be a God, who is the Creator of all us, and who communicates with us spiritually, it is childish to suppose that he said all he had to say two or three thousand years ago, speaking in two languages that are only understood by comparatively a handful of his children, and taking no care whatever to preserve the written word from the accidents of time and change. No one can ever be assured that God has spoken unless God speaks to him individually. Revelation must always be personal. What is revelation at first-hand is only hearsay at second-hand. He who has God's authority for anything only brings me his own authority when he conveys it to me.

Supposing God spoke to Moses, how do I know that this is what he said to him? The very lapse of time raises insuperable difficulties. It will not do to tell me that similar difficulties occur in regard to the works of all ancient writers. *Similar* is not the *same*. There is a fundamental difference at the starting point. It does not materially affect my life or my principles to believe or disbelieve that Cæsar wrote the "Commentaries," or Cicero delivered those Orationes. As the man in the street would say, nothing hangs to it. But an alleged revelation involves the greatest and most decisive consequences, in private and public life, and in all modes of thinking and feeling. So much hangs to it that the revelation should be unquestionable, which it cannot be in the case of a book like the Bible.

Freethought must keep on attacking the Bible. It is the Alpha and Omega of Christian theology and priesthood. Theoretically the Christian has a God in heaven; practically his God is the Bible, and this is none the less true because he reads it in all sorts of different ways, for that is precisely how every God is understood by his devotees.

G. W. FOOTE.

Materialism: Its Meaning and Value.—II.

(Continued from p. 659.)

LIKE other forms of scientific thought, the Materialism of antiquity underwent an eclipse consequent on the revival of supernaturalism, of which Christianity stood as the conquering expression. Until the Renaissance, Materialism as a mode of thought was either extinct or survived only in secret. The products of Greek thinking could not be altogether destroyed, but they were so overlaid with supernaturalism, and the investigation of natural phenomena so completely under the control of the Church, that for the better part of a thousand years the world remained practically stagnant. Many of the positive results of ancient thought were actually lost altogether. This was the case with the Pythagorean system of astronomy—revived at a later date by Copernicus. And when not lost, the true principle of investigation was ignored. The utter barrenness of the spiritualistic or supernaturalistic method was never more clearly shown than in the one period of civilised history during which it exercised complete control.

At the Renaissance, Materialism did for human thought what it has done over and over again in the history of science. Just as in the dawn of Greek philosophy so it again brought men's minds back to an unchallengeable reality—to facts that could be grasped by all, and tested by all. And with each revival, like the waves on an incoming tide, it registered a more assured advance. This time its rise was strengthened by the sound scientific work that had been done in the schools of Mohammedan Spain. Great advances had been made there in many directions; but, above all, the science of chemistry had been created. This served, more than anything else, to make thinkers familiar with the conception of force as something inherent in matter rather than external to it. In its more developed form we have, in place of force, energy. Most advanced scientific workers to-day show a strong inclination to drop "force" altogether as introducing a quite needless anthropomorphic element.

The causes that led up to the deeply-rooted modern mechanistic, or Materialistic, conception of nature may be briefly indicated. In astronomy, the Copernican theory effected a complete revolution in human ideas concerning the earth's place in the universe, and this in turn modified men's attitude towards the ruling form of supernaturalism. It was a sure instinct that led the Church to oppose the Copernican system, as, once admitted, the cosmology on which Christian teaching rested logically collapsed. Following this, Galileo and Newton, in formulating the laws of terrestrial and celestial gravitation, made the important advance of reducing all mass motion to a "force" belonging to matter itself. In a way, this had been done by some of the Greek thinkers; but the Newtonian generalisation gave the idea an experimental and verifiable basis. In turn, Newton was attacked for Atheism and Materialism; and, so far as his theory eliminated the direct action of Deity, the charge was justifiable. With the Nebular Hypothesis of Laplace, the work of establishing the mechanistic principle in astronomy was practically completed. No future criticism of either theory could disturb that. Indeed, all criticism was compelled to express itself in terms of the Materialistic principle.

Just as Laplace used the dissipation of heat and the laws of moving bodies to explain the formation of the solar system, so geology became a science by abolishing cataclysmal and creative epochs, and tracing all geologic changes to the operation of known forms of energy. How recent most of our best scientific knowledge is, and how rapid advance may be once a fruitful idea is mooted, may be seen from the fact that Hutton, the real founder of scientific geology, formulated his theory as late as 1788. Other investigators—Werner, Hall, Humboldt, Sedgwick, Murchison—made important contributions to a knowledge of geological phenomena; and,

finally, Sir Charles Lyell, in 1830, in his epoch-making *Principles of Geology*, established the principle of the uniform, continuous, and permanent action of known forces as accounting for the whole of geological phenomena.

Chemistry exerted also a profound influence in firmly establishing the mechanistic idea. The study of chemistry, for various reasons, has a larger connected history than most of the other sciences—with the possible exception of astronomy. When Dalton, in 1808, propounded the atomic theory, he brought back, by actual proof, the teachings of Democritus and other Greek thinkers. That has remained one of the basic conceptions of modern science, and is substantially unaffected by any possible theory as to the disintegration of the chemical atom. It still remains the most powerful instrument in the hands of the chemist. And when we add to the facts already named the establishment of the principle of the conservation of energy, and of the doctrine of evolution in the organic sphere, we have a world, practically complete in its general features, and in which the supernatural has no place whatever. For everyone of these teachings rests upon the conception of forces as internal instead of external. The whole phenomena of nature, from atom to planet, and from the tiniest speck of living matter up to man, exist as the result of "forces" inseparable from the material of nature. Henceforth, whatever the clash of scientific forces, the problem before all is that of deducing the known universe from the play of known or knowable forces. The supernatural has received its death-blow.

So far, I have not given any exact definition of Materialism. For, like other terms with historical associations, its meaning is best realised by understanding what these associations were. And from what has been said, it will be plain that the essential issue between Materialism and Spiritualism lies in the possibility or impossibility of explaining all phenomena as due to the composition of natural forces. This was the conception that characterised Materialism in the days of Democritus, and it is still characteristic of Materialism in our own day. If phenomena can be so explained, then the truth of Materialism is admitted, even though we may disguise our Materialism under other names. If we give up this method of explanation as hopeless, there is an opening for the spiritualistic theory, although an opening only. There would still be needed positive proof of its correctness. And, judged by its history, there need be no hesitation in saying that, whether Materialism be right or wrong, the spiritualistic theory is absolutely worthless as either an explanation of admitted facts or as an instrument of investigation.

On the other hand, not only has the mechanistic principle proven itself to be of enormous value as a mode of inquiry, but it possesses the valuable feature that its errors always admit of rectification. It should however, be pointed out, that the errors charged against Materialism are more properly chargeable to the science of the time. There is no need for wonder, to take an example, that when "matter" was thought of by all as made up of small, solid bodies, indivisible and indestructible, materialistic thinkers made use of that conception. But no change in our conception of the nature of matter can really affect Materialism. The answer to the question "What is matter?" must always be determined by contemporary science. If matter is thought of at one time as made up of solid particles, and at another as so many ethereal ganglia, the Materialist may rest content with either view. In any case, the word is no more than a symbol, useful to summarise our experiences, and so render them intelligible. The Materialist may, in brief, endorse Mr. Carvath Read's dictum, that "matter" "is a methodological category; it is for science to decide how it may best be defined as a means of understanding phenomena."*

* *Metaphysics of Nature*, p. 287.

The truth is, that a great deal of the discussion about matter is a heritage from the long reign of metaphysics. People assumed—and many still assume—that apart from what we know of the world as represented in consciousness, the whole of which may be traced to sensations and memories of sensations, simplex or complex; beside this it is assumed that we have some apprehension of another world dignified by the name of reality. Under various titles, noumenon, thing-in-itself, unknowable, etc., this has always been a veritable bugbear in the history of scientific philosophy: It is sheer futility. Of a world outside of consciousness we know nothing, and never can know anything—not even whether there is anything to know about. The phenomena described by the term "matter," and the phenomena described by the term "mind," are, for us, never more than two aspects of the same fact or set of facts. Modern psychology, if it has done nothing else, has at least made this clear.

But there are Metaphysical Materialists, as there are Metaphysical Spiritualists. And each perpetrates exactly the same blunder. To take away all sensible qualities: heat, color, smell, hardness, etc., and then to assume that there remains something which we call matter, and declare that to be the origin of everything, is as far removed from sound science and as truly metaphysical—in the vicious sense of the word—as it is to abstract all mental qualities and worship a mythical substratum—"mind." Mind as the sum of mental qualities is understandable. Matter as the sum of sensible qualities is also understandable. But neither mind nor matter, as things in themselves, is anything more than a figment—both useless and misleading. A genuine Materialism is committed to no such metaphysical nightmare. Its sole concern is the establishment of the simple principle that natural phenomena result from the inevitable composition of natural forces. Once grasp that principle in all its simplicity, and apply it with only a moderate degree of logical acumen to all the confusion that has gathered round the subject of Materialism, and a large part of the criticism levelled against it, disappears.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

The Honest Doubter.

THE Rev. Dr. Wilbur Chapman is a professional revivalist who hails from America. Revivalism, as a profession, is not yet a hundred years old; but from the day of Moody and Sankey to this of Torrey and Chapman its popularity has been great. The chief object in view is the restoration of backsliders whom the local clergy are unable to reach. As a rule, backsliders are simply indifferent, lukewarm believers, and to win them back into the Christian fold is not a very difficult task. Convinced unbelievers do not attend revival meetings except out of curiosity, nor are they at all likely to be affected by the ordinary evangelistic appeals. Unbelief is a subject which the revivalist does not seem to understand. Dr. Chapman betrays his ignorance the moment he begins to talk about it. He tells his hearers that some are doubters because they are too stubborn to believe. He admits, however, that "some are born with a tendency to doubt," while convinced that, in the majority of instances, "doubt has sin as its tap-root." "For the one who is an honest doubter," he professes "all respect," and would like to help him if he could. He defines him thus:—

"The honest doubter is the man who tells me that he cannot receive my hope and faith, that he does not know that he wants to receive either, but at the same time he tells me that if my hope cheers me, if my faith strengthens me, if it makes trouble easier to bear, and the tomb to be robbed of some of its gloom, he will say no word to me that will take away from me the thing that means so much to me. Such a man is an honest doubter."

We prefer to call such a man a cowardly doubter, who lacks the courage of his convictions. In Dr.

Chapman's discourse a doubter is one who rejects religion, an Infidel, even an Atheist; but it is impossible to reject religion honestly without regarding it as false. To grow away from it while believing it to be true would be the absurdest thing in the world. But if one verily believes that religion is false is it not his duty to say so and try his best to make converts? Dr. Chapman believes that Christianity is a good which everybody needs, and he goes from one end of the world to the other coaxing people to accept it. Has not the man who is convinced that Christianity is untrue and has wrought incalculable harm in the world, an equal right to make proselytes, if he can? Was not Bradlaugh as legitimate a propagandist as Moody? He is not worth his salt who makes no endeavor to spread the faith that is in him.

Dr. Chapman has an endless store of anecdotes to illustrate whatever assertion he happens to make. The statement that "the doubt of many has a sin as its tap-root" is verified by a neat little story about a University student. He was one of the Upper-class-men, and the gentleman who was about to preach overheard a careless, slighting remark about religion in which he indulged on his way to the chapel. The minister turned and laid his hand upon his shoulder, saying, "May I speak with you for a moment?" When they were alone he said, "Are you a Sceptic?" "Yes, sir, I am," came the ready answer. The preacher said, "What sin are you covering? Tell me honestly what sin are you covering? For I know you are covering sin." Thereupon, the story proceeds, the young fellow's "face became as white as death," and with tears streaming down his cheeks he made a full confession of his guilt. Another pat story is of two men meeting somewhere in Africa. "Are you a Christian?" the one asked the other. "No, I am not a Christian," was the answer. "Why not?" "Because the Bible has so many contradictions in it." This answer casts a strong suspicion upon the truth of the story. They talked the matter out by the fire-side, with the result, of course, that the Freethinker flung his unbelief to the winds, and became a zealous disciple of Jesus Christ. We are told of another, "the greatest Infidel Dr. Chapman has ever known," who, on hearing Moody say, "God is your Father; he has given Jesus Christ to be your Savior; will you take him?" bowed his head and exclaimed "O, God, if this is what thy love means, I will accept thy Son." Such are the stories that are so serviceable at revival meetings; and the people are so delighted to believe them. "A leader in Scepticism," "the greatest Infidel I have ever known," such is the description of the doubters who are supposed so easily to become precious jewels in Immanuel's crown.

Dr. Chapman's sermon contains one priceless gem, of the real value of which the preacher had no idea. Here it is:—

"You may argue yourself into a position of Scepticism, which is greatly to be deplored; you rarely argue yourself out of it."

A truer observation was never made. Acceptance of Christianity is never an intellectual act. No person ever argued himself into a state of Christian belief. Every argument for belief is intellectually assailable. Our revivalist admits it, and says:—

"You may encourage doubt by argument. It is not well to argue about these things that are so great and so sacred. Go at a man with an argument, and you will knock at the door of his head, and he will come back with an argument, it will be 'Greek meeting Greek,' and you will make very little progress."

Now, why is it easier for a man to argue himself into Agnosticism than out of it? Is it not because Agnosticism is fundamentally reasonable, while belief is against reason? It is a notorious fact that the most perfervid believers are in constant danger of lapsing into unbelief. The tendency of all faith is to die out; it can be kept alive only by artificial means. This is beyond all controversy. A Christian may argue himself into a position of Scepticism, but he may not argue himself out of it. It is very

questionable whether a convinced, thoroughgoing Freethinker has ever become a Christian in any way whatever; but we do know of scores of Christians, after joyfully experiencing what is called the new birth, who have become Freethinkers by force of argument, and are permanently beyond the reach of all revivalists. Their Scepticism is a treasure laid up in their hearts, "where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." They are quite prepared to talk the matter out with anyone who comes along; they would not be afraid to try a lance with Dr. Chapman himself, so assured are they of the perfect soundness of their ground. This revivalist is wise enough never to enter into argument with them. Dogmatizing is so much easier and safer. He prefers to say to them, when they are not present: "You are dominated by the spirit of prejudice. You have not been fair to God's Word, to Jesus Christ and the Church." This is sheer balderdash, with not a word of truth in it. The fact is that the reverend gentleman is sitting in judgment upon people he does not understand. If the greatest Infidel he has ever known was converted by means of a few commonplace words uttered by the evangelist Moody, we deliberately declare that he is utterly incompetent to talk about Infidels.

The honest doubter is of necessity a maker of doubters. He does not stick his finger in his waistcoat and sneer, as Dr. Chapman thinks he does, but he does allow the light that is in him to shine before men. He not only tells you that he cannot receive your hope and faith; he goes further, and informs you what prevents him from receiving them, and that, in his judgment, you, too, would be much better off without them. This is by no means a sneering attitude, but the natural attitude of a man who believes that he is in possession of the only saving truth, which he is eager to share with all his brethren. Probably he was once a Christian himself, as zealous and joyful as any revivalist; but when the eyes of his understanding were opened, his faith and hope took wing and flew away. Now, has he not a perfect right to say that he has grown away from religion? When I meet such a man, says Dr. Chapman,—

"I feel like saying to him, Did Gladstone grow away from it? and our own great McKinley, did he grow away from it? When the doctor said that McKinley was going to die, our great martyred President said, Gentlemen, if this is the end, then let us sing a hymn together."

We are not surprised now that the reverend gentleman is averse to arguing about these things. He has not mastered the art. Everybody knows that Gladstone died a Christian; but what on earth has that to do with the case? Charles Darwin, a greater man than Gladstone, did grow away from the Christian religion; and tens of thousands have done the same since. It is a difficult task nowadays to come across a scientist who is a whole-hearted believer. The fact that Gladstone died a Christian cannot surely serve as an argument for the truth of Christianity. You might as well argue that because, five hundred years ago, the majority of people believed in witches, it follows that witchcraft must have been true. We know that witchcraft was not true; and many of us are quite as sure that Christianity is as false. Had it been true, there would have been no need of Dr. Chapman and his ilk. Revivalism is itself a most powerful argument against its truth. So is the Church, with all its intricate machinery.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Glorious Company.

"Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,
For you a stately gallery maintain
Of gay and tragic pictures." —WORDSWORTH.

WE have an affection for all dictionaries. Even a gazetteer is a mine of suggestion; but a biographical dictionary or an encyclopædia is certain to make

large inroads on our time. Take, for example, Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. In it there are thousands of entries, taken from all ages and all countries. That means many thousands of names of interest, many thousands of men and women who have played their part on life's stage, and who played it in a sufficiently remarkable manner to give their names a distinct interest to their descendants. We know of few more delightful occupations than the reading of such a book, and it is a thousand pities that Freethought publishers are not sufficiently wealthy to include the portraits of all the persons mentioned.

Such a book is informative, and turns the handles of many doors. We turn a page and encounter the name of Richard Carlile. It is but a name on the page, but what an indomitable spirit does it not conjure up. There flits into our memory the terrible martyrdom of this bravest of the brave soldiers of Liberty. Think of it! Carlile, the lion-hearted, suffered nine-and-a-half years' imprisonment for championing the liberty of the press. His brave wife and other members of his family, and shop assistants, divided among them fifty years' confinement. Further we see the splendid name of Edward Gibbon, the greatest of English historians, who "sapped a solemn creed with solemn sneer." He walks for ever as to the clash of arms, under an imperial banner. Without exploration we have found the magnetic and powerful name of Voltaire. What a man! His epigrams stung like wasps, and rankled for years afterwards. At sixty-four, when other men are thinking of slipped ease, he was writing *Candide*, the wittiest book in the world. Writing *Edipus* at seventeen, *Irene* at eighty-three, he crowded between these two masterpieces the accomplishments of a giant. And Edward Fitzgerald, who turned the quatrains of the old freethinking Persian, Omar Khayyam, into a masterpiece of English poetry. "A planet larger than the sun which cast it," as his friend Tennyson described it. The name of Thomas Paine is homely, but what a personality does it not recall! A character of outstanding ability, a maker of nations, far from being the uncouth and unlettered man of popular imaginings.

There is a very significant entry in the name of the Empress Catherine, of Russia. How many critics of Freethought know that the evangel of Reason appeals equally to the monarch on the throne as to the man in the street. Catherine was a Freethinker in word and in deed. When Diderot was compelled by poverty to sell his library, she bought it for him, and installed him in it as librarian. Another royal "intellectual" was Frederick the Great. What must it have been to have been present at those festive evenings at Frederick's palace when the nimble wit of Voltaire challenged the best brains of Europe? It must have been a rich memory and an abiding delight, like those ever-memorable nights at the "Mermaid," when rare Ben Jonson exchanged quips and cranks with the smiling Shakespeare. Napoleon, the little Corsican who shook the world, is here, too, in the volume. A more shadowy figure is that of Kit Marlowe, the Elizabethan dramatist, whose untimely death prevented his trial for blasphemy. Sir Richard Burton, the untiring traveller, who penetrated to the "Holy of Holies" at Mecca at the peril of his life, is another of the glorious company of Freethinkers.

The "intellectuals" of France are represented by a splendid procession from Abelard to Anatole France. Who can see the name of Ingersoll without a quickening of the pulses? He comes riding down the wind like a knight in shining armor to attack the embattled hosts of superstition. And the lonely student, Charles Darwin, who turned "Adam" and "Eve" out of the "Garden of Eden," not with a flaming sword, but with a steel pen. Here are Heine, the gifted singer of Germany, dying upon his mattress-grave with a jest upon his lips, and Shelley, the sweet-souled English poet, who was deprived of his children for his Freethought, and men and women imprisoned for selling his works

A sense of fellowship with the fled centuries invades us as we see the name of Giordano Bruno, one of the most fearless martyrs for truth. And Time seems poised for a moment upon his spread wings as we encounter the puissant personality of Lucretius, one of the sublimest poets who ever sang under the eagles of the Cæsars.

Names like these are signposts to meet the reader and direct him towards the wonderful universality of Freethought. And, mind you, there are thousands of such signposts. "Wonderful" is the only adjective which will serve for this maze of wonders; this patient account of the men and women who have cared for intellectual freedom, written by a wise and careful student who himself emptied many an ink-pot in the service of a great cause.

Here under one roof, we may say, is the temple of Liberty and the house of Wisdom, compared with which the abbeys and cathedrals, churches and mosques, of the superstitious are but charnel-houses full of dead bones. For each of these men and women were, in their way, the apostles of freedom. They were knight-errants of the evangel of Liberty. From the far-off time when Lucretius rolled his richest thunders against the infamies of religion in his day, until twenty centuries later Swinburne rallied the soldiers of Freethought with the golden trumpet of his genius, Liberty never failed of its votaries. The bare records of the doings of these pioneers thrill and fascinate by very reason of their simplicity. The feats of Freethinkers have needed little of the embellishments which high-sounding language could give them. From Hypatia, murdered by a Christian rabble, to Ferrer, "butchered to make a Roman holiday," they strike our imaginations and hold our wonder in thrall. They are potent because of their very sincerity. Who could fail to recognise the splendid courage which held so steadfastly to the last moment, or fail to appreciate the iron nerve which bent only before the impossible?

We come to this in the end, that freethinking "saints" are the best. It is significant that in Christian Scotland the popularity of "St. Andrew's Day" is far less than that of "Burns's Night." Is it not true that in the sheer fight of personalities for the possession of England's Day, Shakespeare has beaten St. George, as our American friends would say, "to a frazzle"? There is always a risk when the man whose work lies in the town, as most of our work lies in the town, would rather sit a serviceable armchair than a charger in the ranks of Freedom. But one who has read in Joseph Wheeler's book of those whose monuments are more enduring than marble, might yet listen to the calling bugles of the Army of Liberty.

This is but a little cloud of biographical dust, and, if an apology is needed for such trifling, we point to the fact that the interest of such a volume is inexhaustible. It reaches from the greatest names in history to hundreds of men and women whose achievements were less important, but who, because they dedicated their powers to the service of intellectual liberty, interest us intimately.

"Come let us drink in silence ere we part
To every fervent yet resolved heart
That brought its tameless passion and its tears,
Renunciation and laborious years,
To lay the deep foundations of our race,
To rear its stately fabric overhead,
And light its pinnacles with golden grace."

MIMNERMUS.

The Old and the New.

OUR fathers did the best they could. They believed in the supernatural, and they thought that sacrifice and prayer, fasting and weeping, would induce the supernatural to give them sunshine, rain, and harvest—long life in this world, and eternal joy in another. To them, God was an absolute monarch, quick to take offence, sudden in anger, terrible in punishment,

jealous, hateful to his enemies, generous to his favorites. They believed also in the existence of an evil God—almost the equal of the other God in strength, and a little superior in cunning. Between these two Gods was the soul of man, like a mouse between two paws.

Both of these Gods inspired fear. Our fathers did not quite love God, nor quite hate the Devil; but they were afraid of both. They really wished to enjoy themselves with God in the next world, and with the Devil in this. They believed that the course of nature was affected by their conduct; that floods and storms, diseases, earthquakes, and tempests were sent as punishments, and that all good phenomena were rewards.

Everything was under the control and direction of supernatural powers. The air, the darkness, were filled with angels and devils; witches and wizards planned and plotted against the pious—against the true believers. Eclipses were produced by the sins of the people, and the unusual was regarded as the miraculous. In the good old times Christendom was an insane-asylum, and insane priests and prelates were the keepers. There was no science. The people did not investigate—did not think. They trembled and believed. Ignorance and superstition ruled the Christian world.

At last a few began to observe, to make records, and to think.

It was found that eclipses came at certain intervals, and that their coming could be foretold. This demonstrated that the actions of men had nothing to do with eclipses. A few began to suspect that earthquakes and storms had natural causes, and happened without the slightest reference to mankind.

Some began to doubt the existence of evil spirits, or the interference of good ones in the affairs of the world. Finding out something about astronomy, the great number, the certain and continuous motions of the planets, and the fact that many of them were vastly larger than the earth—ascertaining something about the earth—the slow development of forms—the growth and distribution of plants, the formation of islands and continents, the parts played by fire, water, and air through countless centuries—the kinship of all life—fixing the earth's place in the constellation of the sun—by experiment and research discovering a few secrets of chemistry—by the invention of printing and the preservation and dissemination of facts, theories, and thoughts, they were enabled to break a few chains of superstition—to free themselves a little from the dominion of the supernatural, and to set their faces towards the light. Slowly the number of investigators and thinkers increased—slowly the real facts were gathered—the sciences began to appear—the old beliefs grew a little absurd—the supernatural retreated, and ceased to interfere in the ordinary affairs of men.

Schools were founded, children were taught, books were printed, and the thinkers increased. Day by day confidence lessened in the supernatural, and day by day men were more and more impressed with the idea that man must be his own protector, his own providence. From the mists and darkness of savagery and superstition emerged the dawn of the natural. A sense of freedom took possession of the mind, and the soul began to dream of its power. On every side were invention and discovery, and bolder thought. The Church began to regard the friends of science as its foes. Theologians resorted to chain and fagot—to mutilation and torture.

The thinkers were denounced as heretics and Atheists—as the minions of Satan and the defamers of Christ. All the prejudice, ignorance, and malice of superstition were aroused, and all united for the destruction of investigation and thought. For centuries this conflict was waged. Every outrage was perpetrated, every crime committed by the believers in the supernatural. But, in spite of all, the disciples of the natural increased, and the power of the Church waned. Now the intelligence of the world is on the

side of the natural. Still the conflict goes on—the supernatural constantly losing, and the natural constantly gaining. In a few years the victory of science over superstition will be complete and universal.

So there have been for many centuries two philosophies of life: one in favor of the destruction of the passions—the lessening of wants—and absolute reliance on some higher power; the other, in favor of the reasonable gratification of the passions—the increase of wants, and their supply by industry, ingenuity, and invention, and the reliance of man on his own efforts. Diogenes, Epictetus, Socrates, to some extent Buddha, and Christ, all taught the first philosophy. All despised riches and luxury—all were the enemies of art and music—the despisers of good clothes and good food and good homes. They were the philosophers of poverty and rags—of huts and hovels—of ignorance and faith. They preached the glories of another world, and the miseries of this. They derided the prosperous, the industrious, those who enjoyed life, and reserved heaven for beggars.

This philosophy is losing authority, and now most people are anxious to be happy here in this life. Most people want food, and roof, and raiment—books, and pictures, and luxury, and leisure. They believe in developing the brain—in making servants and slaves of the forces of nature.

Now the intelligent of the world have cast aside the teachings, the philosophy of the ascetics. They no longer believe in the virtue of fasting and self-torture. They believe that happiness is the only good, and that the time to be happy is now, here, in this world. They no longer believe in the rewards and punishments of the supernatural. They believe in consequences, and that the consequences of bad actions are evil, and the consequences of good actions are good.

They believe that man, by investigation, by reason, should find out the conditions of happiness, and then live and act in accordance with such conditions. They do not believe that earthquakes, or tempests, or volcanoes, or eclipses are caused by the conduct of men. They no longer believe in the supernatural. They do not regard themselves as the serfs, servants, slaves, or favorites of a celestial king. They feel that many evils can be avoided by intelligence, and for that reason they believe in the development of the brain. The school-house is their church, and the university their cathedral. The teacher, the interpreter of nature, is their preacher, and all the truths that have been demonstrated constitute their creed.

They believe in the gospel of Intelligence, and they wish to save the world from ignorance, superstition, and misery.

The New Religion satisfies the heart and brain.

The Old Religion is cruel, childish, and absurd. The Old Religion was in perfect harmony with a flat world, with a little heaven above it, and a large hell beneath. The Old Religion had a powerful savage, an immense barbarian for a god, and another savage for a devil. Man at his best was a poor slave, whose happiness and misery dwelt in the smiles and frowns of these supernatural monsters.

The New Religion has destroyed these phantoms. The universe is no longer governed by a tyrant, and man at last is free.

The Supernatural has almost gone, but the Natural remains—the Gods have faded, but Man is here.

—INGERSOLL.

For the benefit of the treasury of Trinity Episcopal Church in Wheaton, Illinois, five young women allowed themselves to be sold at auction, September 20, at a vaudeville show given in the church's clubhouse. What disposition was made of the women by their purchasers is not told by the Chicago *Examiner*, which reports the sale. The proceeding is presumed to be innocent, but is reminiscent of the ages when women regarded it as the fulfilling of a vow that involved all that such a sale would suggest.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Acid Drops.

How the clergy know, and follow, their own interests! They damn the people to all eternity when it is safe to do so for the slightest sign of independence. "Believe and be saved; disbelieve and be damned"—that is their message when the people are silly and weak enough to accept it. But when their power begins to wane they take to pleading instead of cursing, and coaxing instead of coercing. They court the "dear people" and make themselves out to be their kindest, tenderest, and most valuable friends. This game is worked best at a time of bereavement. It is not surprising, therefore, to read that as soon as the silence of grief was broken by speech at Senghenydd, where the deadly mine explosion took place, the men of God looked in with their cheap professional attentions. "Clergy and ministers of all denominations," a reporter said, "move about among the people, and Salvation Army lasses soothe the sorrowing ones with gentle words of comfort." What a ghastly mockery! "Soothing" the women with their men down in the burning pit! The very word is shameful; and only a maudlin religion like Christianity, with its wretched "consolations," could be guilty of such miserable meanness.

One of the rescuers down in the blazing mine was overwhelmed by a fall of roof and killed. It was a brave man's work and a brave man's death. Up above in the sunlight, at the same time, the Bishop of Llandaff was performing prodigies of "consolation." His first visit was to the home of Mrs. Baker, who had lost both her husband and a son, with a family of ten dependent upon her. In the midst of this affliction her new baby was born. Some good, kind woman might have carried sympathy into that stricken home. But what could the Bishop of Llandaff do there? What could any man do there? To speak in the name of God was a mockery. What had that poor woman done that "Providence" should send her so heavy a blow? What could the Bishop talk to her except humbug? By the way, she has since died.

Five men of Mrs. Ross's household were down in the Lancaster pit, and it was feared that all of them had perished. She also was visited by the heroic Bishop of Llandaff, who told her, as he told other humble mourners, to "look to Him to whom the widow and the fatherless are an especial care." Nothing but the religious training of those poor women can account for their listening patiently to such hypocritical nonsense. The kind attentions of "Him" would have been useful *before* the explosion; what use were they after it? The Bishop of Llandaff knows as well as we do that God's care for the widow and the fatherless is only a pious "gag." Science is more merciful than Providence. Had all who were concerned given Science fair play there would have been no explosion at Senghenydd, and the women would not have required any "consolation" for the loss of fathers, husbands, and sons.

Rev. R. J. Campbell has been orating at the City Temple on the recent tragedies on the sea, in the earth below, and in the air above. Many people, he says, find such tragedies standing in the way of "wholehearted assumption of the Christian faith." The explanation used to be that God does as he likes and is, after all, wiser than we are. But the new explanation is that "God cannot help himself in the matter.....It had to be, and omnipotence could not alter it." Which is equivalent to Carlyle's complaint that "God does nothing"—as we have always said.

Mrs. Theaker, a resident at Thorpe Bay, Essex, appears to be exceedingly intimate with God. Speaking at a recent meeting at her house, she said she had sausage-roll and dry toast for dinner on Christmas Day. Afterwards, while pondering over this tribulation, the Lord spoke to her about it, and said to her, "It is because you have never prayed for one"; and she whispered in reply, "No, I did not, for I trusted to the good doctor, who has supplied me with a Christmas dinner for eight years, and I heard afterwards that he was lying ill and unconscious at the time." This Culinary Christianity suggests the association of piety and pies, and prayers with pudding. Most Christians prefer the cash, and let the cookery go.

The Christians of Southend-on-Sea, led by their pastors and masters, are anxious to prevent any amusement on Sunday. They want everything closed except churches, public-houses, and the mouths of the asses which, like Balaam's quadruped's, are opened by the Lord.

A nineteen-years'-old choir-boy figured in a divorce case last week as a co-respondent. This is what comes of following the clergy's example.

The writer of the "Readers and Writers" column in the *New Age* notes a fact that has often been dwelt upon in the *Freethinker*, but falls into a curious error in indicating the cause of its existence. It is, he says, a proof "of the obsession sex has made of itself in the West that many such words as 'expurgated,' originally of a wide connotation, have come to be confined popularly to sex matters. Virtue, continence, licentious, sensual, passionate, lust—the list might be indefinitely extended. These words, I fancy, owe their degradation to novelists and women." Now, novelists and women may be charged with responsibility for a deal, but in this instance they could safely plead "Not guilty." Novelists—of the kind indicated—do not create a public opinion; they follow it, and strengthen it by pandering to it. Besides, this narrowing of ethical language until it has come to mean little more than sex relations is very much older than the novel-writing class, and its source lies much deeper than is indicated by the *New Age* writer.

To put the essence of the case in a sentence, the narrowing of words such as those cited to mere sex is only one of the many illustrations of the profoundly ill effects of Christianity on moral judgment. The older Pagan world rightly conceived the good man, the virtuous man, as one who was "straight" in all aspects of life. It did not specially emphasize sexual straightness; it held that as only one of the relations in life in which rectitude was desirable. The result was that the good man, in the Pagan sense of the word, was one who in all directions discharged his duty faithfully and well. On the other hand, Christianity was from the outset obsessed by the fact of sex. Sexual rightness was the crowning virtue, sexual wrongness the crowning vice. It did not, of course, deny that conduct in other directions was either virtuous or vicious; but it so dwelt upon sex that in course of time it edged other things out of consciousness when the words "vice" and "virtue" were mentioned. And the further result of this was that a man might be forgiven almost any form of rascality provided he kept—at least ostensibly—the seventh commandment. No one was made better by this; it is fairly easy to show that many were made worse. And if any illustration is needed of the truth of what has been said, the swarms of parsons always anxious to discuss sexual purity—or impurity—and their lukewarmness in denouncing other vices, will serve. As in so many other cases, the way of salvation lies in forsaking the Christian path and returning to the healthier humanistic one.

From a report in the *Weekly Scotsman* (Oct. 18) we learn that, at the recent royal marriage "the form of service had been printed in a shortened form," and that "Canon Sheppard, who read the opening injunctions, made it shorter still by omitting those passages which, in the Prayer Book, specify with needless explicitness the purpose for which matrimony was ordained." If the Church marriage service has already to be shortened and expurgated for royal brides and bridegrooms, it will soon have to be cleared of its beastliness for humbler couples—all of which is founded on Paul's sexual perversion. The plea that the brutal language of the Marriage Ceremony is at any rate true has not a shadow of justification in the light of human evolution. Marriage is not based upon love or lust; it is based upon the fact of offspring, and upon that alone.

Of the three parsons who assisted at the Royal Wedding, the *Daily Chronicle* says that one had to undertake his duties "for love," and serve without fee. That one was the Archbishop of Canterbury. What on earth does he get his £15,000 yearly for?

The Chairman of the Congregational Union says that a man may not be irreligious because he does not go to church, but he is not very religious unless he goes. That is exactly what we have always said. It is all humbug asserting that there are more religious people outside the Churches than in them. This discovery is only made in order to soften the fact that so small a proportion of the population attend church. In the main, when a man is really religious, he will attach himself to some church or chapel. And when he severs that connection, even though he may invent a number of excuses for the severance, the bottom reason is that he is losing his faith in religion.

Mr. Morgan Gibbon also asked, "Have strong, brainy, strenuous men no need of religion? And has the Church no

need of them?" Strong, brainy, strenuous men answer the question by generally staying away. We quite admit that the Churches have need of this type—never more so—but they can't get them. Look at the mental calibre of the leaders of the Churches. Would they be leaders in anything but religion? Could anyone imagine the Bishop of London, or Campbell Morgan, or R. J. Campbell leading in anything but theology? Oh, yes; the Churches need brainy men, but as they can't get them they must make the most of what they can get. And the quality is steadily sinking.

The Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon, president of the Congregationalist Conference, has been sighing for the "old Sunday." Presumably, the dear old Sunday when Nonconformists were flogged if they did not attend the Government churches.

Mrs. Herbert Stead spoke of the duty of the Churches towards "the woman in the back street" at the Congregationalist Conference at Southend. The Churches have usually given blankets and promised coals—some in this world, more in the next.

A writer on education says that children should choose their own occupations. Impossible! Too many would wish to be parsons, and work only one day a week.

What a busy week Providence has had! The *Volturno*, with its mass of emigrants on a burning ship in a raging sea; between 400 and 500 killed in a single mine accident in Wales; a railway collision in Lancashire; and an exploding Zeppelin airship, with its tale of dead, in Germany. In the air, on the earth, under the earth, or on the sea, who can escape the power of the Lord? What a comfort it must be to the devout mind to reflect that these things come, not from the unconscious operation of "blind" laws of nature, but from a directive intelligence that baffles all attempts at human comprehension.

Rev. Edward Henry Greenhow, of the Vicarage, Chidcock, Bridport, left £11,623. We wonder if he has met the blessed-be-ye-poor preacher yet. Or did he go straight to the pit?

Punishment! What a silly and inhuman idea! It simply makes a bad matter worse. Yet the Christians are mightily in love with it, for it lies at the basis of their faith. They cannot even conceive the world going on without it. Here is Mrs. Phipps, for instance, chairman of the special schools sub-committee of the London Education Committee, defending the punishment of children by giving them bread and water instead of a square meal at dinner time. "Since the abolition of corporal punishment," she said, "they must have some form of punishment that would affect the children." Nonsense! Stop driving and try leading.

The *Daily Telegraph* notice of the death of the late Mr. Justice North lays on praise with one hand and brushes it off with the other. "He was least successful," our contemporary says, "as a criminal judge, and one of his sentences, that of twelve months' imprisonment on Mr. G. W. Foote for blasphemy, evoked some strong protests on the ground of its severity." Yes, and on other grounds too. He played the role of partisan on the bench, and allowed his friend, Sir Hardinge Giffard (now Lord Halsbury), the leading counsel for the prosecution, to walk out of the court in confidence that the case would be in excellent hands during his absence—as Mr. Foote told his lordship to his face.

A feeble jest that "Buddhism required a mild climate" raised a gentle giggle at a Wesleyan missionary centenary celebration meeting in London the other day. We agree that any climate would appear mild compared with the Christian hell.

A story has been published, entitled *A Preacher of the Lord*. If all of that profession buy a copy of the book, the author should become wealthy; and, should the "Lord" acknowledge the compliment, he should be also famous.

A Brentford school teacher has just been fined for punishing scholars by compelling them to go down on their knees. Not long ago the children used to be laid across the teacher's own.

The *Maxims of Noah* is the title of a new book. It sounds watery. We suppose the *Maxims of Jonah* will follow.

Writing on children's books in the *Daily Mirror*, a correspondent says: "Homer and Virgil may pass from the memory of the busy person, but not Cinderella." Just so! That is why the dear clergy wish the fairy tales of the Bible taught in schools.

"A woman was the only one who had the pluck to withstand the crucifixion of Jesus, and that was Pilate's wife," said Mrs. Councillor Lees, speaking at the Congregational Autumn Assembly at Southend-on-Sea. Another woman, Eve, caused all the bother that led to the crucifixion.

"Marriage is a life-long miracle," quoted the *Daily Mirror*, *apropos* of the Royal wedding. The miracles often get exposed in the law courts.

Holy Russia still keeps up her reputation. She refuses to let Dr. George Brandes pass her frontiers in order to deliver the lectures he had undertaken at St. Petersburg on Goethe and Strindberg. Brandes' father was a Jew, and Brandes inherits the blood, though he is neither a Jew nor anything else in the matter of religion. Moreover, he is unfriendly to Russia; that is to the Russian autocracy, which is, after all, more a bureaucracy. For these lofty reasons he is refused a passport.

Dr. George Brandes may use Shylock's exclamation to explain this Holy Russian outrage,—"I am a Jew." But what of that? Jesus Christ was a Jew. His mother was a Jewess. His father,—well that is delicate ground; but the man whom his mother called his father was a Jew. And all the twelve apostles were Jews. None of them would be admitted into Holy Russia to-day.

That good man, the Head Constable of Wolverhampton, who started the latest "blasphemy" prosecution, resembles the Psalmist in one thing. He is fearfully and wonderfully made. If he has a keen ear for "blasphemy" he has a keener nose for "indecency." A travelling Rag Time company had a poster depicting a boy scout surrounded by the flags of the nations. Nobody had so much as imagined that an objection could be raised to it by anyone outside a prison or a lunatic asylum. The Head Constable of Wolverhampton, however, is like Voltaire's Habbakuk "capable de tout." He objected to the posters as "indecent," and the company had to get them covered up all over the town.

If ever the Head Constable of Wolverhampton had to be executed there would be no need to electrocute him. Put him in a London music-hall chair, with a Russian or French up-to-date female dancer on the stage, and the deed would be done. The shock wouldn't kill everybody, but it would be fatal to this gentleman.

The *Athenæum* performed a great feat last week. It devoted six columns to a review of Mr. Thorold's *Life of Henry Labouchere* without mentioning Bradlaugh—although it mentions Northampton and "Labby's" twenty-five years' representation of the borough in parliament. This reticence is positively sublime. Christians ought to subscribe to present the editor with a testimonial.

The £70,000 deficit of the London Missionary Society occupied the attention of the Congregational Union Assembly at Southend-on-Sea last week. Mr. Basden, of Hampstead, offered the quaint suggestion that the fall was due to people keeping motor-cars. It looks as if the motors had outstripped the chariots of the Lord.

It will be interesting and instructive to watch the action of Church of England clergymen when the Government's land proposals are fairly before the country. The Church is, of course, directly interested in any drastic rearrangement of our land system, and any proposal that goes to the root of the matter is almost certain to affect its revenues. Moreover, the Church of England is the Church of the large land-owning class, and parsons will, therefore, be on the horns of a dilemma. If they back up any proposals for remedying the evils of the land system—that is, assuming they are really made—they will suffer the loss of their best friends. If they do not back them up, the hollowness of their professed interest in social betterment will be plain to all. In this matter the Church of England is more vitally interested than the Nonconformist Churches. They are just as much the Churches of the commercial classes, although the line of division is not so clear as it was some half-century since. But, already, if one may judge from such organs of Church feeling as the *Guardian* and the

Church Times, the line of policy is decided on. That appears to be, sympathy for the agriculturalist, and real help for the landowner.

Fancy "pinching" clothes at the Chichester Diocesan Conference! The meeting was at St. Leonards, and Canon Bond and the Archdeacon of Lewes had new overcoats—which they never took home with them again. The thief who took the Canon's coat left an old one in exchange for it. The Archdeacon fared worse, the thief who took his coat carried off with it the notes of the reverend gentleman's speech, and completely upset him.

"Some of us," says the Bishop of Liverpool, "have undergone the experience of unlearning sacred lessons we were once taught." Some of us! We should all of us have had to unlearn our early religious lessons, more or less. In some cases we have unlearned the lot, in other cases only a part is unlearned, but in almost every case advancing years means throwing overboard much that, thanks to the indulgence of parents and the rapacity of teachers, has been forced on the child's mind. For it is one of the evils of the situation that religious parents will teach, or allow their children to be taught, a cruder form of theology than they themselves believe in. In every other subject we give the children of our best; in theology, they are usually supplied with the worst. Adults will admit their grave doubts concerning many religious doctrines, but they will place them before children as unquestionable truths. It is one of the evils of religious education that this should be so. And the one way out is to leave religion alone until the child is old enough to understand it. The opposition to religious education in State schools rests on the sound basis of injustice to the adults. But the opposition to the religious teaching of children *anywhere* rests upon the more important basis of injustice to the child. Let us act fairly by the children, if we cannot act fairly by adults. Give the child a chance.

The restraining influence of religion is a parrot-cry of the clergy. It was not very apparent in the case of an Italian priest at Spello, near Perugia, who stole a valuable altar painting worth £4,000. Had he been less devout he might have taken the altar as well.

A provincial parson prosecuted a boy recently for stealing a solitary apple from his orchard. Perhaps the clergyman was thinking of that other pippin which "brought death into the world and all our woe."

When he first saw women in the pulpit, said the Rev. Morgan Gibbon at Southend, he felt what a good thing it was that Paul was "thoroughly dead." Paul should be ripe by this time.

Old Moore has published his Almanac for 1914, and the dulcet voices of the stars warn us that religious scandals are to be feared next year. No definite date is given, but, presumably, they will spice the Sunday papers as usual throughout the twelve months.

We don't think we ever read anything sillier than Bishop Weldon's letter in last week's *Clarion*. If he wants to champion Christianity in regard to the treatment of woman during its long history, why doesn't he reply to dignitaries of his own Church, such as Principal Donaldson, for a beginning? And is he really so ignorant as to believe what he says about Chivalry. He actually represents Chivalry as a Christian movement. He may have found it so in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, but let him turn to a history of Chivalry and learn the truth. Bishop Weldon might also stop the circulation of maudlin stories about himself. The latest tells how he pacified and overcame a lot of discontented working men by saying the Lord's Prayer. If he is really so good at that sort of thing, why don't they send him to Dublin? Why does he wait to be sent? Why not go "on his own"?

Gravity is always mistaken by the multitude for wisdom. A round-faced merry fellow shall make a bright, sensible speech, and he will be voted frivolous; but a long-faced saturnine fellow shall utter a string of dull platitudes, and he will be voted a Solon. The clergy, who know this, have developed a perfect art of dullness.

The Birmingham police have been trying to stop the sale of Freethought literature at meetings in the Bull Ring. The magistrates, however, declined to assist a partisan prosecution, and the case was dismissed.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, October 26, Town Hall, Stratford; at 7.30, "Shakespeare's Humanism in the Merchant of Venice."

December 7 and 14, Queen's (Minor) Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1918.—Previously acknowledged, £219 7s. 5d. Received since:—A Manchester Medico, 10s.; Rellim, 2s.; T. T., 2s. 6d.; G. W. S. (Grahamstown), 4s. 4d.

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks. See paragraph.

C. D. writes: "It is good to have one's memory of dear Wheeler refreshed by occasional reprints of his delightful copy. I hope that everyone enjoys them as much as I do. The last example helped me to get a new subscriber to the *Freethinker*." We are pleased to hear this. If we could afford it we would publish a good collection of Wheeler's articles in volume form; but as we cannot do that, we take pleasure in reproducing some of them in our present-day pages for the benefit of a new generation of readers.

E. B.—Many thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged.

SINN.—Sorry we can't oblige.

T. ROBERTSON.—We were afraid that Mr. Cohen would not be in the best of health for his Glasgow visit. Influenza has a way of lingering on the wrong side of the front door after you have said good-bye. We are glad to hear that the lectures were so successful in spite of the new restrictions.

R. H. ROSETTI.—Glad to hear Mr. Lloyd's lecture was "followed with intense interest by a good audience at the Stratford Town Hall." Also that many questions were asked and answered.

P. PARTRIDGE.—Pleased to hear of Miss Kough's large audience and fine lecture at Birmingham.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had capital meetings at Manchester on Sunday. The afternoon meeting, in particular—especially in such brilliant weather, tempting people into the open air—eclipsed all expectations. Mr. Foote was enthusiastically received, and his lectures were warmly applauded. Many questions were asked after both lectures. Mr. C. Pegg was chairman.

"Shakespeare's Humanism in the Merchant of Venice" will be an out of the common subject at Stratford Town Hall this evening (Oct. 26). Mr. Foote has no doubt, however, that he will find Shakespeare appreciated there as elsewhere. It may be added that, up to the present, audiences seem to find this lecture singularly interesting.

Fancy the *Freethinker* being mentioned in *Punch*? This is indeed a blow to the old conspiracy of silence. The following appeared in *Punch* for October 15:—

"The last edition was obviously a great improvement. It contains 352 pages, besides 58 pages of Introduction; say 600 pages in round numbers.—*Freethinker*."

"Of course, if they ask us to, we will say it, but we don't believe it."

The explanation of the strain upon our contemporary's faith is easy. The 352 is a printer's blunder for 532. We hope our arithmetic passes muster now. As for printers and their

blunders, even *Punch* must have had some experience in that direction. But all comic we trust, as in the present instance. Occasionally a tragic instance is enough to wring a heart of stone. We once wrote of an old stalwart of Free-thought that in the heaviest fighting he never blenched. The printer turned it into *bleached*. We just caught it in time. Otherwise our only remedy would have been suicide.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures at the Leicester Secular Hall this evening (Oct. 26). The local "saints" should do all they can to advertise his visit and secure him a big audience.

Mr. Bertram Dobell's catalogues are always interesting. He is not only a seller of books, but a reader of books, and a writer of books. His new catalogue, numbered 222, contains many annotated items, one of which is as follows:—

"Grote (George), Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind, by Philip Beauchamp, 8vo, sewed, 3s. 6d., 1866.

"A work of (for its time) very advanced tendencies, first printed (I believe) by Richard Carlile, and never acknowledged by its Author."

Mr. Dobell is right in believing that this little work was first published by Richard Carlile. We have a copy of the original edition, dated 1822 and bearing Carlile's imprint. It is bound up with other things in vol. iii. of the *Deist*, and is finely printed in large handsome type, with a liberal margin, running to 140 pages. The edition that Mr. Dobell advertises is probably the one published by Edward Truelove.

John Stuart Mill mentioned the *Analysis* in his *Autobiography* (p. 69) as one that contributed materially to his "mental development." He says it was "written on the foundation of some of Bentham's manuscripts and published under the pseudonym of Philip Beauchamp." Mill refers to it again in his essay on "The Utility of Religion" as "a short treatise, understood to have been partly compiled from manuscripts of Mr. Bentham." Mill knew all about it, but he did not care to go farther. The real truth is that the book was written by George Grote, the historian of Greece, from manuscript notes of Bentham. Grote, like Mill, was one of Bentham's disciples. Mill was next door to an Atheist; Grote and Bentham were pure Atheists—Bentham aggressively so. Our old friend and colleague, J. M. Wheeler, told us that he had come across a lot of Bentham's manuscripts in the British Museum, some of which were evidently regarded as too strong for publication. Bentham's character was worthy of his intellect. He supplied Robert Owen with money to prevent the break-up of the New Lanark social experiment. He also supplied Carlile with money to carry on and extend his publishing business in answer to the "blasphemy" prosecutions. Some of the money went in publishing this very able and important work in Mr. Dobell's catalogue.

It is true, as Mr. Dobell says, that the *Analysis* was "never acknowledged by its author." The question even arises, Who was its author? Bentham was not, and Grote was not; yet they both were. The fact was well-known behind the scenes, and it was fully stated in Truelove's edition, if not earlier.

One wonders, by the way, if Macaulay would have penned his glowing tribute to Bentham as a jurist if he had known that the old man was a confirmed Atheist.

The *Glasgow Herald* has made and published a discovery. "When men," it says, "hate each other intensely 'for the love of God' there is no crime too horrible for them to impute, and no cruelty so extreme that they will shrink from perpetrating it." That's all right. But it would have been called a vulgar lie in the *Freethinker*.

Some time ago we announced that we were trying to make up a second set of the *Freethinker* as a precaution against fire or other accidents. We have the volumes of this second set as far back as 1893, and we are anxious to obtain the remainder back to the start in 1881. We also stated that we wished to obtain a copy of our old *Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought* written—well, say before the Flood. Unfortunately we have received no response to our appeal. We venture to renew it. Of course we are ready to pay a reasonable price for the volumes (or numbers) that we desire—although we should cheerfully accept them as a gift if any holder could afford to present them. It would be best to reply to us direct. But anyone calling at 2 Newcastle-street on this business could see our shop manager, Mr. H. Saill, instead.

We are devoting a good deal of time and attention to our review of Professor Bury's *History of Freedom of Thought*—a subject which is, of course, of transcendent interest to our own readers. We hope to print a large instalment of our review in next week's *Freethinker*.

Mr. H. George Farmer, who has written another article for the *Freethinker*, this time on Courbet, says he will take our hint about the National Anthem. "Strange to say," he adds, "I have a lot of notes on the point, which I made some years ago." But he cannot get access to them just at present. On another point Mr. Farmer writes: "I sincerely hope you will not overdo yourself with two lectures at Manchester. The movement cannot afford to lose your guidance even for a day." The same hope was expressed at Manchester. It was expressed by the chairman and earnestly echoed by the audience. Perhaps there is more efficacy in Freethought than in Christian prayers. Anyhow, while we were very tired on Monday morning, we felt none the worse in any other way, and the voice was rather improved than worsened by the Sunday's effort.

Another successful meeting was held at Foresters' Hall, Highgate-road, on Sunday last. An appreciative audience enjoyed Mr. Hope's lecture, and several questions were asked. The final lecture of this course will be delivered to-day (Oct. 26) by Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, who is a favorite of North London "saints."

The Bethnal Green Branch holds a "Tea, Social, and Dance" at the King's Assembly Rooms, Cottage-grove, Mile-end-road (near Grove-road), on Sunday, November 2. Tea on table at 5.45. Mr. C. Quinton as M.C. Tickets 1s. each, obtainable of Mr. J. Neate, 375 Bethnal-green-road.

There is one person, at any rate, who remembers our criticism of the late Wilson Barrett, the actor, and his trumpery play, the *Sign of Cross*. We cut the following from John Francis Hope's article on the "Drama" in last week's *New Age* :—

"I believe that Miss Lillah McCarthy followed Miss Mand Jeffries in the part of Mercia in the *Sign of the Cross*. That was a long time ago, but 'the whirligig of time brings in his revenges'; for she is now Lavinia in *Androcles and the Lion*, and it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Mr. Shaw has written only a parody of Wilson Barrett's 'masterpiece.' It is a little amusing to remember how ministers of religion gave handsome testimonials to that play; and to notice how ministers of religion are divided in opinion about Mr. Shaw's parody of it. So officially and officiously Christian was the welcome given to the *Sign of the Cross* that, in 1895, Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the National Secular Society, published 'a candid criticism' of it. If many more clergymen clasp Mr. Shaw to their bosom as the Rev. R. J. Campbell has done, I suppose that we shall have from Mr. Foote a candid criticism of *Androcles and the Lion*. Certainly, it would serve Mr. Shaw right, for a parody that does not define the thing parodied has failed in its function of criticism."

We rarely go to the theatre now, for we live out of London, and are more affected than we used to be by bad air. But we think of going to see Shaw's new play, even at that price, since it cannot yet be read in print; and if we do our readers (and Mr. Shaw) may be told what we think of it.

We made Maeterlinck's little book on *Death* the subject of a Queen's Hall lecture soon after its publication. Since then he has expanded the treatise, and now publishes it under the title of *Our Eternity*. We hope to give it attention shortly. Meanwhile we may note a brief review in last Sunday's *Observer*. The writer quotes three lines from Shelley as expressing all that the Belgian poet and essayist urges against the fear of death :—

"And Death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave: even as a mother
Folding her child says, 'Leave me not again.'"

"Who can appreciate these lines," the reviewer says, "will not need to read Maeterlinck's essay." What is this? Is Shelley coming into vogue? "Then is doomsday near." Doomsday, at least, to many lies and many evils.

Tuesday's *Daily News* contained a column review of *Shelley, Godwin, and their Circle*, by H. N. Brailsford. The writer, S. K. Ratcliffe, spoke in the highest terms of Thomas Paine, and declared that Mr. Brailsford was hardly to be forgiven for calling that great man "Tom," who was the "splendid knight-errant of democracy."

Vanishing Relics of Man's Early Condition.

IN his *Magic and Religion*, and elsewhere, the late Andrew Lang endeavored to throw doubt on the well-established proposition that lowly savage peoples possess no conception of a Supreme God. Lang also took exception to the view propounded by Dr. Frazer that magic had preceded religion in order of development. But, acute as some of his criticisms undoubtedly were, they have received no support from subsequent inquiry into the customs and beliefs of savages, while some of his contentions have been completely crushed by more recent research.

There is every warranty for the conclusion that the lowliest surviving savage races are to be met with in the remotest recesses of Central Australia. An acquaintance with the facts relating to these primitive peoples is of priceless value to the anthropologist. In the archaic states of society and modes of thought of the Australian natives, we seem to discern the remotest past, and the most primitive stage of human existence still remaining on our planet.

The world of science is immensely indebted to Mr. A. W. Howitt and his colleague, Mr. Lorimer Fison, for their untiring industry in gathering and explaining the facts of aboriginal Australian life. Their pioneer work prepared the way for other students in the same instructive continent, but their greatest service to science was to stimulate Professor Baldwin Spencer and Mr. F. J. Gillen into conducting those observations which have rendered their names famous throughout the anthropological domain. The work of these two eminent men on *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* has given us an elaborate and carefully authenticated account of primitive savages practically unaffected and uncorrupted by European interference.

Although Australia is the largest of islands and the smallest of continents, it is one of the most isolated land surfaces of the earth. This island-continent was dry land at a time when vast tracts of what are now Europe and Asia were covered by the sea. Cut off from larger land masses many millions of years ago, its flora and fauna are of a much more primitive pattern than those of the remaining continents. That fierce struggle for existence which was the order of things in other parts of the world was in Australia at a minimum for ages. As a consequence, plant and animal organisms which had perished in the conflict with higher forms elsewhere continued in Australia to survive. And for similar reasons the Australian savages have remained, right down to our time, in a more aboriginal condition than any other uncivilised people in the world.

Although some of the native tribes are less backward than others, all may be said to be remarkably primitive :—

"While their neighbors, the Malays, Papuans, and Polynesians all cultivate the soil, and build substantial huts and houses, the Australian natives do neither. Pottery, common to Malays and Papuans, the bows and arrows of the latter, and the elaborate canoes of all three races, are unknown to the Australians.....No record, no folk tales, as in the case of the Maoris of New Zealand, of their migration, are preserved by the Australians. True, there are legends and tales of tribal migrations and early tribal history, but nothing, as A. W. Howitt points out, which can be trusted to as referring even indirectly to their first arrival. It is almost incredible there should be none, if the date of their arrival is to be reckoned as only dating back some centuries."*

All the available evidence points to the settlement of these races in Australia at a period very remote. Their rude system of counting betrays no sign of outside influence. Some tribes could not reckon beyond three; very few had any numeral beyond four, and with those that had reached the idea of "five," a word meaning "many" was in use. The

* Channing Arnold, *Australia*.

various native languages differ to a surprising extent, being sometimes quite unintelligible between tribes separated by a very few miles of country. Nevertheless, the occurrence of common roots proves them to have arisen from a common source, which again points to the vast antiquity of the original settlement of the native races.

The wide gulf which separates the tribes of Central Australia from the civilised peoples of our globe is glaringly illustrated by two remarkable facts. Although these children of nature suffer severely from cold at night "under the frosty stars of the clear Australian heaven," the idea of warming their bodies with the skins and furs of the animals they slaughter for food seems never to have entered their heads. Absolutely naked, they crouch round their miserable fires during the hours of darkness, sometimes tumbling into them and scorching their bodies. The second even more astonishing fact resides in the circumstance that these savages are utterly ignorant of the connection between the intercourse of the sexes and the birth of children. Not only is this so, but they resolutely reject the true explanation of procreation when it is offered to them by their white visitors. Their own notions concerning the reproductive processes are indeed astonishing. It is their firm belief that in the days of long ago their ancestors wandered through the country in bands. These ancestral bands were formed of the members of the group that had descended from the particular plant, animal, or even inanimate object which was their totem. Writes Dr. Frazer:—

"A totem is a class of material objects which a savage regards with superstitious respect, believing that there exists between him and every member of the class an intimate and altogether special relation..... The connection between a man and his totem is mutually beneficent; the totem protects the man, and the man shows his respect for the totem in various ways, by not killing it if it be an animal, and not cutting or gathering it if it be a plant. As distinguished from a fetish, a totem is never an isolated individual, but always a class of objects, generally a species of animals or of plants, more rarely a class of inanimate objects, very rarely a class of artificial objects."*

The Central Australians likewise suppose that at death the spirits of their ancestors formerly entered the earth, and at the spots which they selected for this purpose, spirit houses were formed. A stone or a tree is usually regarded as the object denoting the site selected by the spirits as their residence. Such spirit abodes are scattered all over the country and the ancestral ghosts that haunt them are perpetually on the look out for a convenient opportunity "to be born again into the world." When a woman passes one of these spirit dwellings the waiting and watching ghost seizes his chance and darts into her body. In course of time her baby is born and the infant is regarded as a reincarnation of the spirit that successfully waylaid the passing female.

"It matters not whether the woman be young or old, a matron or a maid, all are alike liable to be thus impregnated by the spirits, although it has been shrewdly observed by the natives that the spirits on the whole exhibit a preference for such women as are young and fat."

Among these unsophisticated savages every confinement is regarded as the outcome of spirit agency. And that this most extraordinary delusion was in all probability the universal belief of the human race at the period when the ancestors of extant and extinct civilised peoples were in the same lowly stage of evolution is made abundantly manifest by the survivals of similar notions which are embalmed in the folk tales of the Indo-Germanic stocks. Sidney Hartland's *Primitive Paternity and Legend of Perseus* both abound in examples which very strongly countenance this conclusion. Very possibly with an eye on a certain Virgin Birth recorded in some of our own sacred books, Dr. Frazer pointedly says:—

"Students of folk lore have long been familiar with notions of this sort occurring in the stories of the birth of miraculous personages, but this is the first case on

record of a tribe who believe in immaculate conception as the sole cause of the birth of every human being who comes into the world. A people so ignorant of the most elementary of natural processes may well rank at the very bottom of the savage scale."*

On the more general problem of the genesis of religions, Spencer and Gillen's researches have thrown considerable light. These careful and painstaking observers have shown that, while magic is of universal occurrence among the natives, religion—employing that term as denoting prayer and sacrifice to, and praise of, superior spirits—is nearly unknown. Every aboriginal Australian is quite certain of the power of his own magical influences over nature. But a slight amount of differentiation has already set in. A few savages are regarded as greater experts in the magic arts than the average natives, and these favored mortals correspond to the wizards and medicine-men of other savage races. The belief in the efficacy of magical rites and ceremonies permeates the entire community. Scepticism seems to be quite unknown, and those who indulge in deceit themselves accord the fullest credence to the claims of other practitioners of the magic art.

Still, although magic is the predominating feature of the native superstitions, the germs of religion are not absent. And Dr. Frazer is probably correct in his surmise that these germs would in due course have developed into a full-blown religion had it not been for the arresting influences of European intervention. And turning to the tribes of South-eastern Australia, we find among them that a rudimentary form of ghost-worship exists. Fires were kindled near the resting-places of the dead, so that their ghosts might be made more comfortable. Among the Dieri, dead men of quality were remembered by the living, who placed food on the graves, while in the winter months fires were lighted so that the spirit could bask in their warmth. Moreover, some of the Western Australians maintain a fire on the grave for nearly a month, and, as the natives are confident that the departed will return, they deposit their finger-nails in a hole near their temporary resting places, so that they may recognise their dead kinsmen when they revisit the world. In North-east Queensland the beginnings of a belief in the immortality of the soul have been discovered. Some of the tribes not only place food and water inside the grave, but they also bury with the corpse his ornaments, weapons, and other personal possessions. Dislike of the prowling habits from which all spirits suffer is shown in the custom of breaking the legs of the deceased and in maltreating other parts of his body. A conception of the future state as one closely resembling that which the departed led on earth seems clear from one of the customs of the Tarribal tribe. Their dead were placed in trees.

"If the deceased was a man, they left a spear and a club near him that his spirit might kill game for its sustenance in the future state; but if the deceased was a woman, they laid a yam-stick near her body in order that she might dig for roots."

With another tribe, a man suffering great agony will appeal to the dead for help in his distress. The defunct one is expected to reappear in a dream and teach the sufferer a song which has the power to dispel the malign influences which encompass him. Beliefs and practices such as these are incipient stages of ancestor-worship.

Other Australian tribes call on their totems before going to sleep, much as modern Europeans request the guardianship of their saints or divinities in similar circumstances. One of the Warramunga animal totems is a quite imaginary water-snake, from which these natives claim descent, and this totem is apparently on the high road towards apotheosis. Although in South-east Australia a belief is alleged to be prevalent that a sort of anthropomorphic creature dwells in the sky and keeps an eye on the doings of the people below, he appears to be merely a dead savage whose former exploits have been magnified by the native traditions. On the other

* *Totemism and Exogamy*, vol. i., pp. 3, 4.

* *Totemism and Exogamy*, vol. i., p. 94.

hand, it is quite conceivable that this semi-divine being may owe much of his supposed importance to European influences. Among the Central Australian tribes whose beliefs have been preserved from all possible suspicion of foreign admixture, no belief in any high god can be said to exist. The testimony of our weightiest authorities is to the following effect:—

"The Central Australian natives, and this is true of the tribes extending from Lake Eyre in the south to the far north, and eastwards across to the Gulf of Carpentaria, have no idea whatever of the existence of any supreme being who is pleased if they follow a certain line of what we call moral conduct, and displeased if they do not do so. They have not the faintest idea of a personal individual other than an actual living member of the tribe who approves or disapproves of their conduct, so far as anything like what we call morality is concerned."*

With regard to the alleged "discovery" of a high ethical faith among savages, Professor Baldwin Spencer, in a letter to Dr. Frazer, expresses his very firm conviction that there is an utter absence of "any such thing in Australia." As a plain matter of fact, the obstacles which the reactionaries have placed in the paths of the consistent evolutionists have all turned out to be the merest mare's nests. The more carefully and systematically the still surviving uncivilised races are studied, the clearer becomes the truth that wherever the human race has made progress its advancing career was commenced at lowly savage levels. Supernaturalism may have developed out of magic, or magic and the fear and supplication of the ghosts of the dead may have taken their rise together. In any case, each form of superstition has played its part in leading on to the evolution of all the religions that exist, or ever have existed, in the world.

T. F. PALMER

God-in-Christ.

It is blasphemous of me to link God-in-Christ with hyphens. There is more than a suspicion of disrespect in it; besides, I plead guilty: it is impossible to link the words in any other way. Even professors of long experience in the gentle art of web-weaving cannot accomplish the task of making God-in-Christ a reality. Their lives are full of the sustained endeavor. Every week, for six hours at the most, they heroically strive to achieve the performance. They are assisted by whole libraries of inspired wisdom. They are on friendly terms with God, who is their father, and with Christ, who is their brother; and, despite the much-emphasised statements that they dwell in the love of God, and drink their knowledge from the fount of life, they have, hitherto, failed to do what they claim to be able to do. Try as they will, they cannot reap the reward of their nerve-shattering exertions. God refuses to be linked to Christ except by verbal hyphens. Christ "is not having any."

A few Sundays ago I was lured to church by the title of the evening sermon. The subject was, "The Error of the Unbeliever." As an unbeliever, it was quite pleasant to know I had only one fault; and so I took the opportunity to discover wherein lay that error of my crooked ways, and at the same time to spend an evening in the company of Christ.

The whole sermon might have been condensed into one sentence: the error of the unbeliever is his unbelief. The pastor did not even attempt to prove it; and my conviction, that the modern apostles of Christ, following up their prototypes of the New Testament fairy tales, never prove anything, became more securely fixed in my mind.

Once the minister had disburthened himself of the wonderful discovery resulting from his three hours' preparation, I became interested in the congregation. I searched for the presence of Christ. He was nowhere to be found. There were no signs of him in

the pulpit, nor were there any appearances of him in the pews. Christ, certainly, was conspicuous by his absence.

This was strange; but I remembered it was the spirit that should be looked for in such a place. If the spirit were present it would, assuredly, manifest itself in some way, and particularly to an Atheist. These people were assembled to worship Christ, and, consequently, if he were not addicted to telling "fibs," I was dead sure to see things.

How would the spirit show itself? I surreptitiously studied the eyes of the people nearest me. The light of the world would surely be evident there, I thought; but, no; the eyes were all dull and heavy, sleepy even. There was not one of the bright flashes of enthusiasm that stir the heart with contagious rapture; not one ray of the quick, inspiring interest, shooting from the eyes, and revealing the hot, glowing vitality that throbs with love; not one glimmer of the intelligence that is ablaze with passion for the thing loved. No; all these eyes were lifeless, empty.

And yet, the minister was holding forth the glories of God; how they shone, and how they, generally, were super-superlative in every sense. He ran the whole gamut of the wonders of his father; and not an eye twinkled with pleasure. He deflated on the powers of God till the atmosphere seemed to become divine, so to put it; and not an eye reflected the divine splendors. Something was wrong. The spirit was not walking up to its reputation. Naturally, I experienced a shade of disappointment.

Not being altogether hopeless, I turned my attention to the faces and forms of the congregation. Perhaps the spirit would quietly, if not ostentatiously, evidence itself in them. The same boredom was equally characteristic. There was no smile of joy, nor strength of determination, nor anything that suggests the resolution of conviction. Faces and forms were all sleepy, sodden, expressionless, and the spirit was not in them, obviously. These people were all tired. They might as well have been in a park chewing grass.

And yet, the pastor had, by this time, neared his peroration. He was working his voice into intense awfulness. The glory of God in Christ was the Christian's salvation. The father of Christ asked them through his son to arise and gather the fruits of his great vineyard; but the audience sat still, never moving a muscle. The pastor sent his voice up to the thirteen stars that decorated the roof. "The love of God in Christ, which the unbeliever has not," he elocuted, "is within you. God reposes his trust upon you [there was no doubt about the *reposing* of the trust]. You are his beloved children, to whose care he has bequeathed, through his holy son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the coming of his glorious kingdom. There is no hope for the world save through God in Christ. Amen. May the blessing of the Lord fall upon the words of his servant."

Then it was that the spirit began to move. There was a subdued shuffling of feet, a quiet shutting of Bibles, a low motion of people straightening themselves up. After twenty minutes' somnolency, the spirit of life reawakened to meander through a joyless hymn; and the short service came to an end.

There was something humorously pathetic about the affair; but it has its grim side. A goodly number of the congregation were known to me. Influential men were scattered about, employers of labor, city magnates, controllers of the press, trade-union officials. The remainder of the audience was gathered from the ranks of the middle-class workers. They represent the controlling portion of the nation. Against that social and political power Freethought, the destroyer of hypocrisy, the vanguard of progress, has to fight. The grimness of the struggle is, must be, inevitable; the opposing power is so strong, and we have but our minds.

But, softly, where is the spirit to-day, where is the enthusiasm, where the hot love, tempered with strong reason? In the minds of rebellious un-

* Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 491.

believers in orthodoxy. We could sit for hours listening to the editor and his lieutenants, and go home with our minds, our nerves, tingling with delight, our beliefs rising into a grandeur, and our convictions growing greater with a courage that these sleepy Christians never enjoy from their twenty minutes with God-in-Christ. Victory never comes to them who wait; it comes to them who work; and the value of that work can be reckoned by "the spirit" crystallised in it.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Some Little-Known Freethinkers.

I.—THOMAS SCOTT.

Few have done more valiant work for Freethought, in a quiet way, than the subject of my present sketch. Born April 28, 1808, Thomas Scott lived the life of a cultured gentleman and scholar. He had acted as page to Charles X. of France, and he travelled widely in all parts of the world. Having thoroughly investigated Christianity, he, in the latter part of his life, set himself to the work of enlightening others as to his conclusions. To this task he devoted his time, money, and talents. From his house at Mount Pleasant, Ramsgate, he began by issuing small tracts designed to aid the cause of free inquiry and free expression of thought. These were printed at his own expense and given away, mostly sent by post to the clergy and the cultured classes. Soon a number of writers gathered round him whose works he published and distributed, mainly at his own cost. Altogether, the pamphlets which he published made no fewer than sixteen good-sized volumes. Among the writers who contributed to the series may be mentioned Francis Newman, W. R. Greg, Dr. Willis, J. Cranbrook, M. D. Conway, E. Maitland, M. Macfie, C. Bray, E. V. Neale, J. Robertson, F. E. Abbot, Sir R. D. Hanson, W. Jevons, M. Kalisch, T. Lestrangle, J. Muir, J. A. Symonds, P. A. Taylor, Rev. R. Suffield, Judge Strange, Dr. G. Wild, Dr. Zerffi, and Bishop Hinds. Thomas Scott was well called a prince of propagandists. He had always fresh irons in the fire, and the entire series of pamphlets were of the scholarly, cultured order, calculated to win the attention of those for whom they were designed.

As a specimen of his own incisive style, take the first of 213 Questions, to which answers are respectfully asked from the orthodox (1865):—

"(1) As we are required to love our enemies, may we not safely infer that God loves his enemies? (2) If God loves his enemies, will he punish them more than will be for their good? (3) Would endless punishment be for the good of any being?"

As an instance of illustration, take the following from his reply to Dr. M'Neile, the Dean of Ripon, on the Resurrection:—

"If anyone comes and tells us that a man, like the cow in the nursery rhyme, jumped over the moon, or that he walked through a six-foot-thick wall, or that he could show himself and vanish at will, we should say at once that his statements might possibly be true, so far as his report of what he thought he had seen was concerned; but that, if it was true, then the creature who did these things was not made of flesh and blood, but had an organisation so entirely different from man that no points of likeness could be traced between the one and the other."

The principal work issued with Thomas Scott's name was the *English Life of Jesus*. The title shows it was designed to do for English readers a similar work to that which Strauss and Renan had done for Germans and French. Unlike more popular and pretentious Lives of Jesus, it did not attempt to build an edifice without the needful materials, but rather examined those materials, and showed that they could not consistently be fitted together. It shows, in short, that in the Gospels we have to do with legends and fictions, rather than with facts. The work was written in conjunction with Sir W. G. Cox, or rather, I believe, was founded on manuscripts by that gentleman, who, being a dignitary of the Church of England, could not afford to put his name to such a work, and preferred that the whole credit or odium should fall on Mr. Scott, ever ready to do anything for the cause of Freethought. In 1871 Mr. Scott issued a challenge to the Christian Evidence Society, but that body acted with their accustomed discretion, and Mr. Scott followed up his challenge with a scathing exposure of *The Tactics and Defeat of the Christian Evidence Society*.

In a farewell address to his readers, after fifteen years of work, which he published in 1877, Mr. Scott said:—

"The spectacle of millions of my fellow-countrymen bound hand and foot by metaphysical and priestly exclusiveness made so painful an impression upon my mind that

I felt irresistibly impelled to expose dogmatic assumptions and promote free theological inquiry as the undoubted right of all thoughtful minds."

He entered on his task single-handed, but he soon made friends who rejoiced to help him in his labors. He says:—

"Expressions of sympathy with my design and offers of co-operation in the work reached me from what seemed to be the most unlikely quarters, and, for a considerable period afterwards, able and highly educated clergymen forwarded me manuscripts for publication, containing attacks on the false bulwarks of ecclesiasticism, and expositions of absolute moral verities. Cultivated and earnest laymen, capable of dealing with the points at issue, also came forward voluntarily and contributed useful papers to the series."

Essays on every branch of the theology were issued "illustrating the unhistorical character of many Bible records, the gradual development of beliefs and ceremonies from Solar and Phallic worship to Christianity, the priestly origin of creeds, and the true inductive methods of investigation." In laying down his work he was able to say: "The persuasion gains ground everywhere that the only true orthodoxy is loyalty to reason; and the only infidelity which merits censure is disloyalty to reason." The seed, he says, may for a while appear unproductive. Mrs. Grundy is still strong. "But over all such untoward agencies the cause of freedom of thought and freedom of expression will certainly triumph; and every anathema of priests and denunciation by bigots will but tend to accelerate its progress."

Thomas Scott died at Norwood on December 30, 1878. In a memoir contributed to the *Liberal* of March, 1879, Mr. G. G. Flaws says:—

"His was a grand presence; tall, yet robust, with strikingly handsome head and face; in bearing, dress, and manners every inch a perfect English gentleman. Though fond of deluding himself into the belief that he was destitute of humor, he often chuckled with kindly malicious glee at some of his own *repartees*, and unconsciously manifested great powers of drollery; albeit, his wit, if used in writing—which it seldom was—would have barbed itself with sarcasm. He hugely relished the lighter sallies in others, particularly when, through pen and pencil, they waged war against the unrealities of theology and the creeds. No man more detested cant, in every form; no man more gloried in sincerity, both in himself and others. He was as purely transparent a soul as ever honored mankind."

No notice of Mr. Scott would be complete without mention of his wife, who assisted him in all his work with whole-souled devotion. She was a lady of great culture and refinement, in every way fitted to be the helpmeet and companion of one of nature's gentlemen.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

GOOD CHRISTIANS!

Then there were gruesome stories of the massacres. A lady who had fled from Monastir recounted tales of cruelty, the work of Balkan Christians, which made mere crucifixion seem a deed of kindness. Our nearest neighbor had a cousin in the madhouse, the reason of his madness being this:—

He and some other Turkish students of good family had volunteered for service in the war and, being all acquainted, kept together. One night they were on outpost duty in a lonely hut, quite unaware that the force to which they were attached was in retreat, when they found themselves surrounded by Bulgarian komitajis. The character of the assailants was so well known that all were panic-stricken, and one, who was small, managed to get into an empty barrel which was in the hut. The boy in hiding heard what followed, when the students had been overpowered. "You'll look better without that nose, boy effendi. Those lips are much too long, they hide your teeth. And now that pair of ears—those eyes—that tongue!" Such words, with the horrid crying of the victims, still more, perhaps, his own terror which prevented him from coming out and sharing the fate of those he loved, drove the youth in hiding mad; not at the moment, for he managed to lie quiet and escape, but afterwards, when he had reached a place of safety.

Mere human rags, deprived of all that makes life sentient, found their way to Turkey with the refugees. Among a crowd of wretches who were taken care of on a farm belonging to my friend, Ali Haidar Midhat, every girl and youngish woman had been violated; and children of thirteen were big with child. In our village one saw many refugees. It was nothing uncommon at the railway station to send a tray round among persons waiting for the train on behalf of some unhappy individual. One day, when I was called on to contribute, the object was a splendid specimen of manhood who had had his tongue cut out. I think, too, there was something wrong about his ears, but cannot be quite certain for he wore a heavy turban.—*Marmaduke Pickthall in the "New Age."*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Foresters' Hall, 5 Highgate-road, N.W., adjoining "The Bull and Gate"): 7.30, C. E. Ratcliffe, "God—Freewill—Immortality."

STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's Humanism in the *Merchant of Venice*."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 8, W. Davidson, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, A. J. Minton, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Fred Morgan, a Dramatic Humorous Recital.

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, J. T. Lloyd, "What Do We Know?"

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