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There are in nature neither rewards nor punishments ; there are consequences.—INGERSOLL.

The Message of Christmas.

THE Rev. Dr. Orchard frankly admits that "we can be almost certain that December the 25th was not the birthday of Christ." "Early tradition," he adds, "is quite ambiguous. It is much more likely that the date was chosen because it would help to replace the Roman Saturnalia which was celebrated at that time." According to the reverend gentleman, it is immaterial on what day Jesus was born, "for his birth has made every day sacred to his name." We are called upon to celebrate his birth because he brought something new into the world, or because he himself was something new. But we deny that he either brought or was something new, and challenge Dr. Orchard to prove his statement. We are convinced that the Christian religion does not contain a single original idea, and that not one of the alleged facts upon which it is claimed to be founded can legitimately be regarded as unique. In his article on "The Christianising of Christmas" in the *Christian World* for December 4, Dr. Orchard says:—

"It is indisputable that at the time of Christ the Roman Empire was flooded with myths which have resemblances to the story of Christ's life and death, and these resemblances, although they have been unwarrantably exaggerated, are in their general outlines sufficiently remarkable. These myths were not only floating about as stories, but were dramatised, and their presentation was made the chief object of certain mystery cults."

While making that admission, however, he ridicules the contention that Christianity had a mythical origin. He asserts that "it is certainly a curious example of literary criticism to suggest that the extraordinarily vital atmosphere of our Gospels can have had any such origin." But surely the reverend gentleman must be aware that the Christianity of the Pauline epistles is not to be found in the Gospels. The Pauline Christ is a radically different person from the Synoptic Jesus. In the Gospels baptism is not described as a sacrament, nor is the eucharist represented as mystic communion with a crucified and resuscitated Christ. Whatever his motive may have been, Paul made Christ exceedingly like Osiris and Mythra. Why was such a resemblance established by the Apostle to the Gentiles, rather than by James, a pillar of the Jerusalem Church?

Dr. Orchard imagines that Christianity conquered "a world deluged with myth and mysteries" simply because it was something greater than a myth. He asks derisively, "Did one myth eat up all the others miraculously, like Moses' serpent?" Certainly not; the triumph of the Christian myth over all the others was perfectly natural, and, in the circumstances, inevitable; but Dr. Orchard does not play the part of an impartial historian when he declares that with its conquest faith, hope, and love came to a great renaissance. As a matter of fact Christianity did not win Europe by merit, but by force; not by love, but by the sword. The Pagan myths were suppressed by law, not superseded by a nobler and

more acceptable evangel; destroyed by the civil arm under Theodosius the Great, not outgrown by a truer and more virile faith. Dr. Orchard's account of it is false to history:—

"Jesus brought what the myths had created a desire for, and answered the fevered yearnings that they expressed. It was this which laid the train for the new fire to run through the Empire, and, because a real life had come, wiped out all the mysteries."

The mysteries were wiped out not because a real life had come, but because the head of the Empire adopted the Christian myth and made it his business to stamp out all rival cults. Theodosius prohibited every portion of the Pagan worship, and razed to the ground all the Pagan temples.

In our day even the historicity of a merely human Jesus is either denied or doubted by many first-class scholars; while the belief in an incarnate Christ is quite impossible to the bulk of thinking people. Dr. Orchard maintains that a proper contemplation of Christmas will give us "the realisation that God has been revealed in all his glory within human personality, and on the plane of this mortal life." "Only this," he continues, "can make us sure that at the heart of things there is a Spirit of the same nature as Jesus, warm with our humanity, glorifying in having lived our life and tasted our death." Listen to this:—

"The answer which Jesus brings to our longing for a friendship at once personal and infinite, the reality and certainty which he gives to ideals that are otherwise only torturing dreams of the impossible, the shock and challenge that crucifies the world for which we have lived, and which no imaginative biography could ever administer: this is what Christmas means in its Christian sense."

Then the meaning of Christmas in its Christian sense is a vain and mischievous delusion. There is no evidence whatever of the presence of a tender and loving Spirit at the heart of things, we do not naturally long for an infinite friendship, we can testify that high and beautiful ideals are not "torturing dreams of the impossible" apart from Christ, and it is an undeniable fact that there are thousands of men and women of the purest motives and cleanest lives who have never come within the sphere of Christian influence. They have a deep sense of the absolute nobility of motherhood, and of the absolute purity of everything connected with our entrance into life, as well of the glorious possibilities of the life we all live, though they have never heard of Dr. Orchard's great Revealer and infinite Friend. According to Dr. Orchard, Christians need to be driven "back to the supreme joys which are to be found in family life, and which gather round the cradle," and nothing can do that but a realisation of the revelation of God which Christmas embodies; but the supreme joys of home-life are experienced by the ordinary Chinaman, who says, "Every day is happy at home, every moment miserable abroad." It is the general feeling throughout China that there is no place like home. It is the emptiest cant to describe all the good things of life as gifts brought to us by Christ. They are possessed and enjoyed by all who cheerfully obey Nature's laws, and the intensity of their enjoyment is determined by temperament, not by belief or unbelief in Christ.

The world has hailed innumerable virgin-born Saviors. Has Dr. Orchard forgotten the Inscription

from Halicarnassus in which the praises of Augustus are so sweetly sung? It is worth giving in full:—

"When the eternal and immortal Power which generated the world had added to all other abundant blessings the greatest good by granting to men, to our real good fortune, Cæsar Augustus, the father of his native town the divine Rome, the indigenous Jupiter, and at the same time the Savior of the whole human race, for the sake of which Providence, paying regard to the prayers of all, has not only fulfilled but also surpassed them; for peace prevails on earth and sea; the cities flourish; law and harmony and peaceableness are found; there is a fine abundance of all good things; men are filled with the best hopes for the future, and joyful courage for the present: therefore should [the birthday of Augustus be celebrated] with games and contests, with sacrifices and songs."

Augustus never became the Savior of the whole human race, any more than anybody else; but under him Rome became pre-eminently powerful and prosperous, and enjoyed many years of perfect peace. While he lived the Gospel Jesus was an agitator. His advent did not secure peace on earth and goodwill toward men. After a short period of popularity he became a thorn in his country's side; and the hatred against him grew into such a passion that in his thirty-second year he was put to death as an enemy of his nation. Ere long the belief arose that he was still alive, and his disciples began to declare that he was the Savior of his people Israel. Then Paul came along and proclaimed him the Savior of the world, the only one who could deliver mankind from all the evils through which they suffered; and now every Christmas Day his advent as such is celebrated in mawkish hymns and carols. But he is no more the Savior of the world than was Cæsar Augustus. The Savior of the world is non-existent. The Christian message of Christmas, therefore, has not a word of truth in it, and a lying message cannot possibly be morally elevating.

That being so, we firmly hold that the Saturnalia, which Christmas was intended to replace, was a much wholesomer festival, being originally, no doubt, in celebration of the winter solstice. At Christmas winter receives notice to quit, and all life experiences a potential renewal. It was the turn of the year that people hailed during the Saturnalia, which lasted nearly a week. They gave themselves up to joy and merriment. All schools were closed; no war could be declared or battle fought. Distinctions of rank vanished, masters and slaves sat at the same table, the latter being waited upon by the former. There was a universal exchange of gifts, and all classes mingled freely, the word having gone forth that all men were brothers. The beauty of that ancient festival is gone, and with it the visible tokens of universal brotherhood. To us, however, the twenty-fifth of December comes, not as a Christian festival, but as the day on which we merrily welcome the renewed promise of life.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Failure of Faith.

It is really not a difficult thing to find out what Atheism is. Nor does it require a superhuman degree of intelligence to understand it. Half an hour's careful study of anything written by a representative Atheist would enable any person of normal education and brains to know precisely what is the Atheistic position. He might not agree with it when he does understand it. He would be quite within his rights in calling it stupid, or inconclusive, or to assert that it was less satisfactory than the position of the Theist. All these things are matters of opinion, and in such respects each individual must decide for himself. But what Atheism is, is hardly more a matter of opinion than what natural selection is, or what is meant by radio-active matter. It is primarily a question of fact; and every writer owes it to himself, to his readers, and to those whom he criticises, to set himself right in this direction—even if it delays his writing.

Mr. Raymond Coulson's article in a recent issue of the *Sunday Chronicle* on "The Failure of the Churches," is a case in point. It is all the more regrettable because, in the course of his article, Mr. Coulson has a good many things to say to the Churches that are well worth the saying. He points out how critical the position of the Churches is, and that their vitality to-day consists almost entirely in making themselves centres of social activity. They are, he says, "little more than politico-ethical organisations, and they are all wobbly at the edges," while their efforts "to Bowdlerise science and misinterpret the Bible in order to make the two things fit, demonstrate nothing but the extremely parlous state of modern theology."

There are many other good things in Mr. Coulson's article, but his remarks about Atheism might have been made by the most commonplace pulpiteer, and his view of the function of reason in relation to religion is highly fallacious. To take the case of Atheism first. Probably as an apologetic foil to his attack on the Churches, Mr. Coulson posits a dogmatic Atheism in opposition to a dogmatic Christianity, and so succeeds in demonstrating that one is as bad as the other. We no longer, he says:—

"Talk about the 'dark-souled Atheist,' with a capital A. We do not regard him as a sort of intellectual Lucifer, a fallen angel of the mind. We recognise him, on the contrary, as a conscientious but rather stupid person. Having denied one dogma it seems merely silly to take the trouble to set up another on no better evidence."

There is an air of superiority about this passage that might be annoying if it were not so common. The "blindness" and the "folly" of Atheism have been very often in the mouths of religious people, and as they have naturally done most of the talking, they have succeeded in infecting the rest of the world with the notion that there really is a degree of stupidity associated with the Atheistic position. But I can assure Mr. Coulson—as one whose business in life it is to understand Atheism—that Atheism does not purpose merely putting one dogma in the place of another. What is a dogma? Mr. Coulson seems to be under the impression that a dogma is something that has nothing whatever to do with reason. This is quite a vulgar fallacy. A dogma, as Newman pointed out, is no more than a proposition. It is not reached independently of reason, it is reached by reasoning, whether the reasoning be sound or unsound. The notion—to use another of Newman's terms—only becomes a dogma when we decline to reason further concerning it, and declare that other people must accept it on our authority. That is the way in which all religious dogmas have taken shape. First a proposition established upon what was believed to be a rational basis, and then its creation as a dogma by forbidding people to rationally examine it.

This point is worth bearing in mind, in view of what Mr. Coulson has to say of the functions of reason and religion. For the moment I only wish to point out that there are no dogmas associated with Atheism, and cannot be, for the simple reason that the very kernel of the Atheistic position is a reasoned attack on Theistic beliefs. The Theist comes forward with a belief in God which he declares to be either superior to or independent of reason, or which he forbids us to critically examine. The Atheist declines to be warned off examination, he denies that it is either superior to or independent of reason, and he demonstrates—to his own satisfaction, at least—that the existence of the God posited in unproved and inconceivable. Now, you may say that the Atheist has or has not made his case good. But you cannot, in common sense or justice, say that he desires to merely replace one dogma with another. To make such a statement passes, usually, without comment, only because it falls in with the unthinking humor of the crowd.

Having said this, I can now turn to Mr. Coulson's conception of the part played by reason in relation to religion. "The conflict of religion and science," he

says, "began as a misunderstanding, and is ending as a farce." Ending as a farce, yes; because nothing could be more absurd than the antics of those who are trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. But the conflict did not begin as a misunderstanding; were it so, it might have been brought to an end long ago. The conflict began, and is rooted, in two fundamentally opposed modes of thinking. The religious conception is, in itself, quite as truly due to a process of reasoning as is any later scientific conception. The fault in it is due to the fact that it blunders as to the nature of the forces at work. It conceives natural phenomena as due to the action of beings similar in nature to man himself. On the other hand, pure science commences just so soon as the conception is formed of a force operating that is determinable and knowable, and quite insensible to human cajolery and blind to human hopes and fears. The conflict does not begin in misunderstanding; it begins because the two conceptions are radically opposed, and it is perpetuated simply because religion cannot grant all that science assumes without signing its own death-warrant, just as science cannot admit what religion claims without surrendering its character as science. The struggle is fiercest precisely when each side has the clearest comprehension of all that it stands for.

"Pure human reason," says Mr. Coulson, "can never by any possibility produce a theory to explain the reason." It is very difficult to say just what pure reason can or cannot do, but I am quite certain of this—if human reason cannot do it nothing else can. How does Mr. Coulson imagine that even a religious theory appeals to man except through his reason? Evidently he thinks that religion is concerned with the emotions only. This is not true; but even then you can't, so long as you indulge in any form of teaching, appeal to emotion except through reason. Purely sensuous surroundings, such as one might meet in a play of color or perfume or sound, might appeal direct to the emotions; but exhortations to do or to abstain, the presentation of God as a creator or a governor or a parent, must be an appeal to reason primarily. If Mr. Coulson will ponder the first half-dozen chapters of Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, he will discover what an unreasonable position he has taken up on this question.

Mr. Coulson is quite correct when he says that if you do not accept the religious theory you cannot be argued into it, and also that "when religion condescends to reason she steps down from her impregnable fortress into a field where she must inevitably go down." I should query "impregnable," but otherwise I agree with him. But this is not because religion is in "its essence independent of all processes of human reason," but really because the reasons it adduces no longer appeal to an educated mind. When, for instance, a preacher gives a recovery from sickness as a reason for believing in prayer, he is arguing in a way that makes no appeal to one who has even a moderate acquaintance with modern scientific thought. Religious reasoning did once appeal very powerfully to people, and does so still when it can strike a sufficiently primitive type of mind. It fails more easily now, and bids fair to fail still more decisively in the future, because the general mental environment has undergone a profound alteration. It is for this reason that, as Mr. Coulson says, argument rarely converts a man. This is because the moment you set him reasoning—and you necessarily do this so soon as you start arguing—you bring into operation the power of the mental environment in which he lives. You set the better knowledge of the present at work upon the imperfect knowledge of the past. And inevitably the later knowledge—given time—triumphs.

The difficulty before the Churches is not at all due to their endeavoring to reason. They have always reasoned, and always will reason. Their difficulty centres in the fact that their reasoning rests on premises that no longer appeal to people with any force. They can no longer use the argu-

ment of a future life with any effect. If they utilise hell, they disgust; if they utilise heaven, they weary. They cannot reason upon a basis of miracle; a diffused scientific knowledge causes people to laugh at such primitive arguments. It is no use claiming a supernatural origin for the Bible; the world is aware of many other writings with a similar claim, and the blunders of each are fairly well known. In desperation, the Churches resort to a "social preaching"; convert themselves into "Institutional Churches" in which the claims of religion are based on a billiard-room or a smoking concert, or a free-and-easy musical evening. And this only makes matters worse; for it means the encouragement of a way of looking at life that has already robbed the Churches of best part of their congregations.

The choice before the Churches is plain: either a quick dispatch or a lingering death. To oppose wholeheartedly the non-religious spirit of the time means the former; to compromise with it, to meet it half way, means the latter. It might set itself in stern opposition to modern thought and die with honor. It prefers to compromise and live a little longer, even though it dies finally covered with contempt.

The whole of the failure of the Churches is due to the fact that people have ceased to believe. Every other reason advanced is no more than an excuse. Fundamentally it is not the Atheist, or the Agnostic, or the Secularist that religion is fighting; it is civilisation that is attacking it. Human life begins under the dominance of religious beliefs. Religion shapes to a very considerable degree the beginnings of all human institutions. All human culture, once we emerge from the very primitive type, becomes consequently a fight against the tremendous influence of religion. The fight is of necessity a long one, but time is on the side of civilisation. It is often said that the Catholic Church is the only dangerous Church, because it can afford to wait. That is true. It can wait longer than any *individual*. But there is one thing that can wait longer even than the Catholic Church. The race can outlast the Church, and against the slow but ceaseless movement of human development the gods themselves are ultimately powerless.

C. COHEN.

Anatole France.

M. ANATOLE FRANCE, the foremost figure in European literature, was entertained royally in his seventieth year at the Savoy Hotel recently by a representative gathering of English writers. The act conferred credit upon all present, for they were paying their respects to one of the greatest masters of literature, and a very eminent Freethinker.

Of all the notable Continental writers, M. Anatole France is the most Voltairian, for he carries on the same splendid tradition. As he so wittily expressed himself at the banquet, he is a symbol, as the citizen Momoro represented the Goddess of Reason at the festivals of the French Revolution. The word Voltairian means also something of tone and character, something of an alert but indulgent regard, a delicacy of touch, a subtle irony which immediately suggests the very ideal of the French intellect:—

"Ravishing as red wine in woman's form,
A splendid Mœnad, she of the delirious laugh,
Her body twisted flames with the smoke cap crowned."

Seventy years of age by the book, M. Anatole France has built up a splendid reputation, not only as a writer but also as a humanitarian. A convinced Freethinker, it was only natural that he should take up the brilliant sword of his wit by the side of the Atheist, Zola, in the terrible days of the Dreyfus struggle, when the heroic Zola championed truth and justice in the supreme hour of danger. It was an example of magnificent courage. Honest to their own injury, brave against the enmity of tens of thousands, these Freethinkers raised the world's opinion of human nature.

M. France's literary forefathers are Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire, three of the most virile names in literature. Yet he is no copyist, but strikingly original, modern, and Parisian. The thing he has in common with these great men is his whole-hearted hatred of injustice and his power over language. Although a master of the lash, he uses his whip caressingly. He does not cut his subject to ribbons like Swift; nor, like Voltaire, overflow with an adroit and subtle humor which stings like a thousand wasps. Rather is he like Rabelais, who shifts satire into the realm of imaginative comedy, and pities while he smiles.

Rabelais was so much more tolerant than Swift, who, writing in the shadow of the Christian superstition, found all the world a dunghill and man the most loathsome thing that squatted upon it. But Rabelais, out in the open, with all the winds of the renaissance blowing upon him, was more than a mere satirist. Under the motley of the buffoon beat as generous and as kindly a heart as ever throbbed in the service of humanity. M. France possesses no small share of the tolerant humor of Rabelais, and at a distance of several centuries carries on the same intellectual tradition.

Although M. France has written quite a number of books, his works have a uniform excellence, and it is difficult to pick out any representative masterpieces. He has written no *Candide*, no *Les Misérables*, those seminal masterpieces which represent the sum total of their authors' genius. Like his illustrious countryman, Montaigne, he is not to be judged by a single essay. And, like Montaigne, he is a philosopher in disguise. He has used the novel as a medium of expression, personal and intellectual. In those charming pages of *La Vie Littéraire* he has smilingly told us that he is not speaking pontifically, but only talking of himself; sending his mind adventuring among the masterpieces. Similarly in his novels, he is always as personal and as intimate as Charles Lamb. In his *Isle of the Penguins* he puts modern society under the microscope, and in *The Gods Athirst* he unfolds himself on the subject of the French Revolution. Yet this genial satirist can, in another mood, give us delightful glimpses of his own childhood. *My Friend's Book* is as tender, delightful, and trifling as heart could desire, and in that perfect chapter, "The Hermitage of the Jardin des Plantes," he describes Pierre Noziere's childish passion towards saintship with inimitable grace and irony:—

"My sole idea was to live the life of an ascetic.....In order to lose no time in putting my ideas in operation, I refused to eat my breakfast. My mother, who knew nothing of my new vocation, thought I was ill, and looked at me with an anxiety that it pained me to behold. Nevertheless, I persevered with my fasting, and then, remembering the example of Saint Simeon Stylites, who spent his life on a pillar, I climbed up on to the kitchen cistern, but it was impossible to live there, for Julie, our cook, promptly dislodged me. Though I had thus been ousted from the cistern, I pursued with undiminished ardor the way of perfection, and next decided to imitate Saint Nicholas of Patras, who gave all his riches to the poor. My father's study window looked out on to the quay, and from it I proceeded to fling down a dozen coppers or so which had been presented to me because they were new and bright. These I followed up with marbles, humming-tops, whip-top, and eelskin whip.

"The child is crazy," exclaimed my father, as he shut the window.

"I felt angry and mortified at hearing this judgment passed upon me, but I remembered that my father, not being a saint like myself, would not share with me in the glories of the blessed, a reflection from which I derived great consolation."

No one but a Frenchman could have written this passage, and of this delicate and delightful stuff is woven the golden fabric of his genius. So original, so modern, is this great author who, among other names, has been called the pope of Freethought.

To this most distinguished of living Continental writers we owe much of the present proud position of Freethought—for scepticism is nothing if not intellectual. In the far-off days, Francois Rabelais

caught a glimpse of the dawn of liberty, and largely through his magnificent genius it has now permeated all classes of society. M. Anatole France stands for the liberation of the intellect no less than Rabelais. He is like his illustrious predecessor, first and last a Freethinker, and has the same abiding faith in the triumph of what our own George Meredith calls "the best of causes."

MIMNERMUS.

"Wait Till You Come to Die."—III.

(Continued from p. 789.)

"He [Voltaire at 84] was an intellectual monarch—who had built his own throne and woven the purple of his power. He was a man of genius. The Catholic God had allowed him the appearance of success. His last years were filled with the intoxication of flattery—of almost worship. He stood at the summit of his age. The priests became anxious. They began to fear that God would forget, in a multiplicity of business, to make a terrible example of Voltaire. Towards the last of May, 1778, it was whispered in Paris that Voltaire was dying. Upon the fences of expectation gathered the unclean birds of superstition, impatiently waiting for their prey."—COLONEL INGERSOLL, *Oration on Voltaire*, p. 26.

"I have often thought upon death, and I find it the least of all evils."—FRANCIS BACON, *Essays* (Bohn's Edition), p. 159.

"Lord Playfair asked every doctor he met, for nearly twenty years, if he ever knew a patient afraid to die; and except in two cases the answer was 'No.'"—*Daily Express* (June 2, 1900).

"Let us never forget that it was Christianity which turned the death-bed into a 'bed of agonies,' and that, by the scenes which since then have been enacted thereon, and the terrible sounds which here, for the first time, appeared possible, the senses and the blood of posterity were poisoned for a lifetime."—NIETZSCHE, *The Dawn of Day*.

RELIGIOUS people think that the last moments of a dying person are the most momentous in all the years of life. This is an entirely artificial sentiment, due to the idea that the last moments on earth are the prelude to an eternal life—either of joy or pain—elsewhere. That this is true may be observed by the difference with which they regard the last moments of a faithful dog, or other animal, not furnished with an immortal soul.

This belief in the enormous value attached to the last words of the dying has been responsible for the fabrication of those pious lies about infidel death-beds. It has also been responsible for the production of a still larger number of pious death-beds, where the dying see the heavens opened, hear angel voices, and so on. Doubtless, in the state of physical and mental weakness to which the dying are reduced, and after they have been properly "prepared" by the priest and coached by pious friends, some hysterical Christians have seen what they have been told others have seen in like circumstances.

The power of suggestion over the human mind is now recognised by all psychologists as enormous; and no doubt the followers of other religions, such as Mohammedanism, also occasionally see such things, but in such cases they only see what they have been taught to believe they ought to see.

Dr. Buckley, editor of the *Christian Advocate*, of New York, says:—

"During the past thirty years I have seen many die, and many who thought themselves to be dying who afterwards recovered, but I have no ground to suppose any of the visions supernatural, nor have I seen any indication of the development of a faculty of cognising another world."

Mr. Buckley says devout and consistent Christians sometimes die in great agony of spirit, while total unbelievers pass calmly away, their minds unruffled by apprehension or remorse. The fact, as stated, is that "when the dying appear to see anything, it is in harmony with the traditions they have received." Thus, dying Catholics may have visions of the Virgin Mary, because they have been trained to supplicate her, and have had her image before them in the church; but she never appears to Protestants who have not been trained in their youth as

Catholics, and "Where wicked persons see fiends and evil spirits, they harmonise with the descriptions which have been given in their sermons, poems, and supernatural narrations with which they have been familiar."*

But a very large discount must be made from these death-bed tales, which, if not altogether false, are highly embellished. Medical testimony is altogether against them. Dr. Cyrus Edson, writing on the subject, says:—

"Nothing is more common than to hear from the pulpit pictures in words of excitement, of alarm, of terror, of the death-beds of those who have not lived religious lives, yet, as a rule, if these pictures are supposed to be those of the unfortunates at the moment of death, they are utterly false. In point of fact, ninety-nine of every hundred beings are unconscious for several hours before death comes to them; all the majesty of intellect, the tender beauty of thought or sympathy or charity, the very love for those for whom love has filled all waking thoughts, disappear. As a little baby just born into the world is but a little animal, so the sage, the philosopher, the hero, or the statesman, he whose thoughts or deeds have writ themselves large in the history of the world, become but dying animals at the last. A merciful unconsciousness sets in as the mysterious force we call life slowly takes leave of its last citadel, the heart, and what is has become what was. This is death."†

A greater authority than Dr. Edson gives a similar testimony. Sir William Osler, the Oxford Professor of Medicine, gives the result of his experience during a long life devoted to the practice of medicine. He says:—

"The popular belief that however careless a man may be while in health, at least on the 'low, dark verge of life,' he is appalled at the prospect of leaving these warm precincts to go he knows not where—this popular belief is erroneous. As a rule, man dies as he has lived, uninfluenced practically by the thought of a future life. Bunyan could not understand the quiet, easy death of Mr. Badman, and took it as an incontestable sign of his damnation. The ideal death of Cornelius, so beautifully described by Erasmus, is rarely seen. In our modern life the educated man dies usually as did Mr. Denner in Margaret Deland's story (*John Ward, Preacher*), wondering, but uncertain, generally unconscious and unconcerned. I have careful records of about five hundred death-beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concerns us here. Ninety suffered bodily pain or distress of one sort or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no sign one way or the other; like their birth, their death was a sleep and a forgetting. The Preacher was right; in this matter man hath no pre-eminence over the beast—'as the one dieth so dieth the other' (Ecclesiastes iii. 19).‡

Out of five hundred deaths, only two showed terror and one spiritual exaltation! Both, probably, due to religion. Under the light thrown upon the subject by these statistics, these tales of infidel, and pious, death-beds begin to wilt. They are seen to be the pious fictions which they are; at any rate, the infidel variety, which is now almost exclusively confined to the death-beds of Voltaire and Thomas Paine, which we will, for that reason, shortly examine.

The common fable as to Voltaire's death, runs, that the doctor found Voltaire in great agony, exclaiming, "I am abandoned by God and man," and offering him half his wealth for six months of life; the doctor answering, "Sir, you cannot live six weeks"; and Voltaire replying, "Then I shall go to hell and you will go with me!" and soon after expired. Another account pretends that Voltaire died raving, and that Marshal Richelieu was horrified by the scene and obliged to leave the chamber; as if it were possible for an old man of nearly 84, at the point of death, to die raving!

Carlyle, the historian, in his *Essays*, and Parton, in his monumental *Life of Voltaire*, are agreed as to

the facts regarding Voltaire's death. Parton says:—

"Belle-et-Bonne, who never left his bedside during these last days, said to Lady Morgan in Paris, forty years afterwards, as she did to everyone with whom she ever conversed on the subject, 'To his last moment everything he said and did breathed the benevolence and goodness of his character; all announced in him tranquillity, peace, resignation, except a little movement of ill-humor which he showed to the curé [parson] of Saint-Sulpice, when he begged him to withdraw, and said, 'Let me die in peace.'"

"He lingered until late in the evening. Ten minutes before he breathed his last, he roused from his slumber, took the hand of his valet, pressed it, and said to him, 'Adieu, my dear Morand; I am dying.' These were his last words. He died peacefully and without pain, at a quarter past eleven, on Saturday evening, May 30, 1778, aged eighty-three years, six months, and nine days. This last incident Wagnière reports upon the authority of Morand, who was watching with his master that night."*

Such was the calm and serene end of the man whom Lord Morley speaks of as "the very eye of modern illumination."

The testimony of the domestics of the household in immediate attendance on Voltaire is clinched by the testimony of Dr. Burard, who attended Voltaire through the whole course of his illness, and who says: "I feel happy in being able, while paying homage to truth, to destroy the effects of the lying stories which have been told respecting the last moments of Mons. de Voltaire." He declares that Voltaire "retained his faculties up to the last moment, and the fooleries which have been attributed to him are deserving of the greatest contempt." The tale attributed to Marshal Richelieu, he says, "is as unfounded as the rest."

Farther details may be found in Mr. G. W. Foote's valuable *Infidel Death-Beds*, where Dr. Burard's signed testimony may be found.

The ignorance of the purveyors of these malicious stories is well illustrated in an incident recorded at a lecture given by Mr. Bradlaugh at Wigan in October, 1860: After a lecture, a reverend gentleman—Mr. Woodville Woodman, of Bolton—told the audience that the triumph of Atheism in the French Revolution had produced such disastrous results that Voltaire, when he returned to France after the Revolution was over, expressed his regret for what he had done!

Mr. Bradlaugh, in reply, said:—

"This is, I suppose, another case of the resurrection of the dead! Our friend tells us what Voltaire said after the Revolution was over. Now, as Voltaire died ten years before the Revolution began, he has given us some information that is somewhat startling!" †

(To be continued.)

W. MANN.

Catholic and Protestant.

SPAIN is the victim of Christianity. Catholicism is Christianity to the evolutionist, and Spain is the typical Catholic country. Shut out by the solid barrier of the Pyrenees from free intercourse with the rest of Europe, and imbued with the belief that the greatest of all earthly objects is the maintenance of the Catholic religion, she has been a standing object-lesson in the blessings of Christianity when unchecked by other influences. To the Spaniard religion is not an amusement, or a social decoration, or an artificial aid to morality; to him it is a passion that inflames his whole nature, and makes all other things look comparatively trivial; all other things, that is, but the lust after ill-gotten wealth, which somehow or other has always been singularly compatible with the strongest faith and the most ardent devotion.

Protestants will of course deny that Roman Catholicism is Christianity. They have the real article themselves. But if there had been no Catho-

* Cited in the *Freethinker*, March 18, 1894.

† *North American Review*, August, 1893.

‡ Sir William Osler, *Science and Immortality* (1906), pp. 35-7.

* Parton, *Life of Voltaire*, vol. ii., pp. 610-11.

† *The National Reformer* (March 26, 1893), p. 205.

licism there would have been no Protestantism. Historically, as Michelet observed, Protestantism is an estuary, and Catholicism as the main sea. It is from the Catholic Church that every Protestant sect derives its doctrines, and from the same Church that all Protestant sects derive their Bible. Christianity contains certain fundamental ideas, and it is these, and not selected texts from a large and self-contradictory Scripture, that the evolutionist and the historian have to deal with. These ideas, in the course of ages, found practical expression in certain institutions, and those institutions are all marshalled under the Catholic Church. Nor is Protestantism, as some Rationalists affirm, a better religion than Catholicism. There is less of it—that is all. It is only better as a mild attack of fever is better than a severe attack of fever. And many Protestants have it very mildly. With hosts of them it is a slight recurrent disorder, coming on once a week. Others have just enough religion to amuse them, and get a little æsthetic titillation at church or chapel instead of at the theatre or the music-hall.

Protestantism with supreme power would make as great a desolation as Catholicism with supreme power. Scotland under the Presbyterian yoke was as ugly a place to live in as Spain under the Catholic yoke—in some respects far uglier. Give the clergy power, and it doesn't matter whether their dogmas are fifty or a hundred; their tyranny is just the same, they hate and persecute science and Free-thought, and make their teaching the alpha and omega of human wisdom. Those who think that Protestantism, in itself, was more favorable than Catholicism to the growth of natural knowledge and the free play of the human mind are simply ignorant of the facts of history. All the early Protestant "reformers" were absolutely opposed to any freedom of travel beyond the point they had reached themselves. They imprisoned, tortured, and burnt heretics with the greatest alacrity. Only by a kind of accident did freethinking creep upon the scene. The appeal to a multifarious book like the Bible divided Protestants among themselves. They kept each other in check, and made a ring which bolder spirits gradually entered. Equilibrium, so to speak, was maintained by antagonistic forces that could not destroy each other. Was it not Voltaire who complained that in England he found twenty religions, but only one sauce? But did he not soon perceive that this was the secret of English freedom? In France there was one church big enough to swallow all others, and it did so; while in England there were twenty churches, all hating each other, but all obliged to keep a certain measure of peace and toleration. And in the midst of that peace and toleration there was a chance for a more daring originality.

G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

Lord Radstock, who died recently in Paris at the age of eighty, had "devoted the last half of his life with fine enthusiasm to Christian evangelisation." So says a well-known morning newspaper. The truth is that the man was an arid, barren bigot. His way to heaven was the only way. And what a way it was! The final display of its spirit was in the Torrey-Alexander mission; which, by the way, was an ignominious failure. Mr. G. W. Foote and the late Mr. W. T. Stead, working in loyal co-operation, settled its hash in London by settling Torrey's hash as a reckless slanderer of historic Freethinkers, such as Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll. Lord Radstock dropped a lot of money over "the conversion of London," which the Torrey-Alexander mission impudently undertook. The mission itself broke up soon after. Torrey left England fatally discredited, and he has never returned to the scene of his conviction as a malignant liar.

A sentimental semi-Christian paper, which mainly relies on the Rev. R. J. Campbell's commercial value, but does not disdain other lines of business, has been publishing notes of the "Faith that I live by" elicited from a number of more or less distinguished people, Madame Albani, who was

once a great singer, says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." That is what Job is made to say and Handel sang. But if the lady will take the trouble to look into the matter she will see that the English Bible text is all wrong. Job said nothing about a redeemer. He did not live in a pawnbroker's shop. What he really said was that his avenger (*goel*) lived; meaning that his candid friends were wrong in representing his sufferings as the result of his sins, that his innocence would yet be established, and that he would live in health and wealth again and triumph over his accusers. This proper reading of the text was always known to scholars. It is now acknowledged by common-garden divines. We are sorry to spoil Madame Albani's dream; but, after all, truth is truth—though it was a Roman, not a Christian proverb, that said it should prevail.

Mrs. Besant's answer is characteristic. She starts with "I believe." What on earth does it matter what she believes? There are thousands of beliefs in the world, and hers is only one of them. What does she *know*? That is the question. She has never answered that since she left Atheism (and logic) for Theosophy (and imagination). It shows a kind nature, of course, to believe that we are all going to glory. "Travelling towards perfection," as Mrs. Besant calls it. Florence Nightingale and Jack the Ripper travel together, though they don't know it. Such a delightful gospel, and so easy to understand! No wonder some people pay five shillings to hear it. They must find it very reassuring.

Georg Brandes interposes a word of sense:—

"We must build upon something sure. But under all the uncertainty and doubt which surrounds us one thing is certain and is not to be argued away; it is the pain. All human beings know that it is highly unpleasant to suffer and a great refreshment to be healed, to be unbound, to have the doors of our prison opened, to attain justice. And there is no other healing nor enfranchisement nor justice on earth than that which is carried into effect by us, there is no doubt what we have to do."

Presumably this is a translation of what Georg Brandes wrote. It is not the best of English, but it is intelligible. And it means this—joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, are the great facts in life. And the great truth is that man has no other "Providence" than himself.

Mr. W. J. Bryan, the U.S.A. orator, who nearly gained the presidency once under the rotten flag of a double currency—which was handsomely supported, of course, by all the silver mine owners—has not kissed the blarney stone, for he was born with all its traditional virtues as an innate possession. The one noticeable sentence he ever uttered was that "Mankind should not be crucified on a cross of gold." It was at a political convention, and the "blasphemy" of the utterance should have been shocking to any believer in Christ and the crucifixion. But politicians make anything subserve their purposes. Statesmen do not. That is the difference. Ingersoll, the "infidel," talked common sense and common honesty on the subject. He was in favor of the dollar coinage, but he wanted it to be an honest dollar, even if it were three feet in diameter! The logic and humor of the argument made it irresistible. It sank into people's minds, while Bryan and his clap-trap "cross of gold"—as the event proved—were soon discredited and forgotten. Bryan, however, still works religion for all it is worth. He has even grown familiar with God. He is ready to give the Almighty a testimonial or "character" at any moment. One feels that the Deity ought to be very much obliged. It must be very consoling to feel that you have an eloquent and influential friend like Mr. Bryan when you need one. Just listen to the God-comforting Bryan:—

"Man needs faith in God to strengthen him in his hours of trial, and he needs it to give him courage to do the work of life. How can one fight for the principle unless he believes in the triumph of the right? How can he believe in the triumph of the right if he does not believe that God stands back of the truth, and that God is able to bring victory to truth?"

Speak for yourself, Mr. Bryan. You have a right to do that. But don't arrogate the right to speak for everybody else. When were you elected the representative of "man"? Plenty of men find themselves quite able to do "the work of life" without "faith in God"—quite as able as you are with it. These men smile at your assurance that "God stands back of the truth," and would like to know why he so seldom pushes it forward.

Mr. Maarten Maartens, the Dutch novelist, says he is of the same faith as Abraham and Goethe (what a collocation!) of Michael Angelo and Shakespeare; namely, the faith expressed in the sentence "Thou doest all things." There

is no law against using Shakespeare's name in this way, but intellectually and morally speaking it is a crime. Mr. Stopford Brooke has lately confessed, in his new book, that Shakespeare progressed in scepticism throughout his tragedies, and that the culmination was reached in *King Lear*, where divine justice was not only doubted but denied.

We won't trouble about the "faith" of several pious ladies such as Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler and Katherine Tynan, but pass on to other repliers, at least to one—Sir Hiram Maxim, who declares that he was miserable in believing that "angry and bloodthirsty gods, and innumerable devils and ghosts roamed about the earth making it very hot for mankind"—and that the faith in which he is happy and prosperous now is in the non-existence of these beings.

Lord Redesdale, speaking at the dinner given in honor of M. Anatole France at the Savoy Hotel, said that we owed champagne and the novel to the Church. Was he alluding to the Bible?

To add to the solemnity of "God's birthday," shopkeepers are advertising chalk eggs and indiarubber Gorgonzola. Appropriate diet for the "birthday" of a mythical personage.

The celebration of the Mohammedan festival of the Mohurrum at Agra, India, resulted in a series of rows between the processionists and the Hindus. A number of persons were seriously injured and one killed. Yet the clergy are always assuring us that religion has a civilising influence.

The "waits" have been celebrating the merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows. A contemporary mentions a juvenile troupe who sang "Christians Awake" outside a Jewish gentleman's residence. Those "waits" did not wait long.

A new star in London, runs a placard. Not the "star" of Bethlehem.

"Flight into Egypt—New Style" is the profane headline in the *Daily News and Leader*, concerning an aeroplane trip. Naughty! Naughty! That pious journalist may yet find himself in that place so often referred to in sermons.

It is announced that the English press has reached the unanimous decision not to publish any newspapers on Christmas Day. We are greatly impressed with the Christ-like character of this resolve—particularly when we remember that, owing to the absence of a travelling public and other prevailing conditions, newspapers are generally published on that day at a loss. Once again do we see that the path of godliness alone profiteth man.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald is appealing for more sympathy towards the working classes from the Church, and is "afraid" that unless it is forthcoming the Labor movement may develop anti-religious tendencies. We are afraid the Labor movement is not the place for a man with strong "spiritual" yearnings such as Mr. Macdonald possesses. For our part, we are convinced that the less the Labor movement, or any other movement, has to do with the clergy as an organised body the better. What any movement needs that is worthy of living is, first of all, self-respect. And no party and no leader that possesses this would go round snivelling to the clergy to be more sympathetic towards them. It is curious that just at the time when other forms of thought have ceased to appeal to the Churches for either support or patronage, the leaders of the Labor movement—or some of them—should be taking up this elsewhere discarded attitude. It is often said that many of the Labor leaders are Sunday-school teachers. It may be that the wisest of those in the Labor movement will yet live to trace their greatest disasters to that circumstance.

A curious and, from one point of view, interesting leading article appears in the *Church Times* on "Blasphemy Prosecutions." It points out that the tendency is now to convict for nuisance rather than impiety, and that this bids fair to become the rule in the future. This may be true enough so far as the alleged reason for prosecution is concerned, although the introduction of the word "blasphemy" shows there is more than this in it. The *Church Times* obviously favors a genuine prosecution for blasphemy, although it lacks the courage to say so. It says that if we are content to regard blasphemy prosecutions as prosecutions for nuisance, or outraging people's feelings, "one rule must be applied to all

religions alike, and the Christian lecturer in Hyde Park will no more be able to describe Mohammed as the false prophet, or the god Krishna as a filthy and licentious deity.....Are we prepared for this?.....It seems impossible to lay down the broad ethical rule that no one shall say anything publicly about the religion of others which shall not wound their feelings."

There is much in this with which we agree—much that we have already said. If Christians are really honest in their desire that religious subjects shall be treated "reverently," and so as not to wound the feelings of those who believe in the religion attacked, the rule should apply all round. It should be as binding on Christians as on Freethinkers. But that, we know, is not the case. No judge in England would protect a Mohammedan, or a Parsee, or a Brahmin against the coarsest of abuse from a Christian. It is the Christian only who prosecutes, and that fact alone stamps these prosecutions as religious. Besides, if protection from indecency and abuse is sought for, the ordinary police laws are quite adequate.

The *Church Times* touches the root of the subject when it says, "Our own view is that the abrogation of civil penalties for blasphemy should only be part of a complete and entire renunciation by the State of all responsibility in respect of religious truth. Such a radical revolution, however, is indeed remote." This is really touching bottom. So long as the State makes itself responsible for the teaching of religion, it does stand as a protector of religion, although it need not be that the State should punish with imprisonment one who speaks disrespectfully of a subject it teaches. It is not so, for instance, with regard to education. Religion, however, is in a slightly different category, and there is connected with it the evil tradition that they who hold religion up to contempt must be punished. Therefore, the secularisation of the State is the only way out. And the completion of this is not by any means so remote—of necessity—as the *Church Times* thinks. The State has already declined to say what religion individuals shall profess, or whether they shall have any religion at all. It leaves the relation of a God entirely to the individual's own choice, and treats it as a matter that concerns only the man and God—if there is one. And it is only a step further for the State to leave the gods to look after their own. The *Church Times* says the law punishes defamation of the King or Queen, and "it cannot adopt a lower attitude in respect of blasphemy against Almighty God." To this the reply is simple. King and Queen are portions of the British State, so far as we are aware; "Almighty God" is not. Besides, the King and Queen could hardly be expected to go into the courts of law to defend their characters against every rogue or fool who chose to advertise himself by uttering reckless statements about them. This applies, of course, to all heads of states, whatever the form of government may be.

Rev. Robert J. Roberts, rector of Hopesay, Shropshire, left £20,630. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth."

Rev. John Bush Early, of 73 Crouch-street, Colchester, for thirty-three years rector of Holy Trinity Church, left £12,373 13s. 2d. It was all bequeathed to his housekeeper, Mrs. Emily Jane Cartaar. No doubt it was the proper thing to do.

The estates of professional Jesuites don't figure as large in Scotland as they do in England. Naturally. But we note that the Rev. Adam Scott Matheson, and the Rev. James Black, both of Glasgow, left £6,923 7s. 11d. and £6,746 1s. 9d. respectively.

James Phillips, a young man of Cowley-road, Ilford, being summoned for travelling on the Great Eastern Railway without paying his fare, was fined 20s. and 4s. costs. The plea that he "attended a church and bore a very good character" was of no avail. This sort of thing is always pleaded when fraudulent travellers are found out.

A Christian Yahoo is once more repeating the libel that we were sent to prison in 1883 for "obscenity" in the *Freethinker*. Now there never has been anything of that kind in our pages. We have been far more careful than any other paper we know of to avoid anything that malice could possibly twist into an improper meaning. We have even refused to print a dirty text from the Bible, although it might have been legitimately used in furtherance of our purpose or our argument. And this general reply to the said Christian Yahoo may be supplemented by a particular. No such word as "obscene" or "indecent" occurred in our indictment; no such word was whispered or suggested in

the course of our trials. Such words were more than whispered out of doors in bigoted and malignant journals. We drew the jury's attention to this abuse of language in the course of our address at the third trial; and we were generously aided by Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in his summing up. This is what he said to the jury:—

"Mr. Foote is anxious to have it impressed on your minds that he is not a licentious writer, and that this word does not fairly apply to his publications. You will have the documents before you, and you must judge for yourselves. I should say that he is right. He may be blasphemous, but he certainly is not licentious, in the ordinary sense of the word; and you do not find him pandering to the bad passions of mankind."

There you are, you Christian Yahoo! You knew all about this yourself, but you were careful to hide it. And now you had better tell the handful of silly dupes left you what *you* went to prison for some ten years before. We think it was in 1878, but no doubt you will recollect the date better than we do.

Another Yahoo—unfortunately *not* a Christian—is throwing out what he knows to be lying insinuations about our use of money in "blasphemy" cases. The only "blasphemy" case we ever took up was Mr. Harry Boulter's. It was at his own request, we had full freedom of action, and full responsibility. But we stood throughout the fight not as Mr. G. W. Foote but first as Chairman of the Secular Society, Ltd., which guaranteed the sum of £200, and secondly as President of the National Secular Society. The public subscription was opened in that Society's name; every penny acknowledged by us in the *Freethinker* went through the Society's bank account; every penny expended was on the order of the Society's Executive, by means of its cheques, and through the hands of its Secretary. This was stated publicly at the time. It should not need to be stated again. How the case was fought is a matter of history. Everything was done in a business-like way, including a verbatim report of the trial, which was published in the *Freethinker*. And our own share of the work, gratuitously rendered, is best known to those who were behind the scenes. Not a single farthing's advantage accrued to any member of the National Secular Society.

We see the suggestion that we did not take the trouble to obtain information about the Stewart trial. We think our readers will prefer to believe *us* on a matter of this sort. We applied to Mr. Pack by letter for such information. He kindly replied that he was not present at the trial, as we supposed he had been, and that he had not seen Stewart at any time during the "blasphemy" proceedings. But he had sent on our letter to someone else, who took no notice. And the someone else happens to be the author of the false suggestion.

Rev. C. Lea-Wilson, who has been doing missionary work in a district of the White Nile, a thousand miles south of Khartoum, being interviewed by a Reuter correspondent, gives a good account of the natives there. "They are jet black, typical negroes," he says, "and do not practise either cannibalism or human sacrifices. They have admirable qualities, and I have never seen among them a case of cruelty to women or children." He couldn't say that of England, or any other Christian country.

Thanks are owing to Mr. John Benson, of South Woodham, Essex, who drew attention to the falsity of the suggestion in the *Daily Chronicle* by Mrs. Barclay that George Eliot was a "conventional Christian" and believed that "the Bible was of more than divine origin." Mr. Benson points out that in her early womanhood she ceased to attend any place of worship, and that Herbert Spencer recorded that her summary of religious belief was "God is inconceivable, immortality is unbelievable."

There was some humbug, at least, about the dinner at the Savoy to Anatole France. Marie Corelli helping to honor such a man is really a joke of the first water. Nor did many of the other diners belong to the intellectual circles that Anatole France represents in his own country and in its literature. The guests' speech was full of beauty and courtesy, but it sustained the character he claimed for himself of "never having dissembled his thoughts." He told his auditors that "the great, the true France" was "the France of the eighteenth century, the France of Montesquieu and Voltaire." Some of those present need to be told that truth often—although they were honoring Anatole France.

A letter reached the Savoy dinner from Dorchester. It was one Freethinker greeting another. Thomas Hardy's

tribute to Anatole France was a gem. It threw all the rest into the shade.

The newspaper comments on the Anatole France dinner were flabby and foolish. The utmost care was taken to hide the fact that the great Frenchman was a thinker as well as a novelist. What a press we have in England! Full of cowardice and hypocrisy.

"Wanted a new head," runs an advertisement. It does not refer to the Bishop of London.

In a letter from the Gold Coast by a missionary, quoted by the *Evening News*, it was stated that when he went to find a case of Bibles at the Customs he was informed that there were 16,000 cases of gin and some hundreds of whisky waiting to be delivered. The Gold Coasters are well supplied with the means of spiritual and spirituous intoxication.

"Mythical Policeman" reads a scare-line in the *Yellow Press*. It won't attract Christian readers, for they pin their faith to a mythical Carpenter.

"Burned to death at 83" is the cheerful headline in a daily paper concerning a Kensington woman. If she had been a Freethinker, the treatment would have been continued in another place.

The *Daily Mail* recently asserted that Shakespeare "never once attempted to anticipate the drab heresies of Tom Paine." The youthful scribes of the yellow press are too young to have read Shakespeare or Paine, and when they grow up they will know better.

Do people read Shakespeare? We often wonder. There was a note in the *Star* the other night about the expression "There's hair, like wire," and its age was proved by a quotation from Spenser's "Epithalamium," in which the bride's hair is likened to "golden wire"—which is not very flattering, although it is evidently meant to be so. A more apposite quotation might have been found in Shakespeare's hundred-and-thirtieth sonnet:—

"My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wire, black wires grow on her head."

The matter is not one of much importance. But it is enough to make us repeat the question, Do people really read Shakespeare?

When we say that the matter is not one of much importance, we mean the simile and not the sonnet. The sonnet itself is of great importance in relation to the problem of the sonnets—if, after all, there *is* such a problem.

A writer in the *Daily Mail* says that the vast majority of the congregations in the Churches consists of old ladies with a sprinkling of old gentlemen. He has overlooked the sprinkling of the very young people, which is charged for at the usual rates.

"That cheap American platitudinarian, Ingersoll." We were rather surprised to see this silly insolence in the *Sunday Chronicle*. Is it due to the Roman Catholic influence on that journal? Anyhow, the writer might try his hand at a few Ingersollian platitudes. Some of us could anticipate the result.

Rev. Hyman Redgrave, vicar of St. Paul's, Burslem, who was found guilty by the chancellor of the diocese, and five assessors, of immoral conduct with Hannah Gater, the twenty-two year old daughter of a potter of Burslem, has been deprived of his living by the Bishop. What hugging, kissing, etc., the reverend gentleman (for he is still that) does in future will no doubt be done less publicly. It is fair to say that the Consistory Court did not go to the length of finding him guilty of adultery, but they declared that there was "the gravest suspicion" of it.

"The birthplace of the novel was the Garden of Eden," says the *Daily Mail*. Freethinkers have always insisted that it was fiction.

The *Daily Mail Year Book* devotes four pages to flying in 1918, and gives records in airmanship. There is no mention of the record trip made by the hero of the Four Gospels.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £274 10s. 1d. Received since:—Mrs. B. Siger, 2s. 6d.; George Lunn, 10s.; One of the Old School, 10s.; Ernest, 2s.; T. Margerston, 5s.; T. W. Hicks, 5s.; N. Jacobson (S. Africa), 17s. 6d. Per N. Jacobson: Barney Kouler (S. Africa), £1 1s.; Jacob Kouler (S. Africa), £1 1s.

B. SIGER.—We have passed over what was meant for Miss Vance. Thanks for good wishes.

AUSTIN RUSSELL.—See paragraph. It is not worth more attention. Thanks.

R. BENNETT.—Three officers, and one person, are quite a new sort of a trinity; and the one appointing them all, including himself, who is two, railing at the N. S. S., with its representative Executive and Annual Conference, as a wicked autocracy, is certainly, as you say, an extraordinary joke. The thing itself has been dead, buried, and resurrected more times than Lazarus.

GEORGE LUNN.—Pleased you think this journal gets better as it gets older; also that you speak so highly of our colleagues' contributions as well as our own. We should relish no praise in which they were not included. Your connection with the Freethought movement dates from 1876. It is a good spell of time. Our own is even longer. We smile sometimes at the thought that we have been speaking and writing for Freethought ever since 1869—nearly forty five years, with the exception of the one year that we were fastened up by the Philistines—With regard to your question, you appear to want an encyclopædia rather than a dictionary. But good encyclopædias are expensive, and bad ones are worthless. We should say that Chambers' large single-volume Dictionary is about as good as you could obtain.

C. J. P.—We were present too at the Shelley Society meeting you refer to. As a matter of fact, we opened the discussion, and can corroborate your statement as to Mr. Shaw's declaration. Thanks for the Brough extract. Is your new address the permanent one?

S. V. G.—Much obliged, but we will not pursue the matter, at least as far as the family are concerned.

R. H. ROSETTI.—See paragraph. Thanks.

E. B.—Much obliged for cuttings.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks.

ETHEL BRADY.—We answered your question before. The writer is unable to help you in locating the reference. We may as well state, with regard to one passage in your letter, that Mr. Foote does not write pseudonymous articles in the *Freethinker*—or anywhere else, for that matter. Neither is he in any way connected with the other journal you mention. We cannot answer letters like yours by post.

ERNEST.—The matter is being inquired into.

OLD FREETHINKER (Barnsley).—We are fully acquainted with all the facts you refer to, and they may have to be faced later on. But you are mistaken in supposing that Stewart has any connection whatever with the N. S. S., nor should his record, whatever it is, stand in the way of the strongest opposition to his prosecution and imprisonment for "blasphemy." What we do is always thought out, and there is sure to be a lot to be said for it.

N. JACOBSON (S. Africa).—Thanks for your successful efforts to promote the President's Honorarium Fund. The annual subscription to the journal is placed to your credit.

WILLIAM OWEN.—All right. The difference is slender, and your date is booked.

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

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

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's two Sunday evening lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall have been gratifyingly successful. The first audience was very good, and the second was considerably better,—in fact, it frightened the little boy that Mr. Foote "named" (Raymond William Newman), who looked upon that sea of faces, and then upon the "namer's" mouth, and proceeded to open his own. But things went a bit smoother when he got hold of a beard with one hand and an eyeglass chain with the other. It is pleasant to add that the fine audience included a really large proportion of ladies. Their faces are more mobile than men's, and it is encouraging to see their appreciation of a good point or their recognition of a good joke. Besides, they represent the future through their maternity,—for the mother means the children in the long run; and when Mr. Foote has so many ladies listening

to him he says to himself, alluding to the priests, "Now we are getting at you. We are spoiling your abominable business at its source." But to return to the lecture. Mr. Foote felt in excellent form, and the meeting appreciated the fact, judging by the laughter and applause, and by the way in which his answers to an uncommon number of questions were cheered. Mr. Jones made a capital chairman, and we are glad to hear that his announcement of Mr. Walsh's pamphlet cleared out every copy on the bookstall—and would have cleared out many more.

By a process of exhaustion the conclusion reached with regard to Queen's Hall is that regular Sunday evening Freethought meetings there will always be too expensive. Mr. Foote's two recent meetings have been eminently successful, the second being some twenty-five per cent. larger than the first. But after another lecture or two the cost begins to tell—not upon the business of management, but upon the pockets of the audience. The audience is drawn from all parts of Greater London, and the total expense of travelling, refreshment, and the price of a seat, may easily reach 2s. or 2s. 6d.—and more than that if a man brings his wife or daughter, or other persons in whom he may be interested, with him to the lecture. Few can afford this Sunday after Sunday, so that only a percentage of the potential Freethought audience manages to reach Queen's Hall on any particular evening,—a rally taking place only when there is something special.

Mr. Foote's friends throughout the country will be glad of the assurance that his general health is a good deal improved. The proceedings at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening lasted nearly two hours, and what with the lecture and the answers to questions he must have been on his legs for quite an hour and a half; but he was not particularly tired at the end, and his voice gave him no trouble at all. And though he had to travel before the meeting and travel after it—leaving home at 4.15 and arriving there again at 12.15—he was no worse than just a little flat on the Monday morning.

Thanks are due to the *Star* (London) for its friendly announcement of Mr. Foote's lecture on "Shaw Amongst the Prophets." It was a gleam of light in the darkness of the press conspiracy of silence against the President of the National Secular Society.

Mr. Cohen lectured to an excellent audience at the Leicester Secular Hall on Sunday evening. We are glad to hear that this deserving institution is maintaining its own so well in the midst of multiplying counter attractions.

The conclusion of our article on "Benedict Spinoza" stands over until next week. It is in type, but cannot be fitted into this week's make-up.

We are not adding much to what we wrote last week on "The 'Blasphemy' Case." What we desire to say for the present is contained in this paragraph. First of all, we wish to correct the idea that going to prison is the way to abolish the Blasphemy Laws. It simply whets the orthodox appetite for more victims. It was not our own imprisonment in 1883, but the defence we made, happily before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, that stopped "blasphemy" prosecutions for twenty-five years. Unfortunately the men attacked now are incapable of making a proper defence. No doubt that is why they are attacked. What is wanted, we repeat, is to frustrate every application of the Blasphemy Laws by rendering a conviction extremely difficult, if not impossible. That is the only way. With regard to the Stewart case itself, there should have been a concerted meeting of protest in London and the case should have been carried to the Court of Appeal. Both proceedings would have been simple enough; the latter might have succeeded,—at any rate, it would have meant a splendid advertisement for the cause of "repeal." But as Stewart apparently chose to leave his case in utterly incompetent hands, everybody else was rendered helpless for want of a status in the matter. In a soft moment—all of us have such—we signed the "Humble Petition" got up so rapidly by the Rationalist Press Association; and if such documents were any good the names upon it should have secured Stewart's immediate release; but as it is nothing has occurred up to the present—just as we expected.

The Inverness Library Committee has decided, though only by the narrow majority of 7 to 6, to open the reading-room during certain hours on Sunday. All the stock arguments were used against it in the discussion, including that hardy veteran "the thin end of the wedge." We are glad to note that the lady members voted with the majority.

The Story of the Squirrel.

THE common European squirrel is one of the most interesting and attractive of our native animals. It is a sharp-toothed, active creature, provided with a tail very nearly as long as its body. From the tip of its nose to the base of its tail the average sized squirrel measures just over eight inches, while its caudal appendage from its base to its termination measures seven inches. The tail is remarkably bushy, but the hair is thicker in winter than in the warmer season of the year. When reposing on its hind legs, its appearance is suggestive of that of a miniature kangaroo; but the arched nose and alert eye betoken more intelligence than that well-known Australian animal seems to possess. In company with many other mammals, the color of the squirrel's fur varies considerably with the season's changes. During the dark and dismal winter the rodent's fur becomes of a sombre brown on the head, along the back, and down the middle of the tail, while the sides of its body assume a distinctly grey color. Its limbs vary from bright red to chestnut, and its throat, chest, stomach, and the inner sides of the limbs turn white. Towards the end of April the winter dress is discarded, and in the early summer the frolicsome squirrel darts and leaps in his arboreal habitat in a mantle of bright chestnut, red above and beautiful white below. In winter the dense plumes which adorn the sides of the animal's tail are dark reddish brown, but as the summer advances these plumes incline towards a buff color, and examples are sometimes encountered in August in which the sides of the tail are of the color of cream. The fur of the squirrel is also of economic importance. Russia and Siberia yield six or seven million skins every season, and on the Lena alone, squirrel-trapping is an extensive business. It provides an occupation for large numbers of people, some of the hunters having as many as a thousand snares.

As a rule, squirrels are strictly monogamous and pair for life. They breed once, and occasionally, in exceptional circumstances, twice a year. When the young are expected, a nest is constructed of moss, leaves, dried grass, and similar materials, in a hollow tree or on a forked bough. The nest is provided with a cover to protect the young from the rain. The offspring usually appear in June, and a litter generally consists of four or five; but although the young seem fully able to support themselves by the time they are six or eight weeks' old, they remain with their parents until the following spring. Family quarrels then arise; the children are driven away, and the old animals repair their nest for the coming litter.

When eating, the rodent reclines on its hind legs, with its handsome tail coiled over its back, and grasps its food with its forefeet, or what are practically its hands. Its powers of locomotion are very considerable, as its limbs possess great pliability. When on *terra firma*, it leaps rather than runs, and when it is in its native element among the trees it bounds from bough to bough, its well-proportioned tail aiding its rapid flight as it moves through the air with its outspread limbs.

The squirrel's diet is a varied one. Its chief food is nuts, seeds, and fruit, but it easily accommodates itself to flesh foods, and in the absence of its ordinary nutriment would soon adapt itself to carnivorous habits. In the spring, when nuts are scarcely obtainable, the animal varies its diet of bark and tender leaves by sucking the eggs of thrushes, robins, and wood pigeons, and even devouring the newly hatched birds.

"The squirrel," says Sir Harry Johnston, in his *British Mammals*,

"destroys large quantities of pine cones, and as its attitude towards mankind is very monkey-like and 'cheeky,' it seems to take a pleasure in attacking these pine cones immediately over the head of one who has retired to the forest to paint, or to meditate over a book. In tearing away the segments of the pine cone

to get at the pith of the interior and the seeds, the squirrel showers down these rather moist and sappy fragments on the human being beneath, accompanying this inconvenient action with spitting and swearing sounds, or else conducting this mischievous operation in profound silence, and thereby startling one all the more by raining down unexpectedly a mass of half-chewed debris."*

Where squirrels abound they are regarded with a frosty eye by the forester, who is more concerned with the well-being of his young and struggling trees than with the whimsicalities and æsthetic charms of this destructive rodent. For the squirrel is capable of doing considerable damage to plantations of young trees. The animals tear away the bark and impede the flow of sap, and when this happens to young larches the tops of the trees wither and die. The pretty and playful squirrel is welcome, and more than welcome, to the beech mast, pine cones, acorns, and hedge nuts which he devours; but his destruction of saplings and his growing fondness for the eggs of birds, as well as their young ones, are more serious offences.

But these little shortcomings seem to Sir Harry Johnston to be fully atoned for by the squirrel's undeniable beauty and irresistible fascination. Still, one is inclined to pardon the woodman's anger, and to think that the introduction of this lively rodent into Regent's Park was a grave blunder. To the Londoner, his feathered songsters are much more valuable than squirrels; and the bird's-nesting fraternity among ourselves plunder the nurseries of birds almost everywhere with impunity. The birds of London are to many thousands of people the greatest treasure which our parks contain.

In the autumn the squirrel makes preparation for the impending winter, and gathers together considerable quantities of acorns, hazel nuts, and other nutritious foods. The most surprising places are selected for the granaries, and each pair of animals provides itself with one or more stores. Mr. W. S. Dallas, in speaking of a pair of squirrels kept under observation in a Berkshire garden, referred to the very improvident habits of these animals. They concealed their fruit kernels, horse-chestnuts, crocus-bulbs, potatoes, and other treasures in all sorts of queer places, and then forgot them. When the snow covered the ground, the animals were to be seen scampering about and peering into every nook and cranny to discover their hidden stores. Much of their hoard was buried among the roots of trees and shrubs, and was almost inaccessible when the snow had fallen.

But this detracts very little from the undoubted intelligence of these rodents. All it proves is that they have hardly adapted themselves as yet to an active winter life. It is extremely probable that in quite recent times the hibernating habits of the squirrel were of general occurrence. The animal's skill in cracking and paring nuts has reached a high state of efficiency. When the wild wood-nut is brown and hard, as it becomes when fully ripe, the squirrel makes a circular cut round the shell with his incisor teeth, so that it splits in half and leaves the kernel clear. The nut is then eaten, but every particle of skin is carefully removed before the rodent will deign to devour it.

In the southern counties of England, more especially during the genial winters of the past twenty years, the thrifty hoarding habit has been less and less observed. The squirrel's winter sleeping arrangements have also undergone some modification.

"In bleak districts with a poor food supply during the winter, the squirrel curls itself up in some sheltered hole or cranny in a tree trunk and passes into a torpid condition, only reviving when the sun shines brightly. During these spells of warmer weather in the winter it leaves its hiding-place and searches for hoarded nuts, returning to sleep again after a good meal."

But in the neighborhood of Bournemouth and other southern stations the squirrel is as frequently met with in winter as in summer, particularly where it is fed.

* *British Mammals*, p. 227.

Sir Harry Johnston is not far wrong in thinking that this interesting vertebrate has "all the impudence and much of the fascination of the monkey, whom it imitates also in its wastefulness and its chattering cries." The animal's voice varies considerably; it will give vent to a succession of metallic sounds, which it follows with a rapid series of spitting squeaks. It has a positive passion for indulging in these vocal performances in the presence of the human biped who has invaded its woodland home. At the sight of a man the animal will simulate the greatest indignation, while half mockingly leaping among the branches or running round the trunk of some forest tree. Inquisitive as a monkey, the animal is in reality rather fond of man's society—of course, at a reasonable distance. This is soon made manifest to anyone reading or sketching amid the woodland wilds. The furry rodents will chase one another with the most awful curses, as if they were scornfully indifferent to the presence of so strange an animal as man.

"Then they will affect to be excessively frightened at their own audacity, and hide palpitating round a tree trunk, scrambling round, however, in a minute or two to gaze at you with their large liquid eyes and to spit and swear from their open mouth, with the points of their little brown teeth just showing."

Although it is practically useless to attempt to tame the adult animal, the young are easily domesticated, and are among the most adorable and even affectionate of our pets. The squirrel is one of the most picturesque of our native creatures as it gambols among the boughs, and within reasonable limits it should be cherished and enabled to propagate its kind. Its nest is the best made by any mammal, and, apart from human intervention, it has little to fear save its inveterate enemy, the marten, which is much more powerful, and climbs equally well.

The squirrel is to be found at the present day throughout the entire Palearctic region, from Ireland to Japan and from Northern Italy to Lapland, and its fossil remains have been traced as far back as the Cromer Forest Bed. It has lived in England since the Pleistocene period, and is now abundant everywhere in this country and in the woodland areas of Wales. It is rather scarce in Ireland, and there exists a tradition of its having been introduced there. It has had a chequered career both in Northern England and in Scotland, and, indeed, in the latter country bade fair to become extinct. But with the extensive tree planting in Scotland in the eighteenth century it again spread rapidly, and is now by some regarded as a positive nuisance.

Probably as late as a century ago it was quite unknown in the Lake Districts, but is now fairly abundant through Cumberland and Westmoreland. It appears to have been a common animal throughout the Scandinavian peninsula since the advent of man. In the Northern mythology the squirrel appears as the messenger of the gods, who carried to the other animals the news of the world's doings.

Extinct members of the squirrel family are fairly numerous. The genus *Sciurus*, to which the animal belongs, is an ancient mammalian form. Its fossil remains have been found in the Miocene and even in the Upper Eocene formations of Europe.

T. F. PALMER.

Angels of Dispeace.

MILITANT Atheism is dead. Publicly we are informed of its decease; but privately the informers know and say that it is energetically alive.

The compartment was occupied by four pastors and myself. Being unprepossessing in appearance, the black-froked gentlemen did not deign to notice me. My presence was insignificant. They were well-fed, very respectable representatives of the cloth; and the miner who looked through the window, grimaced, spat, and passed on. Obviously,

he did not envy them their cigars; but he might have concealed his contempt just a little. His uncultured rudeness removed him a degree farther from Paradise.

Conversation at first ran along trivial lines. They interchanged pastoral confidences, sympathised with each other, enjoyed the human weakness of airing grievances, and spoke without restraint concerning the things of their hearts. But their hearts were empty of God, or their mouths would have been full of him.

One does not like to be too severe; but commandments *are* commandments. Pastors will tell you that because certain commandments came from the Lord God, they are even something more for which no word is available. Deliberately to disobey the heavenly mandate constitutes a fault that merits the superlative measure of divine wrath, you will be told. Even to allow worldly things, like cigars and confidences, however pleasurable and innocent, to cast the charm of distance upon God is a grievous error. According to pastors, God comes first. He should occupy our thoughts always. We should never lose sight of him. To live the Christ-life should be our all-consuming desire. God must ever be our guiding star, our heavenly flame, our permanent companion, our one hope in this world, our only hope in the next.

No wonder the dirty, ill-clad, unhumanlike miner passed by.

To disobey God is to blaspheme; and where is the Christian who does not blaspheme? Not a day is sent into the past but Christians send with it God and his commandments. The positiveness of the Diety is as a feeble flickering of the last of a weary life compared with the steady glare of the never-absent negativeness of it.

If God is God, if his commandments are to be considered such, then the first people to actualise them should be his earthly apostles, even if it mean breaking every human law, neglecting every human conventionality, disregarding every human instinct, personal and social, and drawing near unto the liberating gates of death itself.

Should God's commandments be limited by custom and environment? Are they not the only thing of importance here, there, anywhere? Has God to take a back seat to human triviality? Must his voice be drowned in the clamor of the commonplace? Perish the thoughts! And then, even if the practice of these imperishable commandments means death, does not death mean the glorious entrance to the home of the blessed and the everlasting life?

In this frame of mind I settled myself behind a paper to listen to the ministerial conversation; and to extract some information from it. One of them bewailed the gradual decrease, within recent years, of the number of attenders at his weekly prayer-meeting. So heart-breaking had the attendance become that he had found it expedient to cancel the meeting altogether. After spending much time in careful study, it was very discouraging to witness the few people who assembled to hear him. ("Where two or three are gathered together," etc.) Another poured oil on the troubled waters by remarking that his morning meeting for young folk had recently been abandoned for the same reason. And so, for a while, the tale went on uninterruptedly. Church membership was falling off; church enterprises were being sadly neglected; interest in the welfare of the church was on the wane; fewer children were to be seen in the Sunday-schools, and fewer people in the pews; and all this despite the carefulness of preparation, the devotion to the work, and the self-sacrifice of ministers.

One of the holy quartet struck rather a pathetic note. His pastorate was in a little mining town. During the last few years a great change had slowly taken place in the attitude of the people to their minister, causing him to suffer much mental anguish. Once he had been the well-beloved shepherd. Now he was only a sheep like them.

selves. No longer was he welcomed at the house doors. In fact, so disagreeably conscious of the "Halloa! here-ye-are-again-damned- nuisance" attitude of the people was he, that he had been forced to forgo visitation for quite some time back. He felt as if something were slipping away from him; as if the dignity of the church were being, if not despised, at least disregarded.

He was perfectly convinced the change had begun after the visit of an agitator, who, apparently, had poisoned the minds of the flock on the matters of religion and churchgoing; and he bitterly resented the intrusion of these free-speaking, bombastic representatives of a quiet, orderly Trades-Unionism.

Another gentleman, who bossed a city church, volunteered the suggestion that they should be pleased they had provincial charges. These things were nothing, absolutely nothing, compared with the awful difficulties with which city ministers had to contend. Agitators! Why there were Atheists actually fighting them at street corners! Picture palaces and secular meetings of all kinds had robbed the Sabbath of all its holiness.

But he didn't get far in his tirade against Secularism; for the meek-looking member of the party interjected something about the Materialism of villages and provincial towns being as great, comparatively, as that of cities nowadays. Gambling, drinking, whippet-racing, and the rest of the people's rough pleasures, were dragged in to support the statement. It was a great wild sea of Materialism, and on the froth of the waves were agitators and Atheists, Angels of Dispeace that they were, as the meek man thought.

It was a meaty bone thrown to starving dogs, except that there was sufficient meat to prevent them bickering over its disposal. After a spate of quite illogical and uninteresting opinions, the unanimous conclusions were that the people were going to the Devil; that only a soul-stirring revival could avert the catastrophe; and—wonder of wonders!—that such a reawakening of religious beliefs was farther off now than ever; that, in fact, it was impossible, owing to the increasing number of agitators and Atheists, and their cheap publications.

Coming from the adversely affected side, this recognition of defeat was interesting. Another step was required to complete the journey. It was left for the meek man to accomplish. After a short silence, he said: "Well, what are we gentlemen doing, or going to do, in the circumstances? Are we going to shirk the bitter end, to be honest or dishonest? Are we to continue telling lessening congregations that the hope of the world is religion, when the hope is hopeless? for that is the position our conversation has led us into. Must we continue making claims for Christianity in the face of an all-powerful Devil? Religion may remain with the individual few; but our conclusions tell us that the Church's day is done. It has become a torn page of history, existing in the book of life because bound with it; and the hands that would ruthlessly tear it out altogether are doing so gradually with stern resolve. What must we do?"

The meek man's questions remained unanswered; for the train stopped, and a ticket-collector entered to save the situation from its awkwardness. The compartment filled up; and from the faces of the meek man's companions I noticed they, at least, were not sorry the conversation had been providentially brought to an end.

There are some men who give of the strength of their minds for the betterment of man, and their reward comes as the bitter-sweet. They are the Angels of Dispeace.

ROBERT MORELAND.

It isn't true that the laws of nature have been capriciously disturbed; that snakes have talked; that women have been turned to salt; that rods have brought water out of rocks. You must in honesty confess that, if these things were presented to us for the first time, we should smile at them.

—Dr. Conan Doyle, "The Stark-Munro Letters," p. 43.

Some Little-Known Freethinkers.

VIII.—DR. THOMAS INMAN.

It was through Myles McSweeney that I became epistolarily acquainted with the author of *Ancient Faiths Embodied in Ancient Names*. Myles recommended me to the Doctor to make some drawings to illustrate his works; and this led to a good deal of frank correspondence, in which the Doctor treated me as one very much older than I then was. All bore on his discoveries of the evidences of phallic worship, which, as is often the case with discoverers, Dr. Inman pressed beyond their real importance. I have since learned that neither McSweeney nor Dr. Inman was original in the detection of phallicism as underlying Christianity. Earlier even than Payne Knight, Higgins, or Dulaure, was a Kabbalist crank in the last century, a Frenchman, whose work on *Les Mystères du Christianisme*, published in 1771, is certainly one of the most curious volumes it has ever been my lot to look into. The Old and the New Testaments, and the seven sacraments of the Romish Church, are interpreted phallically. Dr. Inman had, however, arrived at his view independently, though he doubtless derived some hints from the *Anacalypsis* of Godfrey Higgins. His researches were originally into the meanings of names, and the mere inquiry why John was convertible into Jack led to some extraordinary results.

Dr. Inman was a Liverpool physician of high standing. He was born at Leicester, January 27, 1820, and his father became director of the Bank of Liverpool, and his brother founded the famous shipping firm of that port. Educated at King's College and London University, he took the degrees of B.A. and M.D., settling at Liverpool, where he became lecturer on botany, medical jurisprudence, therapeutics, and the principles and practice of medicine. He was for some time President of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, and was physician to the Royal Infirmary of that city. He wrote several medical works, and his volumes on *The Preservation of Health* and *The Restoration of Health* are still worth reading. Dr. Inman was original-minded in his profession. He published a work, entitled *Foundation for a New Theory of Medicine* (1861), in which he regarded all disease as arising from a deficiency of vital force; and in his treatment he frankly placed dietetics before drugs, which, he pointed out, were chiefly respected because they deranged the vital force. He stated, as the conclusion of his large medical experience, that "the physician could do harm, but that his power for good was limited." But it was chiefly as an archæologist that his Freethought manifested itself. In his principal work, *Ancient Faiths Embodied in Ancient Names*, he examines all the cognomens in the Bible, eliciting many curious facts that lie behind those names, and showing there was no essential difference between the faith of the Hebrews and that of other Semites. Incidentally he notices that the alleged sojourn in Egypt left no evidence of having modified Israelitish languages, names, or faith. He held that Biblical testimony itself disproved the story of the sojourn in Egypt.

In my essay on "Phallic Worship Among the Jews," in *Bible Studies*, I have given my opinion on the views of Dr. Inman more fully than is possible here; and I shall therefore at once pass to his less known Freethought work, *Ancient Faiths and Modern*, which was published at New York, though printed at Edinburgh, in the year of his death (1876). In the preface he tells how he came to doubt the nostrums both of physical and spiritual doctors. He says:—

"The physician, when professing to cure, has too often assisted disease to kill; and he who has the cure of souls has invented plans to make believers in his doctrine miserable. The first fills his coffers proportionately to the extent to which he can protract recovery; the second becomes rich in proportion to the success with which he multiplies mental terrors, and then sells repose. The one enfeebles the body, the other cripples the intellect, and aggravates envy, hatred, and malice."

On examination, he says:—

"I found that in every nation there have been, and still are, good men and bad, gentle and brutal, thoughtful and ignorant; that the best men of Paganism—Buddha, for example—did not lose by comparison with the brightest lights of Christianity; and that such large cities as London and Paris have as much vice within them as ancient Rome or modern Calcutta. I found, moreover, that there is a culpable coloring in the accounts given by Christian travellers of Pagan countries. The clerical pen rests invariably and strongly upon the bad points of every heathen cult, and contrasts them with the best elements of Christianity."

Dr. Inman entered considerably into the question of the rival merits of Christianity and Buddhism, and gave his preference to the latter as a non-perscuting system, and as containing no obscene stories such as those of the Bible. He says:—

"If we now ask ourselves what parts of the Bible most offend the sense of propriety, we should answer that they

are its untenable cosmogony; its preposterous accounts of the longevity of the men reported as being the earliest formed; the legend of the flood; the origin of the rainbow; the tales of Moses, Pharaoh, the plagues of Egypt, the sojourn in the desert, the capture of Canaan, the miraculous battles. We would wholly expunge the fabulous account of Elijah and Elisha; the ravings after vengeance uttered by the prophets; the apocryphal episodes described in the books of Jonah and Daniel; every obscene story and disgusting speech or writing, whether uttered as a threat against Israel or his enemies. In like manner, we would wish to expunge from the teaching of Jesus everything relating to the immediate destruction of the world, everything connected with community of goods, the advantages of beggary, and the potency of faith and prayer. We would suppress every miracle, and say nothing of a resurrection of the dead Jesus. We would equally abandon any attempt to describe Heaven or Hell or any immediate state. When all these were removed from the Bible, we positively should have very little left, except a certain amount of morality which is sound, and a large portion which is radically bad."

Ancient Faiths and Modern, like all of Dr. Inman's works, abounds in a variety of learning culled from all quarters. He concludes the book with a challenge to the champions of orthodoxy. He says:—

"I defy scholars to prove that the Israelites were ever, as a body, in Egypt; that they were delivered therefrom by Moses; that the people wandered during forty years 'in the desert,' received a code of laws from Jehovah on Sinai, and were, in any sense whatever of the words, 'the chosen people of God.'

"I assert that the whole history of the Old Testament is untrue, with the exception of a few parts which tell of unimportant events—e. g., it is probable that the Jews fought with their neighbors, as the Swiss have done in modern days; but I do not believe the tale about Samson, any more than that of William Tell.

"I assert that there is not a single true prophecy in the whole Bible which can be proved to have been written before the event to which it is assumed to point, or which is superior, in any way, to the oracles delivered in various ancient lands.

"I assert that the whole of what is called the Mosaic law had no existence in the days of David, Solomon, and the early Hebrew chieftains or kings, if they are thought to deserve the title."

This was plain and to the point, and I am not aware of any orthodox champion who has successfully taken up his challenge on these topics.

In 1871 Dr. Inman retired from practice, and resided at Clifton, near Bristol, where he died on May 3, 1876. He was a man of handsome presence, and his genial temperament made him generally popular, despite his outspoken heresy. His antiquarian works will long hold a distinguished place in the cabinets of the curious.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

"Shaw Among the Prophets."

MR. BERNARD SHAW has often been witty at the expense of other people, but he has never been exposed to such a fusillade of wit as at the meeting on Sunday at the Queen's Hall, London, when Mr. G. W. Foote lectured on "Shaw Among the Prophets."

Mr. Collette Jones presided, and prior to the address Mr. Foote performed the pleasing ceremony of naming Raymond William Newman, the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Newman, who were both present.

The lecture, which dealt with Mr. Shaw's opinions on religion, was in Mr. Foote's happiest vein. It was, the lecturer said, to be regarded as a polite duel, and not so bad as a match at the National Sporting Club. Mr. Shaw was a wit and humorist, and must make allowance for the possibility of those faculties in other persons.

In the old days of the Shelley Society—which Mr. Foote said was defunct, but Shelley was not—Mr. Shaw declared himself a Republican, a Vegetarian, and an Atheist; a proceeding which nearly broke up the society. When *Man and Superman* was published in 1903, he was still an Atheist.

In the following ten years, however, he had become more orthodox on the subject of marriage and religion. The import of *Man and Superman* was that we shall never have real progress in the world until we breed the right kind of children. We come from lowly origin, and our object should be to breed only what is human, and to leave the tigerish element behind. The present habit of allowing lunatics on holiday to increase the population was wicked. If the Bishop of London wanted to marry, he would say to him, My dear sir, don't.

Mr. Shaw regarded *Man and Superman* as a Bible, a six-penny book of religion; but this was not a new idea, for more than a hundred years before Thomas Paine wrote a sixpenny book on religion. In Mr. Shaw's lecture on "Modern Religion" he seemed to have a poor idea of any

other religion than his own, which was a characteristic of pious people generally—say, for instance, the Christians in Belfast, who without religion would be a happy family. Mr. Shaw also contended that men must have a religion if they were to do anything; and religion just meant having convictions and being in earnest about them; so the question to ask was, whether a man was serious? Fancy Mr. Shaw asking such a question.

Mr. Shaw stated that he was very active in preventing people baiting Bradlaugh in the days of the Parliamentary struggle. But Bradlaugh was first elected in 1880, and at that time Mr. Shaw was a youth. He did not become prominent until the nineties. Mr. Shaw says he has never been a Materialist, but this is a quarrel over words. Bradlaugh himself was a Monist. Mr. Shaw says that he went to the Hall of Science after Bradlaugh's death, when the Secularists were looking for another leader, and his address there threw the audience into transports of rage. But this was not the case, for Mr. Shaw was merely invited to lecture to fill a vacancy on the platform. Mr. Bradlaugh was recently dead, Mrs. Besant was chasing will-o'-the-wisps, Mr. Symes was in Australia, Mr. Collins in New Zealand, and Mr. Aveling had taken up with Socialism.

Mr. Shaw contended that he was religious, and says he believes in the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Trinity; but, unless he meant what the Christians do, he was merely playing with words. The Rev. R. J. Campbell appears to have converted Mr. Shaw to the view that Jesus had actually existed, whereas modern scholarship showed that the Christ of the Gospels had no more real existence than the Knights of the Round Table or William Tell.

Mr. Shaw was severe on the Methodists, and had a great hatred of the doctrine of the Atonement, but there was nothing novel in this, for Thomas Paine was ashamed of it at eight years of age, and all decent people had left it behind.

Mr. Shaw claimed that he had taken out his watch and challenged the Deity to strike him dead. People had stated that they had actually seen Bradlaugh do the same thing. God never did it, nor did Bradlaugh, for he was not an ass. If Mr. Shaw ever did it, he was more foolish than he has ever been taken for. Mr. Shaw admits his deity has no existence, for he says his god is only coming into existence. Sir Oliver Lodge says the same thing in other words. He says to the Deity, "Don't despair. Help is coming—from Birmingham."

Mr. Shaw says he is a mystic—that is, a man in a mist—"the most unkindest cut of all." There is something impish in his genius. There is no new religion, for superstition is as old as man's ignorance, solid as his credulity, and lasting as his weakness. Aro we to think that this new profession is the result of keeping bad company at the City Temple? Or is it the result of caring more for the applause of society than for the welfare of ordinary men?

C. E. S.

Obituary.

We regret to record the death of Mr. Alfred Clarke, of Birmingham, at the age of sixty-two. He was an old friend of ours, and a close friend of the late Mr. Horace W. Parsons. They used to attend our Birmingham lectures together, and it was usual for them to spend some time with us at our hotel when we visited the city for the purpose of the Town Hall meetings. Mr. Clarke called on us the last time we lectured there. He was suffering from an internal complaint, and he did not expect to meet us again. His death took place at Selby Oak Infirmary, and his relatives gave him a Christian burial, though it is difficult to believe they did not know that this was against his wishes. They even followed it up with a pious mourning card, which would be a source of amusement to him if he could read it. Mr. Clarke's resources were sadly diminished by long illness and indifferent business (he was a dentist), but what little is left is willed to the Freethought movement.—G. W. F.

With dramatic suddenness Mr. Walter Russell Juler, whose account of his friend Cossey's death appeared in these columns only a few weeks ago, died, in his fifty-eight year, at his residence, 10 Locomotive-terrace, Todhills, near Willington, Durham, on the 10th inst. Mr. Juler was an enthusiastic convert, and a warm-hearted admirer of Mr. G. W. Foote and the *Freethinker*. The remains were interred in the presence of his sorrowing family, his fellow-workmen, and a few representative Secularists from Newcastle and South Shields, at Newfield Churchyard, on Saturday, December 13. Mr. Juler's decease is a decided loss to the Freethought movement in Bishop Auckland district, where he was an active and zealous worker for the cause.—R. C.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, R. H. Rosetti, "Bible Blunders."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.45, W. Davidson, "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, A. Aladin, "Man—His Creative Powers and His Dreams."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): E. Morris Young, 3, "Necessity the Key to Progress"; 6.30, "Religions Drawback to Progress." Tea at 5.

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