

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

If we had done as the kings told us, we would all have been slaves. If we had done as the priests told us, we would all have been idiots. If we had done as the doctors told us, we would all have been dead.

—R. G. INGERSOLL.

Who Made God?

WHATEVER "blasphemy" there is in this question does not belong to us. It belongs to Mr. Booth-Clibborn, one of the great Booth family, though only by marriage. We once saw it at the top of one of his lecture posters.

When the good Christians hear that explanation their anger will cool down. The Blasphemy Laws were intended to prevent "infidels" from making Christianity ridiculous; Christians may make it as ridiculous as they please—and it must be allowed that their efforts are crowned with considerable success.

We remember what happened at our trial for "blasphemy" before Mr. Justice North, at the Old Bailey, more than thirty years ago. (Lord, how the time flies!) We made a long list, which was published in the report of our trial, of the vituperative epithets that Christians applied to each other during the controversy between Catholics and Protestants at the time of what is called the Reformation. It was a tremendous list in every way, and would really be useful to political opponents in the approaching elections. Nothing was omitted that Christian charity could prompt or pious ingenuity suggest. It constituted a perfect debater's slang dictionary. No wonder the judge looked half-mad when we presented those flowers of religious courtesy to the jury; especially when we suggested that anything complained of in the pages of the *Freethinker* was but a poor and feeble imitation of orthodox achievements. But the judge lost his temper entirely when we proceeded to show that the "blasphemy" in our indictment was pale and vapid in comparison with the red and pungent samples we culled from recent numbers of the *War Cry*.

Mr. Booth-Clibborn, having been a Salvationist, and being now "on his own" in the same line of business, is a licensed "blasphemer." If he were an "infidel" the authorities would soon be down upon him. The question at the top of his poster caused a terrible rumpus at Birmingham some years ago. The Secularists were holding Sunday evening meetings in the Bristol-street Board School, and one of their lecturers dealt with the question, "Did God make Man, or did Man make God?" This awful query stirred Birmingham to the very depths. The School Board turned the Secularists out of the building they had profaned. Letters and articles appeared in the local newspapers. There was Hades to pay. Yet the pious Mr. Booth-Clibborn puts "Who Made God?" on a poster in a little strait-laced, clergy-ridden town, and not a dog barks at it. The policeman looks at it and passes on as if it were "Aladdin" or the "Forty Thieves."

We do not deny that Mr. Booth-Clibborn's question is a very sensible one. We are also prepared to say that it admits of an answer.

There is a text in the Bible story of Creation
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which runs thus:—

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

The grammar is mixed, but the meaning is clear. God made mankind male and female. That was the ancient idea. But a great deal has been learnt since then, and the modern idea is very different. The declaration of primitive ignorance has to be read upside down in the light of present knowledge. Man thought that God made him. He could not think otherwise. It was the only way of explaining how he came here. And the guess of ignorance satisfied him while he remained ignorant. But he is better instructed now; having investigated and discovered, he has no more use for guesses; he accepts the teachings of Evolution; he knows that the world came, and all that is in it, including himself, in a perfectly natural way; and the more he studies Evolution the more he suspects, or actually perceives, that God did not make him, but that he made God. The old text, therefore, will eventually read in the true Revised Version of the Bible:—

"So man created God in his own image, in the image of man created he him; male and female created he them."

Yes, *them*. For the world has been populous with gods. Down in Egypt, which Spenser so finely called the motherland of superstition, a Greek wit said that it was often easier to find a god than a man. There were gods of every aspect of nature; gods of the sky, gods of the stars, gods of the mountains, gods of the woods, gods of the rivers, and gods of the seas. Lastly, there were gods of every aspect of human nature; as in the splendid Greek pantheon, with its Mars, the god of war—Apollo, the god of light and song—Juno, the goddess of marriage—Venus, the goddess of beauty—and Cupid, the god of love, who is blind because love is blind, and winged because love is swift, and eternally young because love is always young; for time touches all else, but love it cannot touch, and the fragrance of youthful days still linger in old hearts, and when the passions have burnt themselves out the light of affection gleams in aged eyes, whose possessors are tottering down the hill they once climbed together, and will soon be sleeping together at its foot. Yes, love is youth; we are young to the extent that it remains with us; and without it we are dead, though we are not buried.

The one God of monotheism is no more an actual existence than whiteness or virtue is an actual existence. Whiteness and virtue are general terms, denoting qualities common to many objects and actions. God is also a general term, denoting certain qualities common to the multitudes of deities of all ages and climes. We may change the illustration, and say that it is crude supernaturalism refined to the last degree. Supernatural beings have disappeared, and left behind them the conception of supernatural personality. Nature is no longer mapped out in separate provinces; man recognises that it is one and indivisible; consequently the mob of rival gods become incredible; man drops them out of his mind, and accepts one great God in their place. Religion teaches him nothing; his religion is always modified by his growing knowledge, and purified by his growing morality.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christmas Cant.

FOR publishing reasons this article is written before Christmas, although it will not be in the reader's hands until the holiday is over. It is not, however, necessary for one to wait until the Christmas holiday is done in order to find out what kind of sermon will be delivered in thousands of Christian pulpits concerning the meaning and influence of Christmas. There will be all the customary verbiage about "glad tidings of great joy," of the wonderful Christmas dawn at Bethlehem, of the profound moral influence exerted by Christianity upon the world, and of the degree to which it has fostered love and brotherhood among men. All these things will be looked for much as children used to look for the clown's "Here we are again!" and will be accepted without question because they are just part and parcel of the religious entertainment. Everything will be dwelt on except the one pregnant fact that Christmas was a Pagan festival long before it was a heathen one, that it is part of a very widespread nature-worship, and that it has no more to do with the birth of a Jewish child at Bethlehem than it has to do with the cultivation of cabbages.

Christmas—to use the name of this ancient festival—was always a season of rejoicing; it was left for Christianity to convert it into a saturnalia of cant. Disregarding historic fact and present circumstances, the familiar shibboleths are repeated just as though their veracity were beyond question. And, with senses dulled by the narcotising influence of tradition, people hear them with only here and there a faint feeling that the history and influence of Christianity may be open to a different interpretation from that usually given. The cant of the pew re-echoes the cant of the pulpit. From the church it is carried into the outside world; and the church, far from being a centre of enlightenment and good fellowship thus becomes one of the chief centres from which radiates ill-feeling, misrepresentation, and opposition to genuine enlightenment.

The charge is sweeping, but not difficult to substantiate. Christianity has had an official existence of over fifteen hundred years. During that time it has wielded tremendous power, enjoyed unique social influence, had at its command almost fabulous wealth. No other system has ever had such opportunities for moulding the world to its desires, and with what result? Comparing the Christian world of to-day with the Pagan world of antiquity, what do we see? It is claimed that the world of to-day is the better of the two. Let it pass as such, although a great deal might be said on the other side. Fifteen hundred years is a long while; and as progress is not a Christian invention, is there not reason for assuming that the world would have grown better had Christianity never appeared? Instead of talking like an ignorant pulpiter, let us apply another test. Taking the art, the science, the literature, the social life of antiquity, with the capacity for development latent in human nature, allowing for all these factors, are we so much more advanced than the peoples of antiquity that normal human forces cannot account for the difference? Not what we are, but what we might have been; not whether we have improved, but how much have we improved, are the questions by which the influence of Christianity must be tested.

Tried by that test, Christianity stands fairly condemned. Christmas Day, instead of the anniversary of a beneficent event, becomes that of the greatest disaster that ever overtook the civilised world. For a thousand years Christianity rode roughshod over the learning, the science, the culture of the ancient world. This might have been forgiven had it possessed an art or culture of its own. But it had none. Literature was replaced by monkish legends, social activities by religious exercises, medical science by miracle cures, the conception of this life as an end in itself by that of the world as a halting-place on a long pilgrimage, during which man showed his

greatness by ignoring its beauties and trampling on its pleasures. The period of Christianity's unquestioned rule represents so much time lost to the world's progress. It is a blank over which the progressive tendencies of the Renaissance reached to affiliate with the suppressed life of pre-Christian times. For the last five hundred years the story of European progress has largely been the story of an attempt, more or less successful, to throw off the cramping clutch of the Christian Church. First directed against the Catholic Church, then against this or that section of the Protestant Church, then against the general influence of Christianity itself. But always there has been the recognition—more or less conscious as enlightenment was more or less complete—that organised Christianity must be kept firmly in check if progress was to be permanent and its results conserved.

What amount of goodwill did Christianity bring into the world? It talked much about love and brotherhood; it still talks much about them. Parsons slobber about love in the pulpit, and journalists write columns on the same topic in the religious press. Again, what are the facts? In the very earliest notices we get of Christian communities, we find the qualities of slander, ill-feeling, and hatred to the front. It is found even in the pages of the New Testament. It accompanies Christianity right through the ages; it is strong in current Christianity. Listen to the members of one denomination attacking another, and then reflect how much encouragement is given to good-fellowship by Christian belief. Why, it is chronicled as a great achievement when members of different denominations stand on the same platform on behalf of some common purpose. The mere sight of Christians belonging to different sects fraternising arouses astonishment—and more cant about the power of Christian love.

More than this, the rancor awakened by religious feelings is the bitterest of all. People will sink their differences on all other topics sooner than they will on religion. In every other direction a man will minimise his dislike, and take it as something of which he ought to feel ashamed. In religion alone he counts his hatred as a virtue, and feeds it diligently. In all civilised society there is no force so divisive and so disruptive as religion. In Ireland this remains true, whether we take the side of the Catholic or that of the Protestant. In either case, we see how it is religion, and religion alone, that prevents two bodies working amicably together, and each confesses that it is the religion of the other which is the cause of their separateness. And both talk with equal glibness about the religion of love.

The cant of it all! And the strangest fact of all is that the failure of Christianity is admitted by Christians even in the very act of glorifying their creed. When preaching their "purity crusade," the Bishop of London and his colleagues draw pictures of Christian London such as few other cities in the world's history could produce. If one were to be guided by these pornographic moralists, one would have to believe that every girl who ventures abroad without a sturdy male relative runs the greatest possible risk of abuse, and that sexual immorality in all its worst forms flourishes with us almost unchecked. Of course, these clerical diatribes are full of gross exaggeration, but things are bad enough in all truth. And, being bad enough, what becomes of the boasted influence of the Christian faith? Surely, by this time, a religion such as it is claimed Christianity is, and controlling, as it has done, whole generations from the cradle to the grave, ought to have completely moralised the social medium. And now they are crying out for the policeman to step in and save our women folk from disaster. Could any other system, after so many centuries of rule, chronicle a more disastrous failure?

Not only good will, but peace. Christian peace, when all over the civilised world it is the Christian Powers, Christian greed, and Christian bad faith that provides the occasion for nine-tenths of the world's wars and the insane competition in arma-

ments. What nation of pre-Christian times could compete with Christian countries of to-day, allowing for all corrections due to difference of time and situation? Where, in pre-Christian times, would there be found highly organised corporations engaged in fanning war and talk of war for the mere purpose of financial gain? And how could this be unless there existed a vast mass of uncivilised feeling to which these war-mongers could appeal? Christian Europe forced non-Christian Japan into militarist channels, and it is forcing non-Christian China along the same road. It has compelled Turkey to devote its main energies to militarist preparations if it would be secure against Christian greed and bad faith. Every Christian nation openly proclaims that nothing save huge armies and enormous fleets will induce other Christian nations to act honestly or to respect treaties. Every Christian nation is groaning under the burden of armaments, while Christian leaders assure us that things will have to become worse before they can get better. And these same people have the insolence to talk about "Peace on earth and good will to all men"!

Let it be granted that all this, with the poverty, the misery, the vice, and the crime of present-day existence, has not resulted from Christianity. The pulpit legend is that Christianity brought peace, and brotherhood, and good will, and love to bear upon all human relations, and so moralised life. Where are the proofs? Has there ever been a time when even preachers have not lamented the presence of all manner of evils, and the fact that Christianity failed to make society, as a whole, better? Christianity, if it did not induce these evils, did not remove them. That is the solid fact, shirked by all religious controversialists, and the one fact that completely demolishes Christian claims.

As a matter of sober truth, Christianity did encourage the persistence of all the social evils concerning which complaints are raised. It diverted social energies and perverted the social consciousness. It dulled men's sense of social claims in order to strengthen those of religious obligation. The whole history of Christianity has been that of an exploitation of man's social nature in the interests of supernaturalism. If to-day the clergy are adopting another tone, it is only because the social forces are too strong for them, and, in spite of suppression and distortion, can no longer be denied. And there should be no mistaking the significance that all over Europe earnest workers in the cause of reform—no matter by what name they may call themselves—are at one in claiming that this world and this life must come first, and that religion itself must be tried by the test of how far it promotes human happiness here. Man has been long enough judged by the standard of how far he pleased God; it is now the turn of the gods to be tried by the test of how far they please man.

So far as the Christmas of 1913 has a helpful message, it is this. Peace on earth and good will to all men is what we all need. But it will never come until we clear our minds of superstition and our mouths of cant, and judge life from the standpoint of a rationalised humanity.

C. COHEN.

Man's Descent from the Ape.

BETWEEN theology and science there is an impassable gulf. It is true that many theologians accept the conclusions of science, but they inevitably do so at the expense of mutilating their theology. The theory of evolution, for example, flatly contradicts the doctrine of creation; but the doctrine of creation is a fundamental article in the Christian creed, and no one can renounce it without rendering the Gospel simply ridiculous. If Darwinism is true Christianity is founded upon a lie. When a clergyman rejects evolution, therefore, he pursues the only consistent policy: he only becomes foolish when he attempts to disprove it. We are bound to respect those divines

whose faith in their system is so strong that they positively refuse to have anything whatever to do with science; but there are a few whom we cannot but despise, not because they are anti-scientists, but because they have the temerity, while defending their own faith, to bitterly and ignorantly attack that of the scientists. The Rev. Canon Digby Berry is a well-known Christian apologist who, at one time, won great distinction as such in Australia. About a month ago, he preached a remarkable sermon in Christ Church, Johannesburg, which was afterwards published, on "The Supposed Animal Origin of Man." Having carefully perused it, a necessity is laid upon us to declare that its attack upon Darwinism is distinguished only for its utter fatuity. Canon Berry accuses evolutionists of passing over "in silence those immense differences between man and all other animals, those impassable chasms, which suggest most forcibly that man, though he has an animal nature, has also another nature absolutely distinct from that of all other animals." There is in this charge an element of deliberate disingenuousness. So far are scientists from passing over in silence the enormous differences between man and all other animals that they expatiate upon them with marked emphasis. Huxley refers to them again and again in his well-known masterpiece, *Man's Place in Nature*; but he also calls attention to the fact "that the structural differences which separate Man from the Gorilla and the Chimpanzee are not so great as those which separate the Gorilla from the lower apes." Now, we charge the Canon with passing over in silence the resemblances between man and the anthropoid ape. The skeleton in both is composed of two hundred bones. They both possess the same hair covering the skin, the same mammary glands providing food for the young, the same four-chambered heart, the same reproductive organs, and the same brain-structure. As Huxley says, "Whatever organ we take, the differences between man and the anthropoid apes are slighter than the corresponding difference between the latter and the lower apes."

Canon Berry has, therefore, no right whatever to call the differences between man and the apes "impassable chasms," or to jump to the conclusion that because of them man has "a nature absolutely distinct from that of all other animals." He might as well say that the anthropoid ape has a nature absolutely distinct from that of all the lower apes. The truth is that the differences cannot reasonably be advanced as objections to the evolutionary theory, while the similarities are wholly inexplicable on the special-creation hypothesis. Furthermore, the differences between civilised and educated man and a raw savage are greater than those between the lowest man and the highest ape. Discussing the important matter of cranial capacity, Huxley says:—

"After making due allowance for difference of size, the cranial capacities of some of the lower apes fall nearly as much, relatively, below those of the higher apes as the latter fall below man. Thus, men differ more widely from one another than they do from the apes; while the lowest apes differ as much, in proportion, from the highest as the latter does from man" (*Man's Place in Nature*, pp. 54, 55).

Canon Berry does not understand what the theory of evolution really means, his definition of it being as fallacious as it can be. Referring to the question of priority between the hen and the egg, he says:—

"Now if you choose to assume that because the full-grown hen develops from the egg, therefore the whole race of hens has developed from an egg, and that that egg had no hen for its parent, you must not expect me to believe this without proof."

No one with the most elementary knowledge of Darwin's teaching could put the case against it in so crude and erroneous a manner. Is not Canon Berry aware that the simplest living form known to us is unicellular, and that every individual living thing, including man, begins life as a single cell which multiplies into two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and so on, until there is an innumerable

host of nucleated cells? If he is, his argument against evolution is infinitely absurd; if he is not, he has no right to talk on the subject.

Equally unfortunate is his allusion to the fact that "the body of the human being before birth passes through such a series of transformations that it belongs in turn to every family of animals on earth." This is an extremely faulty statement of the repetition or recapitulation doctrine, of the truth of which there can be no doubt. The truth is that the human embryo has to retravel the road followed by the embryos of its ancestors. Even Canon Berry has not the hardihood to deny this truth; but his inference is, not that man has descended from the animals, but that God created him to be the head and the shepherd of the terrestrial creation. "Is it not therefore quite natural," he asks, "that the Creator should have made man the flesh and blood relation of all those creatures whose shepherd he was to be?" We regard that question as the most foolish that could be asked, and certainly it suggests no explanation whatever of the fact that the development of the human embryo is a shortened recapitulation of the evolution of animal embryos.

It is now a truism that both in plants and animals there are minute and practically useless representatives of organs which are highly developed and of direct service in other forms. There are many vestigial structures in the human body, such as remnants of the muscles by means of which animals twitch their skin, move their scalps up and down, and draw the whole ear backwards and forwards at will, and such as the third eyelid, gill-arches, and the vermiform appendix. Canon Berry observes that "if it is true that there are useless organs in the human body, this, on the special creation hypothesis, would imply that mere utility, mere usefulness to the individual, is not the only principle followed in the construction of man's body." The Canon is inclined, however, to deny the existence of such organs. He admits that there are organs, the use of which we do not yet know, but contends that our ignorance is no proof of their uselessness. We much prefer to take the testimony of people who have made the human body a special study, which is that "our own body is a veritable museum of relics."

Canon Berry falls back upon two men of science as his authorities in the denial of man's animal origin, namely, the late Professor Rudolph Virchow, of Berlin, and the late Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace; but they are both authorities utterly discredited by the biologists of to-day. Dr. Wallace was a thoroughgoing evolutionist on all points except the origin of mind, while Virchow rejected evolution entirely in its application to man. Now, on what evidence does the reverend Canon deny the evolution of man? On no evidence whatsoever beyond the fact that the Genesis story of creation has been before the world for twenty-five centuries at the very least, and probably for fifty centuries, whereas the theory of evolution was invented only a few years ago. He hinted that if he were lecturing instead of preaching he would have offered his hearers a great deal more evidence; but we doubt it, as in the sermon he offers no evidence at all. To aver that the so-called missing link has never been found is not to demonstrate man's heavenly origin. The Canon declares that he prefers the one miracle of Genesis to a chain of thousands of miracles offered us by the evolutionists. As a matter of fact, however, the evolutionists believe in no miracle whatever, the evolutionary process being, in their estimation, perfectly natural, conducted under physical and chemical forces alone.

At the close of his sermon Canon Berry makes the following amazingly naive admission:—

'Why can we not believe that man was evolved from the lower animals without any prejudice whatever to our Christian beliefs? I will give you two reasons in answer to that question. In the first place the evolution of man from the lower animals implies and teaches that man is a risen and rising being, instead of a fallen being. I am convinced that if once

men are possessed with the belief that they are a race risen from the lower animals, they will give up all belief in the Fall, and in original sin: they will, in fact, refuse to be treated as sinners in need of salvation."

That is, indeed, an exceedingly valid reason, from the Christian point of view, for rejecting the theory of evolution. To a Christian minister the Fall is indispensable. He lives on the belief that men are sinners in need of salvation. It is his business to induce that belief in all who listen to him. There is no getting away from the conclusion that if man has been evolved from the lower animals, the Genesis story is nothing but a legend. If we have risen, and not fallen, we are not sinners in need of salvation, but slowly growing and improving beings. What we need is not salvation from sin, but conquest over ignorance and weakness; not forgiveness, but uplifting and inspiration. It is a good sign for the future of our race that it is gradually losing the sense of sin acquired in times of ignorance and superstition. There is, therefore, nothing more natural than that a clergyman should shut the door against the doctrine of evolution, and give the lie to all the known facts of life. But the facts are bound to triumph, for all that, and to demolish every system not founded upon them.

J. T. LLOYD.

"Wait Till You Come to Die."—V.

(Concluded.)

"Like Frederick's grenadier, the Salvationist wants to live for ever (the most monstrous way of crying for the moon);.....the man who has come to believe that there is no such thing as death, the change so-called being merely the transition to an exquisitely happy and utterly careless life, has not overcome the fear of death at all; on the contrary, it has overcome him so completely that he refuses to die on any terms whatever. I do not call a Salvationist really saved till he is ready to lie down cheerfully on the scrap heap, having paid scot and lot and something over, and let his eternal life pass on to renew its youth in the battalions of the future."—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, *Major Barbara*, pp. 169-70.

"It would not do for the Church to admit that they [Infidels] died peacefully. That would show that religion was not essential at the last moment. Superstition gets its power from the terror of death. It would not do to have the common people understand that a man could deny the Bible, refuse to kiss the cross, contend that humanity was greater than Christ, and then die as sweetly as Torquemada did after pouring molten lead into the ears of an honest man—or as calmly as Calvin after he had burned Servetus, or as peacefully as King David after advising, with his last breath, one son to assassinate another."—COLONEL INGERSOLL, *Oration on Voltaire*, p. 25.

IF the Church cannot retain the allegiance of men of genius while they are alive, they always strive to obtain possession of their bodies when they are dead. Charles Darwin, who laid the axe to the root of the tree of Christian superstition, lies in Westminster Abbey. This was owing to the manipulations of the late Dean Stanley—for which he was called "the body-snatcher"—in spite of much opposition.

Recently we have had to witness the spectacle of Freethinkers, like Swinburne and Meredith, buried with the rites of a Church which they rejected and despised all their lives.

As Moncure Conway—who was himself educated for the ministry—has truly observed:—

"Many brave and independent lives are still included with the conventional world at those helpless periods. We were baptised when we could not help it; we renounced the Devil and all his works, and took the vows of orthodox faith through various sponsors, when we had no will or reason of our own. Advancing in knowledge and thought, we found those pious swaddling bands the shroud of our living selves. We burst those bonds of a gorgeous tomb. We came forth, and are trying to live our own lives, to think our own thoughts. But when we again sink into infant helplessness, or when death comes, the conventional world and creed will again come with its rites, its burial service, to say, 'This man is ours. He lived a heretic, but could not die so.' Or, if it cannot say that, it will manage to get friends and relatives to bury the dead thinker's body

with a Christian service, in order that it may go forth to the world that his testimony was in favor of the conventional system. How many have we known who, from lives of faithful testimony against established error, have gone to their rest beneath its symbols? Their burial is with the rich. The Church rarely refuses to bury such in the odor of sanctity. It is but too glad, if they are respectable and eminent, to gain the prestige of their virtues and talents, and have their epitaphs weigh where their lives did not—on the orthodox side. This desire to appropriate lives, to have their tombs support error when their protests are forgotten, underlies the strenuous efforts made in all ages to extort from dying Freethinkers recantations of their heresies. And often where there has been no recantation, invention has come in, when the dead cannot repudiate it, to report some last word favorable to the old system.*

"Even were such inventions true," says the same writer, "what would they amount to? So far as the real man and his thought are concerned, they amount to nothing. They would only mean that so long as he was sound he was liberal; when unsound was credulous. Freedom got his health, dogma his disease. Stories of death-bed conversions, says Heine, belong to the department of pathology. "After all, they only prove that it is impossible to convert the freethinkers so long as they move about under God's open sky, in the enjoyment of their healthy senses, and in the full possession of their reasoning faculty."

"When a man has spent the main force of his life; when the brain grows feebler, the nerves weaker, the energies not able to keep abreast of advancing inquiry, there is sometimes a tendency to reaction, or at least to nearer conformity with those around. The feeble one desires peace, wishes to please relatives, perhaps consents, for others' sake, to see the parson, and makes the interview as conciliatory as possible. He consents to be buried as his family desire; and that is too generally in a tomb of the Arimathean, which goes on announcing from its false marble lips that he was what he was not, and believed what he believed not."†

Unfortunately, all the arrangements for human burial are in the hands of a Christian society, and Conway tells how an eminent London barrister, a veteran Freethinker, a friend of Leigh Hunt and other literary men of a bygone time, wishing to guard against misrepresentation, had his tomb made and the epitaph engraved—an epitaph scholarly, dignified, weighty, ending with (in Latin) "Let truth stand though the priest fall." He was unable to find a cemetery which would admit such an inscription, and for some years he paid a shopkeeper in Regent-street to exhibit the stone in his window. But all his precautions were in vain. The Church triumphed in the end, and his body was buried in the conventional manner.

In France and Italy these tales of recantation became so common that associations were formed to defend dying Freethinkers from the priests, and to witness their last words and death. "Since that practice began such legends have nearly ceased in those countries, and they who die in freedom are not buried in Arimathean tombs."‡

With the decay of religion we are regaining the serenity and tranquillity of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Nature itself provides an anodyne for death. As a distinguished French author observes:—

"Illness and old age always make us set less value upon the joys of which they deprive us, which they first render bitter then impossible; and the last joy of all, that of bare existence, is as subject to the law as its predecessors. Consciousness of one's inability to live brings with it inability to desire to live; it becomes a burden to draw one's breath."

Egoism declines with declining strength.

"One sentiment alone survives, a sense of weariness. We long for rest, long to relax the tension of life, to lie at ease, to have done with it once for all. Oh! to be no longer on one's feet. The dying well know the supreme joy of looking forward to their last resting place! They no longer envy the interminable file of the living whom

they perceive, as it were in a dream, vainly marching and counter-marching upon the surface of the earth where they sleep. They are resigned to the solitude and abandonment of death. They are like travellers in the desert—worn with fever and fatigue, and unwilling to make another step in advance; they are no longer borne up by the hope of revisiting familiar scenes; they are unable to surmount the remaining difficulties of the way and request their companions to leave them, to march on without them, and, stretched upon the sand, watch without a tear, without a desire, the departing caravan creeping away toward the horizon."*

No terrors, no gasps and struggles. "Let me die in peace" was the pathetic request of the dying Voltaire to the priests who disturbed his dying hours. To be let alone, that is the last request of the dying, and it is often denied them by pious relatives.

It is science, not religion, that frees man from the fear of death. It is science, not religion, that triumphantly cries, "Oh, death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave, where is thy victory?"

Listen to the testimony of a very gifted woman—one brought up in the Christian faith, but who emancipated herself from the bondage of religion. It is Harriet Martineau who speaks—in her old age, face to face with death. She says:—

"The release [from superstition] is an inexpressible comfort, and the simplifying of the whole matter has a most tranquillising effect. I see that the dying (other than the aged) naturally and regularly, unless disturbed, desire and sink into death as into sleep. Where no artificial state is induced, they feel no care about dying, or about living again. The state of their organisation disposes them to rest, and rest is all they think about. We know by all testimony that persons who are brought face to face with death by an accident, which seems to leave no chance of escape, have no religious ideas or emotions whatever.....to me there is no sacrifice, no sense of loss, nothing to fear, nothing to regret. Under the eternal laws of the universe I came into being, and under them I have lived a life so full that its fullness is equivalent to length."

"The fresh air of Nature, in short, after imprisonment in the ghost-peopled cavern of superstition—has been as favorable to my moral nature as to intellectual progress and general enjoyment. Thus, there has been much in life that I am glad to have enjoyed; and much that generates a mood of contentment at the close. Besides that, I never dream of wishing that anything were otherwise than as it is. I am frankly satisfied to have done with life; I have had a noble share of it, and I desire no more. I neither wish to live longer here, nor to find life again elsewhere. It seems to me simply absurd to expect it, and a mere act of restricted human imagination and morality to conceive it. It seems to me that there is, not only a total absence of evidence of a renewed life for human beings, but so clear a way of accounting for the conception, in the immaturity of the human mind, that I myself utterly disbelieve in a future life."†

This fearless and Freethinking lady concludes that "The real and justifiable and honorable subject of interest to human beings, living and dying, is the welfare of their fellows surrounding them or surviving them. About this I do care supremely" (439).

Lest the pious should accuse this writer of vainglory, it is as well to state that her *Autobiography* was not published until after death.

Yes, the real subject of interest should not be an absorbing struggle for personal advancement, or a life of selfish pleasure, but an attempt to leave the world a little better than it was before we came into it. As Guyau eloquently says:—

"Next to the joy of possessing a truth or a system which seems to be true, is that of disseminating this truth, of feeling it speak and act in us, of exhaling it with our breath. There have been more than twelve apostles in the history of humanity; every heart that is young, and strong, and loving is the heart of an apostle."‡

In future articles we hope to deal with the origin of belief in the soul and a future life. W. MANN.

* Moncure D. Conway, *Lessons for the Day*, pp. 88-89; 1908.
 † Moncure D. Conway, *Lessons for the Day*, p. 91.
 ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

* Guyau, *The Non-Religion of the Future*, pp. 537-8.
 † Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography*, vol. ii., pp. 435-8.
 ‡ Guyau, *The Non-Religion of the Future*, p. 402.

Acid Drops.

There was a rather curious sentence at the end of Professor Gilbert Murray's fine letter on the Stewart case, which we praised and quoted in last week's *Freethinker*. "Mr. Stewart," he wrote, "had served three months under the same law in 1911, a fact which probably goes some way to account for the ferocity of his anti-Christian feeling." Surely there is some mistake here. Stewart was not charged with any ferocity of criticism; he was accused of *ridiculing* the Christian religion. The ferocity was all on the other side. We suggest that Professor Murray should have written that Stewart's imprisonment in 1911 went some way—or a good way—to account for the ferocity of his Christian prosecutors. There is a real meaning in that. The more the appetite of bigotry is gratified the more it looks out for fresh victims. We have made this unquestionable fact the basis of our argument that the way to break down the Blasphemy Laws is not to go to prison, but to keep out of it; that is, by offering the most skilful as well as the boldest opposition to every indictment for "blasphemy." Our conduct of the Boulter case—for it was really *our* conduct—reduced the final result to a month's imprisonment. We called that comic-opera martyrdom. So it was. And it is to be noticed that "blasphemy" prosecutions left London for the provinces ever since.

The number of Catholic priests in Great Britain is 4,401; the number in little Ireland is 3,787. We hope the difference will continue, unless it alters for the better.

The Roman Catholic population of the world is reported to be as follows:—

Europe	...	...	190 352 931
Asia	...	...	6,059 572
Africa	...	...	2,769 604
America	...	...	90,268 391
Australasia	...	...	9,284,344

Who was it that said the fight between Religion and Freethought was over? To borrow a phrase from Charles Lamb, we should like to feel his bumps. Yet he persuaded a lot of timid or lazy (or both) "infidels" to say "ditto."

We noticed last week that Dean Inge had been singing the praises of "pain." We may add that the people who do that generally have the least of it, and are seldom energetic in obtaining more. But this is not uncommon to preachers. Most of them are like sign-posts. They point the way but never travel.

The Philosopher of the City Temple says that he receives many communications, written and printed, from people, pointing out that it will not be long before there is an end to Churches and creeds, and some of the writers are so reckless as to say they will be pleased when this occurs. This puzzles Mr. Campbell exceedingly, who cannot understand this frame of mind. So he comments on the phenomenon in this fashion:—

"Suppose we were all forced by irresistible evidence to accept the conclusion that man is his body and nothing else, that there was no God and no future, and no room for belief in either, the news would not be good news; on the contrary, it would be very bad news, to be received with regret on the simple ground that there was no hope of anything better."

It is a pity that Mr. Campbell does not try to understand the communications he receives, for we have little doubt that the meaning of the writers is fairly intelligible. Freethinkers hail the dissolution of Churches and creeds because they see how these things stand in the way of the realisation of a more perfect human life. They do not contest the hope of anything better; on the contrary, their whole campaign is built on this hope. But while men expend their energies and base their aspirations on any form of supernaturalism, the result is wasted effort and frustrated hopes. And all history is behind the Freethinker in this assertion.

Mr. Campbell says he believes so earnestly in the future that he cannot accept the gospel of "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." Neither do we; but Mr. Campbell ought to know that this is merely a pulpit slander on the Freethinker. Of course, it has new Testament warranty, but it is a slander nevertheless. It was Paul who said that if there was no resurrection from the dead, then let us eat and drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die. But that was merely an illustration of the low moral standard of Paul and Christians generally. The only reason for not leading the life of a pig now was that you might live the life of an angel hereafter. If the life of the angel was

not certain, "Then," the Christian said, "I am going in for a 'good time'"—and by that he understood wallowing in all kinds of sensual enjoyment. This has been the Christian teaching through the ages, and there is small wonder that with such a gospel the results of Christian teaching on human character were so disastrous. The poorest Freethought teaching has always been superior to this. If there be no future life, then all the more reason why this one should be made more worthy. There is really no need to bother whether there is a God or future life or not. It is enough that human life is real, and that the capacity for improving it is with us. The fault of the Christian is that he says to himself, "If I were not a Christian I should be a scoundrel," and then assumes that everyone else must be built on the same unfortunate lines.

Rev. R. F. Horton takes a more hopeful view of the situation—that is, hopeful for the clergy. He discovers that we are on the eve of a great revival of faith. We have heard about this revival of faith ever since we were old enough to trouble about such things, and have seen all the time churches emptying and Freethinkers becoming more numerous. But Dr. Horton brings forward proofs. Poetry, philosophy, science, and labor are turning towards religion. William Watson has written a poem confessing his return to a faith in God; therefore, poetry is returning to religion. Not a very convincing proof, this. Professor Eucken pleads for an alliance of religion and morality; therefore, philosophy is becoming religious. The evidence here quite matches that produced on behalf of poetry. And we can only say that when either Eucken or William Watson can produce evidence that they represent either poetry or philosophy on this point, we will agree with Dr. Horton's summary of the situation.

The movement of the world of labor towards religion is shown by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. From this gentleman Mr. Horton gathers that the alienation of working men from church and chapel really means that they consider that the church and the chapel do not sufficiently embody the Christian ideal. We do not believe that five per cent. of absentees can be accounted for in this way. A good many of the labor men who do talk in this manner have got it into their heads that they can hoodwink the clergy and capture the Churches. And, on the other hand, the clergy imagine that by professing an interest in the labor movement they may ultimately harness it to the Churches. The first idea is simply stupid. No movement will ever be able to capture the Churches. It has been their business for so long to capture movements that they are up to every move in the game, and the cunning of threatened self-interest will always keep them on the alert. On the other hand, the Churches may capture the labor movement. They have succeeded in this direction more than once, and the result for the movement captured was extinction. Any Church will, in fact, eat the heart out of a reform movement, because its main function is to perpetuate the established order of things.

The conversion of science is, of course, shown in Sir Oliver Lodge—as though he had ever left religion! Only Dr. Horton adds some foolish flourishes of his own. For instance, he says that Sir Oliver Lodge disposed of the argument against prayer, based on the uniformity of nature, by pointing out that we interfere with the uniformity of nature every time we water a garden, and that the whole of human activity interferes with the uniformity of nature. Now, Sir Oliver Lodge has said many strange things, but he never said anything so hopelessly foolish as this. The merit of this observation belongs entirely to Dr. Horton. What Sir Oliver really said was that human ingenuity could "deflect" natural laws, as in engineering and other directions. But this is not contrary to the uniformity of nature; the process of deflection takes the uniformity for granted. When we water the garden we assume that the water will fall on the ground, not rise in the air; that it will nurture the plants, not kill them. The principle of the uniformity of nature does not say that things will happen irrespective of conditions; all it says is that, given certain conditions, certain consequences will follow. When a preacher shows an incapacity to follow a scientist on so simple a point as this, his opinion as to what is the real attitude of science towards life in general is not likely to be worth much.

Glastonbury's "holy" thorn, which tradition asserts has blossomed every Christmas since it was planted by Joseph of Arimathea, has this year no winter buds. We always considered this a rare "plant."

Latterly there has been a revival of mediæval customs, and the election of boy bishops has taken place at Berden,

near Bishop Stortford. Most of the bishops we are acquainted with are in their second childhood.

A working man received an invitation from a clergyman to attend divine service at a neighboring church, and the note contained a text, "Come unto me all ye that labor." The recipient wrote back, "Cannot attend, on strike."

The Bishop of London has authorised a Collect appealing for deliverance from dangers of riots in Ireland. Pity the sorrows of a poor old Deity! He'll have to go on strike too one of these days.

A strike of tailors has been settled at Johannesburg. We are glad to hear it, for people might have been compelled to imitate the primitive costumes of Adam and Eve, or the Tango dance of David.

The king personally selected all his Christmas presents, a society paper informs us. As far as we can judge, the "King of Kings" does not give presents, but only receives them—through the good, kind priests.

Is "Our Heavenly Father" a humorist? We ask this question in all seriousness, for, whenever his children are celebrating his "birthday," he replies with a disaster involving loss of life. The Tay Bridge disaster, the Messina earthquake, the Chicago theatre fire, the Elcott Junction railway accident of 1906, and the Hawes Junction express wreck of 1912, are only a few of the noteworthy occurrences at this season of the year.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell said at the City Temple that "the mother of Jesus had done more for her sex than all other influences put together." How is it the "mother of God" waited two thousand years for Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues to endow maternity? And why do women in Catholic countries till the fields and act as beasts of burden?

According to the Oracle of the City Temple, Protestants accord little honor to the Virgin Mary. They never forget to reverence "little Mary," as Mr. Campbell might notice in the City itself.

Another poor Jesuite! Rev. William Gay, of Ettrick, Blenheim-road, East Barnet, left £34,610. "These," as Johnson said to Garrick, "are the things that make death bitter."

The next poor Jesuite was the Rev. Canon John Miller Elvy, of Broughton Park, Manchester, who left £13,573. It does not equal the Rev. William Gay's leavings, but it is a pretty considerable "hump" all the same.

"Well done, Belfast," cries a correspondent of the *Northern Whig*. He congratulates that hub of toleration on showing itself not only "thoroughly Protestant" but on showing itself "thoroughly Christian." And in what way? By refusing to let Mr. John Lawson keep the Palladium open on Sunday evenings with a program of pictures and orchestral music. Another correspondent, signing himself "Progress," suggests that an empty Palladium means the patronage of many worse places.

The churches of St. Louis, Missouri, advertise through the Church Federation, in the *Post Dispatch*, for "more." That is to say, for more money. We judge that their condition at present is a bad one. Yet they boldly announce, while begging for cash, that "The Church is all-powerful simply because the religion of Jesus Christ is back of it." That's all right, to start with, but something else is necessary. "The law demands that you pay your grocer and tailor," the advertisers say, "but greater by far is your debt to the Church." Maybe. But grocers and tailors deliver actual goods and can sue for the price of them. What do the clergy deliver, and on what basis could they sue for its value? As for Jesus Christ's religion being "a happy religion," we are willing to agree that it is—especially when it sends an "infidel" to prison or burns a sceptic at the stake. But the opportunities for such pleasures are not as frequent as they used to be.

The St. Louis clergy are competent at blowing their own trumpet. Take them out of St. Louis, they say, and "there would be no homes—no schools—no honor among business men." We had no idea St. Louis was as bad as that. Evidently the clergy haven't done much good there up to

the present. "No matter—the time will come!" So plank down your donation for more of the same old medicine, and—wait and see.

Lord Halifax says that all the Church wants from the State is to be left free to manage its own affairs. So Church humbug replies to Nonconformist humbug. Really what Lord Halifax means is State support and State patronage minus any measure of State control. All take and no give.

Canon Gough has discovered a new proof that the Church and Labor are at one. Both, he says, desire that men may have life, and have it more abundantly. Quite so; but the life abundant of the Church is to be enjoyed after we are dead, and we hardly think that is the kind of life that Labor is anxious about.

Seven millions of money is spent annually in this country on hunting. The Christian upper classes have yet to learn kindness to animals.

The four Bible Societies last year had an income of £288,287, and 102 Home and Foreign Missions £3 881,094. This is only part of the economic basis of a religion "without money and without price."

"Half a century ago education consisted of the classics, with a little mathematics and Bible teaching," says Mr. A. C. Benson, formerly a master at Eton College. There was no doubt of the paucity of the mathematical teaching, for the majority of the pupils were taught that three gods were one, and one was three.

"Forty-one Years at One School" is the alluring headline to a paragraph in a daily paper. It does not refer to one of the Old Testament patriarchs, but to a modern school-master.

The *Daily Mail Year Book* says that the Bible "is the supreme treasure house of literature told in stories and parables." Some of these stories are as true as the famous account of the Pekin massacres once published by the *Daily Mail*.

During the past ten years the number of voluntary schools has decreased by 1,564. Clerical influence has correspondingly decreased.

The clerical mind is a fearful and wonderful thing. Writing of Christianity in *Lloyds' Weekly News*, the Rev. W. D. Morrison, rector of Marylebone, says that "It is never made a test of discipleship with Christ that those who elect to follow him should assent to any elaborate confession or creed." Didn't the reverend gentleman sign the Thirty-Nine Articles? And hasn't he heard of the Athanasian Creed?

According to the dear *Daily News*, M. Anatole France took his stand during the Dreyfus struggle as "a natural Christian." What is a natural Christian? The village idiot is called a "natural." We fancy the *Daily News* has confused Anatole France with some members of its own staff.

"Vapid and salacious" is a New York parson's description of a play. The phrase fits some religious literature exactly.

"Manners are growing coarser," a contemporary publication tells us. Christian Evidence patterers will have to start a competition if this goes on.

However could we get on without religion, is the cry of the ordinary pulpiteer. The real question is, How can we get on with it? Ireland is an instance. We have over and over again pointed out the part played by religion in the Irish question, and just lately Sir Edward Grey said:—

"I believe that the real root of the difficulty is the difference of religion, and that but for that religious difficulty you would not find there was any difference of race, or point of view, or anything else which made it difficult for the two parts of Ireland to work together."

As usual, the people from different parts of Ireland can work together, eat together, talk together, walk together, trade together; the one thing they cannot do is to be religious together. And, worse still, the intrusion of religion upsets all other relations. If Ireland were without religion the chief difficulties of the situation would be non-existent. The greatest obstacles are either religious or use religion as

a cover. We repeat, the world's difficulty has never been how it could get on without religion, but how it is possible to get on with it in our midst.

Rev. C. Ensor Walters says that, "If the little Bethels would only stand one by another, we have a force that could turn men out at election times." Maybe; but the prospect is a most horrible one. Imagine Governments made and unmade by a combination of "little Bethels"! Once before in the history of England the "little Bethels" stood together and elected or turned out men, and the result was the return of the Stuarts. No one could ever stand the rule of the Church for long. Geneva, Scotland, America. England, it has been tried in all these places, and in the end the people preferred anything to the reign of cant and hypocrisy and intolerance that resulted. Just think of the Free Church Council as the responsible government of the country!

Christianity is becoming a harlequinade. What with Harry Lauder holding forth in the kirk, and the editor of *Punch* preaching at a chapel, and actors reading the lessons at churches, the religion of the "Man of Sorrows" promises to become funnier every year. The *Daily Chronicle*, recognising this tendency, published an article on "Christmas before Christ," and entrusted it to the humorous writer, Barry Pain.

Dr. Wentz, writing in the *Daily News and Leader* on "Fairy Tales," urges the instruction of children in "the historic tradition of divine knowledge." There is no need for the gentleman to worry, for the fairy tales of the Bible are taught in countless day and Sunday-schools.

According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, there are over thirteen millions of Jews in the world. Exactly! And half of Christendom worships a Jew and the other half a Jewess.

The advertisement boardings contain announcements of a "Wonder Zoo." It will not be able to rival the Biblical collection with its talking snake and jackass, savings-bank fish, lodging-house whale, and similar curiosities.

An appeal has been issued by ministers of religion for united prayer for, among other things, "brotherly love to OUR peoples." People who profess to love their enemies usually hate their neighbors, if they do not attend the same tin tabernacle.

During Christmas the Salvation Army distributed 30 000 puddings through the "kindness of friends." There is nothing miraculous in this, for the "General" of the first "Salvation Army" is alleged to have fed 5,000 persons with three sardines and two bath-buns.

A jocular American, who knows something of both the Bible and English history, says that in the old days England used to burn the witches, but now the witches are trying to burn England.

A poor old gas-stoker, who had been blind for sixteen years, and who had been maintained by his wife, died recently at Pimlico from destitution. Both had often been in want of food. What has happened to the philanthropic ravens who fed Elijah? Are they as dead as the prophet?

A melodrama has been made out of the "story of the rosary." All over the world priests have for many centuries seen the commercial possibilities of a string of beads.

"Animistic belief," says a writer in the *Daily News and Leader*, is "the chief refining influence in every state of society, from the barbarism of the black man in Central Africa to the civilisation of the Archbishop of Canterbury." Yet this "refining influence" permits Christians to sing of "the blood of the Lamb," and Pagans to eat their neighbors.

"It was clearly God's will," the Bishop of London says, "that there should be men and women in the world." It was clearly God's will, too, that the Bishop of London should be one of them,—which some people think is hardly a matter for general congratulation. It was clearly God's will, also, that the world's human beings should be quarrelsome and murderous. The Bishop of London says *no* to this.

We say *no* to his contradiction. Why? What is the criterion? Whatever happens is, and must be, the will of God. There is no other criterion possible. "I, the Lord, do all these things."

The late Cardinal Rampolla was called the "Vice-Pope" by the journalists. An ironic compliment.

More "Providence." A Salvation Army Home has been burnt down at Cincinnati. Eight of the inmates were burnt to death, and many seriously hurt in the rush to escape by doors and windows. "Providence" is no respecter of persons; that is, there is *no* "Providence." An indiscriminating "Providence" is a contradiction in terms.

It will be remembered that we took a bigot to task for sneering at Charles Bradlaugh on account of his statue at Northampton being near a public convenience. We were able to show, from an old friend's letter, that the late King Edward's statue in a well-known part of South London is in a similar position—and that the public convenience was there first. We now hear from an Aberdeen correspondent that the Prince Albert statue in that city has been similarly situated for the last forty years. There is also a public convenience just below the late King Edward's statue; and another (in fact, two) in proximity to the only granite statue in the city—that of the fifth Duke of Gordon. So the Bradlaugh "misfortune" seems fairly fashionable.

"A current 'joke' originating with the *New York Globe* runs as follows:—

'Your father is a religious man, isn't he, James?' a small boy was asked.

'Oh, yes,' was the naive answer. 'He just hates anybody who doesn't go to church.'

The correlation of religion and hatred is no joke. Writing in the *North American Review* on 'The Problem of Ulster,' Sydney Brooks deposes: 'The tale is told of an old Orangeman who had been called as a witness to the peaceable disposition of a friend of his. 'What sort of man,' asked the counsel, 'would you say Jamie Williamson is?' 'A quiet, decent man.' 'Is he the sort of man that would be likely to be breaking windows?' 'No man less likely.' 'Is he the sort of man that you would expect to find at the head of a mob shouting, "To hell with the Pope"?' Witness, with great emphasis: 'No, certainly not. Jamie was never anyways a *religious* man.'—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. Robert Bridges, who is Poet Laureate, has written his first "official" poem in the form of a Christmas hymn. He should leave that kind of work to the contributors of the *War Cry*.

"The duties of the modern bishops are very onerous," says a religious contemporary. If they have to attend all the theatrical and music-hall shows in their dioceses in order to safeguard the morals of their flocks, they have our sympathy. We hope the Bishops of London and Kensington enjoyed their pantomime visits.

Evening classes for policemen are to be established in the provinces. We are glad to hear it, for the boys in blue will be able to follow more intelligently the addresses of the open-air lecturers on Freethought platforms.

"Horseflesh as Beef" is the heading of a scare paragraph in the *Daily News*. Our old friend, Ezekiel, dined on something worse—if more highly seasoned.

We have often called attention to the slow spread of Christianity in Africa and the rapid spread of Mohammedanism. We now see that the Bishop of Uganda has raised a storm by declaring that the various Christian Protestant sects doing missionary work in the Dark Continent will have to close up their ranks and make common cause against the Mohammedan danger. This is not the first time that "the Arab thief," as John Wesley called the Prophet of Islam, has worsted the Prophet of Nazareth.

The fated missionary asked to be allowed to sing a hymn before being killed and eaten, and the cannibal chief replied that it was not their custom to have music with meals.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £283 4s. 1d. Received since:—Freethinkers of Bethulie (Orange Free State), per P. Hamel: J. J. Warshaugh, £2 2s.; J. A. Jorissen, £2 2s.; P. Hamel, 10s. 6d.; Berman and Ben, 15s.; B. Knott, 5s.; W. Soutar, 5s.; J. D. Grant, 2s.; J. O. Grunow, 2s. 6d.; total, less cost of remittance, £6 2s. J. F. (per J. Neate), 10s.; F. H. H., 3s.; R. L. M., £2 2s.; M. M., 5s.; H. T., 2s. 6d.; C. W. Thomas (New Zealand), £1 1s.; A. Hurcum, 10s. 6d.; E. J. Rawtell, 4s. 6d.; "Jersey," 10s.; Edward Jones, 10s. 6d.; E. A. H., 5s. *Warrington Saints*: W. P. P., 5s.; W. McC, 2s. 6d.; J. B., 3s.; M. K., 1s.; B. W., 1s. Total to December 31, £296 2s. 7d.

D. E. B.—You will find our views on "Agnostic" and "Atheist" stated at length in our pamphlet entitled *What is Agnosticism?* We do not answer questions in sociology as a rule, but we don't mind saying (for once) that when poetry and romance and passionate love have died out in the world there may be room left for "trial marriages" *Romeo and Juliet* and the wonderful chapter "A Diversion Played on a Penny Whistle" in George Meredith's *Richard Feverel* will illustrate our meaning. Love is an exclusive preference. Those who do not know it have never loved.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

BIRMINGHAM "SAINT."—We understand that no reply but a formal acknowledgment has been received to the Petition for Stewart's release or better treatment in prison.

W. DAVIDSON.—It is amusing, with a serious side; but the law of libel is a nightmare to a Freethought editor. Thanks for news of the progress at Edmonton.

C. C.—J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs* would serve your object, but you can't get books of that kind at 2s 6d. Forms of affirmation can be obtained at the N. S. S. office.

MR. AND MRS. G. L. ALWARD.—Your reasonable good wishes are reciprocated.

JOHN MATTHEWS.—There is a faithful history of the Crusades in a chapter of our *Crimes of Christianity*. We do not know of any cheap single volume on the subject. References in our footnotes would guide you to its literature.

J. B. IRVINE.—Mr. W. T. Lee held several debates with Mr. Foote in former years. The last one must have taken place some sixteen or seventeen years ago. We are sorry to see Mr. Lee's bills now disfigured by "meetings for men only."

H. BLACK.—Much obliged for your very useful cuttings. We may take your hint as to our next visit to Manchester.

RICHARD ALLEN.—Your letter and enclosure reached us on December 22—in time, you see. Thanks for your new year's good wishes.

DEVALION (New Zealand).—It is not our province in this journal to deal with Labor questions, although we wish well to all men who are seeking to raise themselves in the scale of being. So many journals deal with Labor questions already, and so few are devoted to the work we are doing. We believe you will agree with us on second thoughts.

J. ROSS.—You say that "to believe that Shakespeare wrote 'Shakespeare' is to believe in a miracle." We answer that to believe that Bacon wrote "Shakespeare" is to believe in a bigger miracle—and an utterly incredible one. We have Bacon's acknowledged works, and we know his character, for he was a public man; and to assert that he wrote "Shakespeare" is to assert not so much the wonderful as the impossible. As a matter of fact, genius always is a "miracle." It is really what the biologists call "a sport." And that the greatest genius is the greatest sport is just what might be expected. All this will be dealt with fully in our book on Shakespeare, which we hope to finish during 1914. For the other matters see paragraphs.

G. W. (Birkenhead).—Charles Bradlaugh did not debate publicly with Celestine Edwards in the Manchester Free Trade Hall—or elsewhere.

H. ROBERTS.—We do not know of a book called *God's Funeral*. There was a poem bearing that title in the *English Review*, by Thomas Hardy. We do post copies of the *Freethinker* to persons prominently mentioned in it week by week.

C. J. P.—Glad you were so pleased with our attitude. Thanks for the reference and the pamphlet. Both may be useful.

E. B.—Your cuttings are always useful.

D. BERNSTEIN.—See paragraph. Thanks.

R. L. M.—We understand. Thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

AVON DALE.—The theme is too egotistic. What can it matter to the world which of us turns out to be a genius? There are things that do matter to the world. Why not try to sing them?

T. M. BROWN (U.S.A.).—Glad to hear that you "get the *Freethinker* every week" and that you "agree with some other correspondents that it seems to get better every time."

H. BLACK.—Thanks for fresh cuttings, which we find useful. We cannot join in any newspaper correspondence on the Stewart (or any other) case. Such a work would be endless. We should have no time for anything else. We really must leave it to the local "saints."

WELSH RATIONALIST.—There is some truth in your criticism, but it does not really affect the general truth of our observation that the Catholic Church is Christianity,—the Christianity of history, of doctrine, and development—the Christianity of the

Western World. What are Russia and a few Balkan States to all the rest of Europe proper—to say nothing of America?

J. BOSTOCK.—Better late than never, and better little than nothing.

R. H. W.—We answered the Hugh Price Hughes book, by his daughter, at the time it was published, and showed that she had only made the case worse for her father—and, we are sorry to say, for Mr. Holyoake.

E. A. H.—A clever compliment.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, will take place this year at Frascati's, on Wednesday, January 28. There are several reasons for the change in place, but they need not be entered upon now. The change in time, it is believed, will prove beneficial to the gathering. On the first occasion of the change, at any rate, the dinner will be associated with two great names in the history of Freethought. Thomas Paine was born on January 29—Charles Bradlaugh died on January 30. The Chairman will devote his address mainly to the principles, achievements, and examples of those English heroes of humanity.

The Annual Dinner tickets are the same price as before (4s.), but the room available at Frascati's will not accommodate more than 200. Those who wish to ensure their seats at this function should therefore apply for their tickets as early as possible.

There will be several speakers at the Annual Dinner as well as a good musical program. The list will include Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd for certain, and other names will be announced next week. We note a general satisfaction at the changes made in this year's arrangements, especially in the matter of the date.

We reproduced last week an excellent article from the *Manchester Guardian* against the revival of the Blasphemy Laws in the Stewart case. Our contemporary returned to the subject, and we have pleasure in reproducing its second leaderette:—

"BLASPHEMY AS AN OFFENCE.

"We publish to day a letter on what we said yesterday about the Blasphemy Laws in which a correspondent argues (we believe we represent his views fairly) that, though right is on our side in the matter, we have chosen a bad case to fight on. About Mr Stewart we know nothing whatever; it may be, as our correspondent suggests, that his language on the platform was such as to constitute a breach of public decorum sufficient to warrant criminal proceedings; but, even if that were so, that does not in the slightest degree excuse the authorities in having based their action on the Blasphemy Laws. If a man attacks Christian doctrine, or even ridicules Christian beliefs, the proper place to bring him to book is not a court of law; he ought to be dealt with, as our correspondent has himself dealt with such people, in public debate; if in the course of such attacks he lapses into obscenity, then by all means let him be summoned and punished, but for the concrete offence of obscenity, and not for the nebulous, indefinable offence of blasphemy. We choose the case of Mr. Stewart because he happens to have been the only man recently convicted and imprisoned under the Blasphemy Laws. His conviction proves that these laws are regarded as still in force. We want to see them either repealed or allowed to lapse and we are confident that when they are removed there still remains ample, and, indeed better protection for the decencies of public controversy than they can provide."

We should like to strengthen this appeal by pointing out that while the Blasphemy Laws continue to exist, even if no prosecutions take place under them, they will still operate indirectly by raising a prejudice against any Freethought speaker who should be prosecuted merely on account of "bad language."

Further letters on the Blasphemy Law, with reference to the Stewart case, have appeared in the *Manchester*

Guardian. One is from Sir W. P. Byles, who concludes with an appeal to his fellow Nonconformists. "Free Churchmen especially," he says, "whose fathers have suffered persecution and imprisonment for preaching the faith which is now freely spoken, are bound, in my judgment, to defend for others who differ from them—yes, even for Stewart—the freedom which they have inherited from the sufferings of those who have gone before."

"Secularist's" letter in this correspondence is an extremely good one. He points out that "Liberal Governments have no reputation for leniency in these affairs," and adds that "there is only one case of a pardon on record, and that was obtained through the death of the prisoner's wife." Here is another pertinent passage:—

"Professor Murray is in error in stating that no efforts have been made to secure Stewart's release. Unfortunately for him, his immediate friends bungled the case very badly at the first, declining proffered help and expert advice from the National Secular Society, otherwise the case would have been carried to the Court of Appeal and the verdict in all probability overruled."

This is really the crux of the whole question. Fighting involves leadership. Even a defective leadership is better than no leadership at all. And the leadership of such a fight as this naturally devolves upon the President of the National Secular Society. No matter who he is. His being in that position is the all-important fact. Not "Providence" but the course of events has placed him there. Private feelings or silly little personal ambitions should not stand in the way of the cause. We might have had a big fight, and perhaps a successful one, over this case. For the first time a "blasphemy" sentence might have been carried to the Court of Appeal, and the whole question of *the law* might have been argued for us by eminent counsel. But the time for that, alas, has gone by.

Mr. Mark Melford sent us notice some time ago that he was a dying man. He had about three weeks to live, and he wished us farewell. But there is always a risk in prophecy,—a function which is better performed after the event than before it. We are glad to see the dying old historian turning up again as the author of *Life in a Booth* (Hendersons, 1s.), an interesting and by no means uninteresting account of his chequered career during sixty years as "dramatic actor, author, and variety artiste." Mr. Melford does not hide his Freethought; he even places an advertisement of the *Freethinker* at the end of his book. We have much pleasure in commending it to our readers' attention. Many a shilling is laid out to very much worse advantage.

We occasionally print special letters from our readers, who, by the way, are to be found in all parts of the world. The following letter is from Bethulie, in the Orange Free State, South Africa;—

"Dear Mr. Foote,—We, the Freethinkers of Bethulie, wishing to show our gratitude to you, who do so much for our good cause, have made up a small collection towards your Honorarium Fund, and beg you kindly to accept our small gift. May Freethought spread more and more over the earth, and may mankind soon break the chains of superstition and become free.—Yours truly, P. HAMEL."

The details of the "collection" appear in our list of acknowledgments in another column. The above letter, dated Dec. 4, reached us on Dec. 23, so the subscriptions fall well within 1913. We thank the subscribers and assure them how glad we are that our work is appreciated in all parts of the English-speaking (or English-reading) world. We also cordially reciprocate their good wishes for the new year.

"Lord Haldane, greatly daring, ventured to speak the truth about education the other day when he said: 'The supporters of denominational education on the one hand, and on the other those who thought that everybody ought to be content with Cowper-Temple teaching—his view was that the one was just as sectarian as the other.' That is the crux of the whole religious difficulty. Cowper-Templeism, or 'simple Bible teaching,' is just as sectarian to the Anglican and to the Roman Catholic as the Church Catechism is to Nonconformists. Until Nonconformists recognise this elementary fact there will, and can, be no settlement in education. If justice is to be done the State must subsidise all religious views or none at all."—*Reynolds' Newspaper*.

We are glad to quote the foregoing paragraph from our Radical contemporary. We should have been better pleased however, if some reference had been made to the non-Christian members of the community, whose rights are infringed not only by "sectarian" religious teaching in the public schools, but by any religious teaching at all. No agreement between the Churches in the form of what is called "a compromise" can alter that fact.

Once a Year.

Christmas Morning, 1913.

CHRISTMAS morning was gloriously bright. Hard frost had preceded a heavy fall of snow, and nature smiled, like a girl child, in happy amazement at finding herself dressed in a soft, spotlessly white, new frock, all glittering in the sunlight, when she arose in the morning. Every branch of every tree was motionless with astonishment; there was no breeze to shake off its ridge of winter beauty. The rhododendron bushes had been transformed into miniature snow palaces. The delicate twigs of the flowering currant bush were bowed beneath their heavy burden of iciness. The wallflower rows were like minarets rising above a desert of white, glistening sand. The firs and pines philosophically objected not; and the big plane, standing in the centre of the lawn, seemed to feel conscious of a great accession to its natural majesty and dignity. And above the snow-roofed wood the hill sloped, its white summit rivalling the few fleecy clouds that drifted slowly in the light amethyst of the sky.

It was a morning to be happy; and when someone suggested tramping to the service the idea was laughed to scorn, and the proposer joined in the objections. Going to church would have eaten a goodly portion out of the day; besides, on a weekday, the thing was preposterous. And so Christmas was spent at home, with snowballing, sliding, tobogganing, snow-figure making; and the old snow-man of the skies, had he shown himself, would have melted in the genial warmth of our boisterous play.

It was good to see the merriment of the boys when they discovered what Santa Claus had not brought them. It was better to feel the pleasure their awkward thanks gave you. And it was better still to know that their young minds had not the least trace of religious coloring as they thought of the joyfulness of Christmas. There were no morning prayers to throw the day out of joint; but there was a mighty ringing of deafening bells, that would have frightened all the ghosts of Christendom into purgatory for peace and quietness. There was no thanking God for what we had given them; but there was, in each little mind, a grim determination not to disturb the happiness of the day by fighting; and the difficult resolution was faithfully carried out. When bedtime came, Christmas, a year ago, was voted a great success, the boys wishing it would come every month.

But my thoughts, this Christmas, are not so pleasant. A different environment surrounds me. There is no quiet, snow-draped country to dull my mind to the happenings of the busy world. I can see what is going on amongst the mass of men; and many things make this Christmas tainted. All over the land priests and pastors will be declaiming on the brotherhood of Christ; how it has encircled the earth with a belt of wondrous glory; how the Child Christ has enwoven the mirror-like strands of memory around Christmas; how Christianity has succeeded in entering the hearts of the people by opening them to the marvellous light of its homely love. Christmas is the time of the year when the Christ spirit bursts from the bonds that enchain it, the bonds of selfishness, of hardheartedness, and indifference, and goes winging its way amongst the people, bidding them think of others rather than themselves. Christmas is the time of memories, of new interests, of new regards. By his ineffable sacrificial example Christ has hallowed Christmas with a power that no human energy can shatter. Christ died for others. In imitation of his divine example, we live for others, on his birthday. Our present-givings, our remembrances, our well-wishes, are homage paid to the Divine Man, the Son of God, whose life we, in our little way emulate on Christmas Day. So the story runs.

Thousands of poor people enjoy a decent dinner—on Christmas Day. Thousands of the pauper brothers

and sisters of the Lamb of God are treated as if they were human beings—on Christ's Day. Thousands of the little ones the Savior presumably loved so much, little ones whose daily lives are so unlovely that they seem like rank weeds growing in mire, receive toys, and have their starved hearts stunned by a sudden shaft of dazzling light—on Christ Jesus' birthday.

Christ is the prodigal son, who returns once a year to celebrate his birthday. The rejoicings are terrible in their hateful resemblance to the rattle of skeleton finger-bones on coffin-lids. The cynicism of the farce is a damnable disclosure of the ugliness of the putrefaction of death. The Christmas pauper smile is the grin of triumphant immorality. The unctuous smickerings of priests re-echo like the smacking of the fangs of wolves on a snowclad social prairie.

Brotherhood! Once a year! Good God! And such brotherhood, the fraternity of spiritual horrors! And there are social reformers amongst us who look on, amused or indifferent.

Perhaps it is unpardonable, perhaps it is an intellectual crime against reason; but when the mind realises the full significance of these things the blood goes raging in furious riot through one's veins.

Piety, what a horribly contorted thing it is, on Christmas Day. Saintliness, what a disgustingly sick thing it is, on Christ's day. Christianity, what a mocker of human virtue, what a reviler of human justice and reason, it is, on Christ's birthday. Extravagantly dressed ladies hand round bags of stale cakes to city urchins, and an agent gives parcels of cast-off clothing to the parents, because their Lord and Master bade them remember his little ones. This is piety. Priests and pastors move about blessing the multitude who live on the upper circles of the social abyss, and keep on smiling the seraphic smile—which is saintliness. The multitude, having fed, scatters, the many to hovels, the benevolent few to mansions; and this is the boasted activity, the vaunted social valuableness of Christianity.

To-day, Christianity discards its one loosely clinging, Eastern robe, its hypocrisy, and reveals a body covered with ulcers and sores. Like the Paphnutius of Anatole France's *Thais*, it stretches itself upon its phallic-like column of falsehood to bless the assembled people, all stricken with the divine mental malady.

"There are, Lucius," said Aristeus, the doctor of Lucius Aurelius Cotta, the perfect of the fleet of Alexandria, as they stood in the crowd looking at the stylite, Paphnutius, the holy man who vainly endeavored to escape from the sex desire, "certain forces infinitely more powerful than reason and science."

"Which?" asked Cotta.

"Ignorance and folly," replied Aristeus.

And it is just now, at Christmas time, that we understand more acutely the nature of the stuff that is the staff of life to Christianity. It is just now, perhaps, more than at any other time, that we realise to the greatest degree the anti-social character of the national religion. Almsgiving comes like an army of courtesans, the countless reincarnations of *Thais*, seductively smiling, betwitching the hearts, bodies, and brains of the foolish and ignorant. Charity flaunts its purple and gold around the human cesspool. The Church licks the wineglass of the wealthy, presses its wet lips on the dry mouth of poverty, and murmurs "blessed are the poor."

It is just now, at Christmas time, that we Free-thinkers realise the gravity of the responsibilities our beliefs impose upon us. Amidst the carrollings and hymnsings there sounds the whirr of our weapons against the grindstone of reason. And, breaking the sanctimonious solemnity of the foolish prayer, there rises the strong battle-call of Reason, "Glory to Man in the Highest, for man is the master of things."

ROBERT MORELAND.

Rampolla's Dream.

"The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies."

—LUCRETIUS.

CARDINAL RAMPOLLA, who died recently, was for sixteen years the Papal Secretary of State, and largely inspired all the later policy of Leo XIII. It was his daring diplomacy which during the years 1887 to 1903 sought restlessly for the means of restoring the Pope's political power; and it was he who suggested the Church's remarkable overtures to Republicanism and to Socialism. When Leo XIII. died, Cardinal Rampolla would have been elected to succeed him but for the veto of the Emperor of Austria, which was communicated to the conclave by a Polish Cardinal. While the Cardinals hesitated to accept this reactionary veto, Rampolla, with rare dignity, himself accepted it, and the present Pope was elected, and Rampolla's dream of the restoration of the temporal power came to an end. He lived thenceforward in retirement, and his diplomatic combinations crumbled into nothingness, and with them went the last hopes of the Catholic Church.

There was a time when the Catholic Church was as liberal as her younger Anglican sister. She once had her broad wing, her rationalists, her scholars, and thinkers, who found her borrowed mummeries and stolen creeds susceptible of mystical interpretation. The ignorant, evangelical party gradually prevailed over these, and exterminated them by fire and sword, rack and gibbet, leaving themselves more ignorant and bigoted than before. Gradually the whole Church was made over to their "leprous likeness."

It required centuries to produce this result. The very triumphs of Freethought indirectly contributed to this end. Every Catholic who became a Free-thinker assisted this process. The more brains that were drawn out of the Church, the more did the huge mass part with its intellectual leaven, and tend to flatten and harden down to a mere mass of ignorance and intolerance. What constitutes the obstructive character of the Catholic Church is the abyss which now separates it from the highest intelligence around it; the live, alert intellect of science, and the leaden, moveless stereotype of dogma.

There has been of late a revival of interest in the Catholic Church since the Ritualistic party in the English Church has waxed fat and strong. The Ritualists have not done all that was hoped by themselves and dreaded by the timid Nonconformists, but they have secured a firm foothold, and the Bishops cannot turn them out. It is now certain that there is a very strong party of the Anglican Church who play fast and loose with the authority of the Church in its entirety. At this hour there are covered by the English Church's banner men who hold the extremest doctrine of the freedom of the individual, and men who are willing to submit to the utmost doctrine of priestly control. How long will this divided house stand? That a large and increasing number of the Anglican clergy are coquetting with Rome has caused attention in the Catholic Church. The Pope has hopes of reconverting England, of reimposing the yoke which our ancestors threw off. But much water has flowed to the sea since the English acknowledged Papal supremacy.

In darkened and superstitious times the power of the Catholic Church was great, but it finished with the yellow glare of the fearful fires of Smithfield. It was never as unquestioned and unresisted as in Italy, Spain, and France. There is a wholesome tendency to resistance in British blood, which is cooler than that of the Latin races. It shows itself whenever any specially arrogant claim on obedience is heard, as Charles I. and James II. knew to their cost, and as the battlefields for the free press also prove. The Church of Cardinal Rampolla may do its worst. We shall never as a people permit the cesspool of the confessional. We shall never submit

to the poisoned weapons of priestcraft, its hypocritical affectations of celibacy, its tyranny in the home, its officiousness in public affairs, its menace and robbery at the death-bed. Ecclesiasticism had not a safe seat on English shoulders even before the days of the Reformation; it is an impossible dream now that there is an organised Freethought party, which has inscribed on its banners that significant phrase, "Crush the Infamous."

Where Rampolla failed his Church will fail too. Science expands in search of light and truth. The Christian Church is still entombed within the covers of the Bible. Men ask for the bread of knowledge; the Church offers but the sawdust of superstition. The Church's teaching is no longer of any practical use, and represents but a backwash in the river of human knowledge. The great river of human thought rolls on, and bears us further and further away from the ignorance of the past, further and further from the shadow of the Cross.

MIMNERMUS.

Some Little-Known Freethinkers.

X.—JOHN STEWART.

JOHN STEWART, commonly known as "Walking Stewart," and in his own day characterised as "Philosopher Stewart," has been several times written about, yet remains very little known. De Quincey consecrated an article to his memory, but dwelt rather upon his eccentricities and exploits than his opinions. It is, of course, chiefly as a Freethinker that he is here considered. Of Scotch origin, though born in London in 1749, John Stewart possessed characteristic Scotch hardihood, relentless energy, and independence. Educated at Harrow and the Charterhouse, at the age of sixteen he entered the service of the East India Company, and went out to Madras. Disappointed of advancement, in two years, he quitted this employment, writing to the directors that "he was born for nobler pursuits than to be a copier of invoices and bills of lading to a company of grocers, haberdashers, and cheesemongers." Smitten with what Leslie Stephen ventures to call "the characteristic passion of the wise and good—the passion for walking," which perhaps is mainly atavism from a nomadic state, he went on foot all over Hindostan "to become acquainted with the customs, laws, languages, and temperament of the inhabitants." He entered the service of Hyder Aly, first as interpreter, and afterwards as military officer, rising to the rank of general. He was wounded in battle, and applied for leave of absence to consult a surgeon at one of the European settlements. The request was acceded to by Hyder, after some hesitation; but his escort had orders to kill him, which design Stewart penetrating, he made his escape, seizing a favorable moment to plunge into a river and swim across. His swiftness of foot enabled him to outstrip his pursuers. He subsequently entered the service of the Nawaub of Arcot, became his private secretary, and eventually Prime Minister. He was not paid at the time, but many years after, when the East India Company liquidated the Nawaub's debts, he received £10,000 for his services. He walked from India through Persia, Armenia, and Turkey, to Europe. Crossing the Persian Gulf, a storm arose, and the crew were for casting him overboard like Jonah, but he persuaded them to compromise by immuring him in a hencoop, and suspending him by the yard-arm till the storm abated. He had many adventures, and gave his testimony that, in all countries, it was safer to travel unarmed. To the credit of human nature, he relates that whenever he made people understand that he trusted them they showed no disposition to do him injury. He travelled on foot through Germany, Italy, France, and Spain, settling for a while in Paris. Having walked through England, Scotland, and Ireland, he crossed the Atlantic in 1791, and perambulated the United States and Canada.

When he came into his fortune, he settled down in Cockspur-street, Pall Mall, that he might be "in the full tide of existence, and gave private Sunday evening concerts. Among his personal friends and acquaintances were the Freethinkers, Thomas Paine, Clio Rickman, William Godwin, and Robert Owen.

Hogg, in his *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (ii., 328), mentions the famous "Walking Stewart" as "a tall, hard-featured, middle-aged man, impatiently forcing his way through the crowd that commonly impedes the passage across Westminster Bridge," and says "his chief delight was to walk at the rate of five miles an hour, straight on and, as long as it was light. In the evening he sought literary and

scientific conversation, and the commerce of wits." Hogg gives what is probably a highly colored anecdote concerning his parties. He says:—

"He complained to William Godwin: 'You, and the other great wits of the day, seldom come to my evening parties, and I know why you do not come. It is because you are afraid that the good things which you say will be lost; but, I assure you, you are mistaken. Not a single word will be thrown away; nothing will be lost. I have taken effectual precautions to prevent it. I have engaged twelve eminent shorthand writers; they are placed behind screens in different parts of the room very judiciously posted. They take down whatever they hear, and report it to myself; nothing can escape them. So fear not; not a word will be lost; talk your best!'"

A more veracious account is given in *The Reminiscences of Alaric Watts*, who describes him as an ascetic epicure. He was a vegetarian, eschewing, like the Brahmins, meat and intoxicants, yet concerning himself with the delectation of his guests. Watts says:—

"One of his most cherished friends was Robert Owen, of New Lanark, who was always welcomed with greater cordiality, and was a general favorite with the younger guests. His manners exhibited the beau ideal of *bonhomie*, genial to all, and to the young most kind and paternal."

Stewart in 1803 gave "Lectures on the Human Mind and the Study of Man," and he wrote numerous books expounding his philosophic views. They had strange-sounding titles, such as *The Siphonometer*, *The Tocsin of Social Life*, *The Revelation of Nature*, *The Revolution of Reason*, *The Book of Intellectual Life*, and *Opas Maximum*. The books were as strange. A solitary thinker wandering among many nations, Stewart had acquired a thought and language of his own. As De Quincey remarks: "Potentially, he was a great man." But he lacked power of popular exposition and expression.

De Quincey, who was much struck by the eloquence of his conversation, lays his finger on a damning fault of his writings, in saying "he was everlastingly metaphysicising against metaphysics." A few quotations may illustrate both his views and his style:—

"With what weakness is it asserted that matter is inert, while each atom proves to the contrary. Where do we discover matter destitute of power? Is it in the minute particles of the virulent poisons? or is it in the atoms of inflammable air buried in the earth, which precipitates whole cities into ruins? And where is the particle that does not possess electrical power, chemical affinity, and gravity? And this partial power, energy of nature—the great whole of power in its component parts."

Speaking of man, he says:—

"Man is formed of particles of matter, organised so as to resemble a corded instrument of music of five strings, which correspond with the five senses. The intellectual faculties hold the bow and play, and the passions form the stops upon the handle of the instrument; and if just tones are produced, simultaneously or successively, their harmony of melody forms what is called an agreeable tune or air, or well-being and happiness, of which man himself possesses consciousness; and in this power he is superior to, and differs from, the inanimate instrument."

He advocated what he called "the philosophy of Materialism" and the "perfectibility of human nature." De Quincey says:—

"Like the late Mr. Shelley, he had a fine vague enthusiasm, and lofty aspirations in connection with human nature generally and its hopes; and, like him, he strove to give steadiness, a uniform direction, and an intelligible purpose to these feelings, by fitting to them a scheme of philosophical opinions."

Alaric Watts (ii., 282) gives the following account of his opinions:—

"His theory seemed to involve the rejection not only of revealed, but also of natural, religion, truly so-called. Kind-hearted and benevolent to the highest degree, it was his whim to ascribe his sympathy for his race to feelings of mere selfishness. He supposed that there was a continual transmutation of constituent atoms between all bodies brought within the sphere of reciprocal influence, and that the process was regular and invariable. He denied that there was any manifestation of intelligence in the structure of the globe, or of the bodies on its surface, and disclaimed wholly any belief in the existence of a superintending deity."

De Quincey said in *Tait's Magazine*, though he did not reprint the observation in book form:—

"In fact, he was as deliberate and resolute an Atheist as can ever have existed; but for all that, and although wishing, for his own sake, that he had been a more religious man, or at least had felt a greater reverence for such subjects, and a closer sympathy with that which for so vast a majority of the human race must ever constitute their sole consolation under sorrow and calamity, still I could not close my eyes to the many evidences which his writings and his conversation afforded of a true grandeur of mind, and of a calm Spinozistic state of contemplative reverie."

Among his eccentricities, both of thought and diction, are many good things. He said with Spinoza: "To think is to

identify ourselves with nature." He was himself a thinker, at times original and deep, but without method. He insisted that the mind should be regarded, "not as a sack of science, but as an instrument of sense." Travel and observation he preferred to books and knowledge. He says:—

"The most important action of my life was to uneducate myself and wipe away the evil propensities and erudite nonsense of school instruction. I soon discovered that the maxims of virtue would avail little against the untutored dispositions of violence, fraud, cruelty, falsehood, and superstitious inanity."

He thought that most minds carried over-much sail with too slim a rudder. So he says: "The human mind should be taught to think before it is taught to know, and the rudder of reason should be fixed before the mind is launched into the ocean of life." Virtue and vice, he said, are synonymous with wisdom and folly. Christianity he calls a more ridiculous system of superstition than the Pagan Pantheon. "This Christian superstition," he continues, "brought on the long period of the dark ages, which now exists in defiance of all the progress of science, literature, and travels." He says: "All appeal to supernatural or universal power is downright insanity. Man can profit only in an appeal to the intelligible and communicative power of reason in his own species." "Intellectual discernment," he says, "would avoid the excess of wealth, which always produces corresponding poverty, and often the most frightful evils. It would seek to deduce good from evil, so to modify war that it may become the means of peace, coercion that it may become the means of liberty, and civil government that its power may become the means of national prosperity in reconciling public interest with private good."

Sometimes he shows a touch of wit, as when he says the Irish Catholics have "only Father Murphy's supper in the clouds to allure them." His travels gave him a good opinion of his own countrymen. He disputes their being phlegmatic, and says "an Englishman would buy a house before a foreigner would finish the bargain of an egg." He divided society into seven classes—viz., savage, pastoral, agrestic, scientific, confederate, and perfectible life. He advocated missions to the lower classes from the superior ones, "not to teach them, as has been the practice, the silly doctrines of mythology and metaphysics, to make fools of them, but of practical secular education in useful arts and sciences." He notes how the offer of a reward for a chimney-sweeping invention did away with the cruelty of children sweeping chimneys, which religion was unable to effect. "Religion," he remarks, "demands implicit assent to all propositions upon pain of punishment, which disposes the mind to indolence of examination, ignorance, and a breach of probity." "Reflection, rising superior to the narrow confines of religious creeds and mythological dogmas, and comprehending the vast circle of nature's laws relative to man, discovers the end of his being to be the improvement of the mundane system in time and futurity."

De Quincey, who knew him well, says:—

"He was a man of extraordinary genius. He has generally been treated by those who have spoken of him in print as a madman. But this is a mistake, and must have been founded chiefly on the titles of his books. He was a man of fervid mind, and of sublime aspirations; but he was no madman, or, if he was, then I say that it is so far desirable to be a madman."

In describing his own characteristics, Stewart, in his *Opus Maximum*, says:—

"I have learnt to pity, and not to resent, the passions of others; and when to an angry or illiberal observation I reply with complacent language, it is but marking my own superiority of moral temperament, and showing that I am not to be infected with moral as with physical contagion. A philosopher may catch the small-pox, but if he catches his passions, he must be a fool."

Stewart died February 20, 1822, and left by his will a thousand pounds to Edinburgh University, which he esteemed the most liberal institution of the kind. His works remain a curious, ill-shapen, rugged mass of unrefined ore, whence, with much smelting, precious metal can still be obtained.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

Correspondence.

A CORRECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Kindly permit me to correct a trifling error in last week's selection from the late Mr. Wheeler's "Some Little-known Freethinkers."

Judge Strange—my brother-in-law—was 76 years and 7 months old—not 75—when he died.

ELPHINSTONE BEGGIE (Major-General).

MUCH BETTER THAN CURSING.

Two Irishmen, the eldest of whom was badly club-footed were tramping along a country road. At noon they stopped under a tree to rest and have a nap. The club-foot man took off his shoes and placed them near him. In about an hour they awoke to find that some thief had made away with the shoes.

Immediately the young man made the air sulphurous with curses of the thief for fully five minutes. Then the club-foot man cried out: "Ah, ah! Mike, don't curse him so, but pray. Down on your knees and pray to the Virgin with me that inside of an hour my old crooked shoes'll fit him."

EXPERIENCED.

During an Episcopal convention in Boston, one of the bishops had an experience he will long remember. He was a portly man, weighing over 300 pounds. One afternoon while walking through Boston Common he sat down on one of the benches to rest. When he attempted to get up, he failed in the effort. He tried again and failed. About this time a little girl, poorly clad, came along and was attracted by the struggles of the bishop. Stepping up to him, she exclaimed:—

"Don't you want me to give you a lift?"

The bishop gazed at her in amazement and exclaimed:

"Why, you can't help me. You are too little."

"No, I am not," she replied, "I have helped my pa get up many times when he was drunker than you are."

It had been a trying day in the nursery, and nurse had had occasion several times to call for assistance in the management of what that day had proved a very unruly little miss. The child seemed conscious of her fall from grace, and it was with a very sober face that she came to ask forgiveness. After repeating the time-honored, "Now I lay me down to sleep," she continued, as was her wont, "An' now, Dod, please bess mamma an' papa, an' make me a dood dir! —" Here she paused, and, with the seriousness which convulsed the other members of the family and completely won her mother's forgiveness, she added, "An' if at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!" It is to be hoped *le bon Dieu* took it as good-humoredly as her parents, and was encouraged to another almighty effort.

In a "Methodist" 'vival' once, attended wholly by enthusiastic darkies, there ensued so much commotion during the hysterical excitement that the red-hot stove was overturned. The result was a small panic, but the white-wooled pastor rose up in the pulpit, and, stretching out his arms, shouted: "Pick it up, Brudder Granger, pick it up! De Laud won't let it burn yuh!" Brother Granger, full of faith which was inspired by the revival, rushed forward and started to pick up the stove. A veil must be drawn over the details of the natural consequences that followed; but it was impossible not to hear Brother Granger's first remark, which was: "The hell he won't!"

A clergyman in an Eastern town warned his hearers lately "not to walk in a slippery path, lest they be sucked, maelstrom-like, into its meshes." This metaphor suggests that of another clergyman, who prayed that the word might be as a nail driven in a sure place, sending its roots downward and its branches upward.

"You might put on thar," said the bereaved husband to the rural sculptor, "that she died peaceful, an' that we wouldn't call her back." "Anything else?" "She never spoke a cross word in her life." "All right." "Bein deaf an' dumb an' of a quiet an' retirin' natur'." "Is that all?" "Well, you might throw in a little scriptur'. Jest say, 'Her children rise up an' call her Betsy.'"

A country rector complained to a well-known dignitary of the Church that he had received only £5 for preaching a sermon at Oxford. "Five pounds!" ejaculated the dignitary. "Why, I would not have preached that sermon for fifty."

Sunday-school Teacher (after telling the story of David): "And all this happened over three thousand years ago." Little Clara: "Oh, my; what a memory you have got!"

The Sinner had been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Whereupon the attorneys for the Sinner filed a motion for a new trial on the ground that the scales were out of order.]

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