

THE Freethinker

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I differ with Moore in thinking Christianity useful to the world; no man of sense can think it true.

—SHELLEY.

Laws Against Religious Liberty.

THE present age boasts of its freedom. Civil and religious liberty is almost a commonplace among Englishmen. Catholics, Dissenters, and Jews have all been enfranchised. They enjoy the full rights of citizenship; their propaganda, worship, and property are fully protected by the law. But there is one exception to this rule of toleration. Freethinkers are still victims of oppression. They may vote for members of Parliament, and other representatives of the people; they may even sit in Parliament without hypocrisy or subterfuge under Mr. Bradlaugh's Oaths Act; but they are still insulted as jurymen by ignorant or bigoted judges; and they are liable to penalties for propagating their principles.

Many persons who are not Freethinkers are unaware of the grievances under which they suffer, and the following statement is intended for their benefit. It is believed that, when they understand the facts of the case, they will, for the most part, be favorable to an alteration of the law, so that all forms of opinion may enjoy a legal equality.

Under the old English law, heresy, blasphemy, schism, and other such offences, were tried and punished by the Ecclesiastical Courts. By the writ *de heretico comburendo* atheists, heretics, blasphemers, and schismatics could be burnt to death. This penalty was only abolished in 1677 by the Act 29 Charles II., cap. 9. The Act did not, however, take away the power of the Ecclesiastical Courts to deal with such offenders by "censures not extending to death." But in the course of time, by a gradual change of practice, the Ecclesiastical Courts have lost actual jurisdiction except over clergymen of the Church of England.

As heresy dropped out of sight attention became fixed on blasphemy. Lord Coleridge said that "the law of blasphemous libel first appeared in our books—at least the cases relating to it are first reported—shortly after the curtailment or abolition of the jurisdiction of the Ecclesiastical Courts in matters temporal. Speaking broadly, before the time of Charles II. these things would have been dealt with as heresy; and the libellers so-called of more recent days would have suffered as heretics in earlier times.

This law and practice continued till the passing of an Act known as the 9 and 10 William III., cap. 32, called "An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness." It declares that "any person or persons having been educated in, or at any time having made profession of, the Christian religion within this realm, who shall, by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God, or shall assert or maintain that there are more gods than one, or shall deny the Christian doctrine to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority," shall upon conviction be disabled from holding any ecclesiastical, civil, or military employment, and on a second conviction be im-

prisoned for three years and deprived for ever of all civil rights.

Lord Coleridge and Sir James Stephen have both called this law "ferocious." But it still disgraces the Statute Book. So much of it, as affected the Unitarians, was ostensibly repealed by the 58 George III., cap. 160. Lord Eldon, however, in 1817, doubted, whether it was even partially repealed; and Chief Baron Kelly and Lord Bramwell, so late as 1867, held that a lecture on "The Character and Teachings of Jesus: the former Defective, the latter Misleading," was an offence against the Statute.

This "infamous" Act was drawn up with such stringency that it defeated itself. No prosecution ever took place under it. But it largely guided the judges in their view of the Common Law of Blasphemy, under which scores of Freethinkers have been imprisoned.

The Act of William III. specifies certain *opinions* as blasphemous; it says nothing about the *language* in which they are couched. The crime was not in the manner but in the matter. And this view of Blasphemy was held by all our judges up to 1883, with the single exception of Lord Coleridge. In Woolston's case (1790) the Court "would not suffer it to be debated whether to write against Christianity in general was not an offence at Common Law." In Carliile's case (1819) the Court "was bound not to hear the truth of the Christian religion questioned." It declared that "if the defendant wished to produce authors to show that the Christian religion *might be denied*, that could not be allowed." Lord Chief Justice Abbott said "it was not competent in a Christian court, in a court of law, to rise up and say that the Christian religion was not a religion of truth." Mr. Justice Best went still further. He said: "The Act is not confined to those who libel religion, but extends to those who, in their most private intercourse, by advised conversation *admit* that they disbelieve the Scriptures." Lord Ellenborough, in the case of Eaton (1812), who was prosecuted for selling Paine's *Age of Reason*, said that "to deny the truth of the book which is the foundation of our faith, has never been permitted." In the case of Hetherington (1841), it was decided by Lord Chief Justice Denman that "an attack upon the Old Testament is clearly indictable." In the case of Paterson (Edinburgh, 1846), the Lord Justice Clerk said that the law expressly provided that "they who publish opinions contrary to the known principles of Christianity might be called to account and proceeded against by the civil magistrate." When the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh was illegally arrested at Devonport, in 1861, for *intending* to lecture against the Bible, he brought an action for false imprisonment, and obtained *one farthing* damages; Lord Justice Erle, holding that the policeman, although he acted illegally, had really conferred a benefit on the plaintiff by preventing him from disseminating infidel opinions. Precisely the same view was taken by the Court of Exchequer in the case of Cowen *v.* Milbourn. Baron Bramwell said "it was unlawful to deny the truth of Christianity or the divine authority of the Scriptures." Lord Chief Baron Kelly added that to call the teaching of Christ misleading was "a violation of the law and cannot be done without blasphemy."

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

The Clergy.

LAST week's article was hardly out of my hands before I received a lengthy letter from a correspondent, which, curiously enough, dealt with an issue raised therein. The writer complains of what he calls the "habit" of Freethought writers dealing with the clergy as though they were all either rogues or fools. He says that he is personally acquainted with many intelligent and worthy men in the ranks of the clergy, and protests against the habitual injustice to which they are subjected. He adds that he does not call himself a Christian, although from the tone of his letter I do not think he is a Freethinker. Still, he is within his rights in ventilating what he considers a grievance, and I purpose dealing with his complaint in the same tone in which it is raised. I do not intend dealing with the rest of his letter at length, as it merely illustrates and enforces the point noted.

First of all, as to the facts. It is not true that writers in the *Freethinker* are in the habit of classifying clergymen as either rogues or fools. They know better. They know that such a statement would be false, and they would be themselves fools to make assertions, the consequence of which, would be injury to their own case. What they do protest against—or, to put the matter on a personal basis—what I have always protested against is the assumption that the clergy are better, morally or intellectually, than other people. They are not. On the contrary, there are circumstances connected with their training and status that tend to dull their sense of moral discrimination and intellectual rectitude. I am not prepared to say that the clergy, as a class, are worse than any other class. I do say they are no better, that their assumption of superiority is a relic of the old magic-working days, and that no man is made a better man by becoming a clergyman. However good he may be, the probability is that he would have been better had he never entered the pulpit.

Let us stick to two facts—facts that can be accepted by both sides. As a class, the clergy represent a body of educated men. They have all been carefully trained—too carefully trained. A large number of them carry degrees, and, whatever their faults may be, they cannot be due to want of education—using that word in a purely scholastic sense. Yet what proportion of new ideas, of advanced ideas, spring from their midst? What sort of a welcome is given by them to new ideas when advanced by other people? It is notorious that in both respects they make a poorer show than any other class in the community. And they make greater claims than any other class. Doctors do not profess to guide the community save in the matter of health. Lawyers only profess to guide in matters of law. But the clergy profess to guide in all the larger and more serious issues of life. The clergy not only fail to originate or to respond to new ideas in science, in ethics, or in sociology, it is the same with regard to their own special subject. They do not lead in matters of religion. The last century saw an enormous revolution of opinion on religious subjects; yet this was forced upon the clergy from the outside, and many have not accepted it yet. For over 200 years the clergy fought against the truth concerning the Old Testament. They were instrumental in getting men and women imprisoned, pilloried, whipped, and slandered for teaching the truth, and they only admitted they were in the wrong when denial became more dangerous than admission. To resist as long as may be, to denounce the investigator as an enemy to all that is worth preserving, and to minimise the importance of new ideas when they can no longer be denied, is the historic policy of the clergy of all the Churches.

Putting on one side the opposition during early years to Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Buffon, and Lyell, let us take the clergy in relation to the theory of evolution. Darwin's work was met by them with

universal vituperation. It was not that they rejected Natural Selection as untrue; that would have been a legitimate ground of objection, although the clergy were quite incompetent to express an opinion. Their objection was that it was contrary to their religion. So far, I agree with them; and this was the one grain of truth that figured in their mountain of abuse. It deposed God, they said, and established Atheism. In a very few years the more astute among the clergy saw that the game was up. Accordingly a new discovery was made. Christianity implied evolution. Darwin became a teacher of Christianity as Bradlaugh was—after his death—made a religious character. Evolution placed religion on a scientific basis. Science became the handmaid of theology.

Were the clergy quite genuine, even here? Did they, do they, even now really welcome scientific advance and investigation? If science and all its works could be banished, would the clergy complain? I have my doubts. In the sixteenth century the Jews of Spain were faced with the alternative of conversion or exile and death. Thousands became converted and were regular attendants at Church. But from the Church service many hurried home to carry out the Jewish ceremonies in private. If one could have watched the converted Spanish Jew in his home one would have found how genuine his adherence to Christianity was. When one watches the clergy carefully one notes how real is their attachment to scientific advance. Let a scientific worker challenge any presentment of the doctrine of evolution; above all, let him point out that there are certain limitations to science, that on some topics our ignorance is indestructible, and nowhere is he hailed with such glee as in Christian pulpits. Everywhere else ignorance is regarded as a misfortune. In the pulpit it becomes glad tidings of great joy. Now, as ever, the clergy show that they feel general ignorance to be the surest guarantee of their own rule.

Still more facts. Two hundred years ago, even a century ago, the clergy had the same beliefs that they had possessed a thousand years before. They believed in special creation, in Providence, in prayer, in miracles, in inspiration. So far as mere words are concerned, they have these beliefs still. Now I say deliberately that the majority of the clergy do not believe in these things at all. Press them to explain what is meant by a miracle, and they will reply ancient miracles were misunderstood natural happenings. Ask them whether prayers are really answered, and they will reply, Yes, *subjectively*. That is, one derives a mental solace and strength from the belief that one is in contact with a higher Power. The names are here, but their old meaning has gone. And the chief objection is that even now these definitions are only submitted on compulsion. When they can, the clergy keep up the delusion. Will any of them have the courage and the honesty to say plainly from the pulpit that the course of nature is unalterable? That disease is not to be cured by prayer, that prayer will not produce a good harvest, send a ship safely to its destination, or bring an army success? Will they tell their congregations plainly that the only benefit from prayer is that it gives those who pray a mental tonic, so long as they believe? My correspondent knows as well as I do that they will not do this. They will continue to keep the old illusions alive by the use of the old language and the old forms. Men may believe in all the things named and be stupid; they cannot accept the better knowledge of to-day, and continue preaching the old doctrines, and still retain a sound title to honesty.

Here, then, is the plain issue. A man of small culture and intelligence—there are plenty such in the pulpit—may retain a character for honesty and still preach the old doctrines. But in proportion as his culture and intelligence is enlarged, so his straightforwardness is diminished. Either he deliberately preaches things he knows to be false, or he gives a new meaning to the old doctrines—a meaning

which they never did bear, and cannot now be fairly made to bear. That is the reason why with each generation the occupancy of the pulpit becomes more and more distasteful to men of genuine ability. Lesser men get their chance. And the religion that once found its leaders in a Hooker, a Jeremy Taylor, a Butler, and a Newman, now finds it in a Dr. Dixon, a Bishop Ingram, and a R. J. Campbell.

Do I mean, then, that the bulk of the clergy are hypocrites? Not a bit of it. They are, many of them, humbugs, but not hypocrites. Human nature could not sustain so elaborate an hypocrisy, or even so large a humbug, if all were conscious of the part they played. The humbug is sustained because it is largely unconscious. It is moralised because it springs from a class ethic. Given a body of men whose whole interest in life is bound up with the maintenance of a particular institution, let them be specially trained for service in or on behalf of that institution, and they inevitably come to measure things by different values to that which attach to other matters. We see something of this in the professional ethic of lawyers or doctors; but we see it most clearly, and with its evil features most pronounced, in the case of the clergy. For religion is by its very nature less open to the influence of new knowledge and needs, and more dependent upon the maintenance of the beliefs and intellectual atmosphere of bygone generations. It is, consequently, more alert to detect innovating tendencies, and more ferocious in the opposition offered. Not, be it noted, on the real ground that they threaten the interests of a class and the security of an institution, but on the fictitious ground that they weaken morality, degrade humanity, etc., etc. In this way bigotry and self-interest shelters itself behind a cloud of moral phrases, and does this so effectively that it imposes upon the clergy themselves. Strongly as I believe in the humbug of the modern clergy, and their utter uselessness to the State, I also believe that large numbers persuade themselves that they are working in the interests of society at large. Education and self-interest combined have taught them to identify the welfare of the Church with the welfare of the State, and so prevents their looking at things from the standpoint of a rational, healthy, social life. There are, of course, other types of clergy, about whom the less said the better.

Well, then, here are the facts that must determine any rational judgment concerning the clergy. A body of educated men, at least 50,000 strong, shows itself to-day, as of old, absolutely unproductive of new or progressive ideas. In the main, they show themselves hostile to their introduction and propagation. They are trained, not to search for truth as a scientist is trained to seek truth, not to use the supposed truth already possessed as a means of acquiring more, but simply to teach a body of doctrines already established. The consequence of this is that the whole of their real interest lies in maintaining things as they are. Identifying themselves with their Church and the welfare of their Church with that of the nation, the clerical mind operates under the influence of an ethic that is false in theory and dangerous in practice, and only those who thwart them know how the peculiarities of the clerical ethic express themselves. For a clergyman to be intellectually straightforward means that he must be either stupid enough to close his mind to developing knowledge and life, or he must leave the pulpit altogether. If he does not belong to the first class, and lacks the courage to follow the last course, his whole life becomes a series of evasions, apologies, and intellectual shuffles such as hardly any other educated body of men would stoop to. It may well be that the clergyman is not always consciously dishonest in these tactics. Personally, I should say that the vast majority are not. But the fact remains. And the fact that the mental crookedness is unconscious, that it can be concealed under the cover of a moral duty is only the more conclusive proof of the evil of the profession. No Freethinker need deny the existence of many good men among

the clergy. The more numerous they are, the stronger is his case against the order. To paraphrase Ingersoll, our quarrel is not with the man beneath the priest. It is with the priest that almost inevitably strangles the man.

C. COHEN.

Sin.

THE Church is beginning to realise the vast importance and incalculable value of the doctrine of sin. In its absence the Church, in its present form, could not exist, and the significant fact is that the sense of sin is undoubtedly weakening everywhere. This was frankly admitted by the Right Rev. George Nickson, Bishop of Jarrow, in a paper which he read at the Islington Conference at Mildmay Hall a few weeks ago. Whilst stoutly contending that sin is a fact in human experience, his lordship was bound to recognise the grave danger of its ceasing to be such a fact. He bluntly stated that the piety of the best Christians to-day is an entirely different thing from that which prevailed even a generation ago. As a well-known scientist said a few years ago, "the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins, still less about their punishment." For this ecclesiastically mournful state of things Dr. Nickson blames the growth of luxury and the pursuit of power which are characteristic of the present age. Those are what he calls material causes of the decay of the sense of sin. Evolutionary science, too, has to bear its share of the responsibility, because its natural tendency is to "obliterate the impression of a Personal God," without which impression sin, in its theological meaning, becomes an impossibility. Now, the Bishop tells us that it is the bounden duty of the Church to "make it clear that sin is a fact of human experience."

The Rev. E. A. Eardley-Wilmot, M.A., also read a paper on sin at the Islington Conference which ran on similar lines to that by the Bishop. Both clergymen deplore the fact that sin is either openly denied or thought so lightly of at the present day. Mr. Eardley-Wilmot quotes the following passage from the pen of Bishop Gore:—

"There will be no revival of vital religion among us on any large scale, or with any adequate results, except through a deepening of the sense of sin—a return to the properly Christian severity of view about the meaning of sin and its consequences."

Dr. Gore is perfectly right; but the revival for which he looks and works is not likely ever to take place, because the sense of sin, instead of deepening, is rapidly becoming shallower and shallower. "What has decayed among us rapidly," said Dean Inge many years ago, "is the reality of sin," and what was true then is much truer now. On this point there can be no two opinions. Bishop Nickson admits that if Massillon, one of the greatest of French preachers, lived to-day instead of two hundred years ago, he could not paralyse his hearers with his vivid description of men's sins and of their terrible consequences, as he so easily did then. The days for frightening people in that manner are past, never to return, because the sense of sin, being the product of superstition, is being destroyed by knowledge. The Bishop was quite right when he held science partly responsible for the change which he so ardently deplores; but we go a little further, and declare that science has been the chief agent in bringing it about. Professor David Smith, in his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly* for January 22, asserts that, whilst the theologian is bound to accept all its findings in its own domain, science has no right to invade that of the theologian. "Its province is strictly limited," he assures us. "It takes cognisance of things as they are, and investigates their genesis and relations. Beyond this it cannot travel." Are we to infer that the theologian deals with things as they are not? This is what Dr. Smith says about the man of science:—

"When the Scriptures affirm an initial catastrophe he holds his peace. 'Of that,' he says, 'I know

nothing. It is only things as they are that lie within my ken, and I cannot tell what may have preceded or determined them.'.....The moment he goes further in the way of affirmation or of denial, he invades the province of theology and ceases to be a man of science. Thus it is open to the theologian, while accepting the legitimate verdicts of science, to assume that initial catastrophe denominated the Fall, and the question is whether there be evidence to justify the affirmation."

What a horrible caricature of the man of science that extract is. To deal with things as they are and trace their evolution is to discover that there is absolutely no record of an initial catastrophe. Geological remains disclose no sign whatever of the Fall. What is the use of quoting Coleridge on the subject? Coleridge never investigated the genesis and relations of things, nor had he the means of doing so, such as we possess. Dr. Smith imagines that there is at least a two-fold evidence of the sinful condition of mankind. Let us hear and examine it:—

"The presence in man's life and within the orbit of his influence of moral disorder and the suffering which it entails. In an otherwise orderly universe it is impossible to regard this as normal, and thus, to my mind, the doctrine of the Fall is a corollary of the scientific axiom of the orderliness of Nature. Human lawlessness is a dislocation of natural law."

That extract is chock-full of scientific errors. "Human lawlessness" is a figment of the theological imagination. A dislocation of natural law is a natural impossibility. The unbreakability of Nature's laws is a scientific truism. Heredity is insusceptible of dislocation. It is a law that works in a thoroughly orderly manner. Imperfection also seems to be a law from which Nature never departs. What the Professor speaks of as "moral disorder" is nothing in the world but natural imperfection, which throughout the animal kingdom entails suffering. "Disorder" is a wrong term in such a connection. All human actions are so far from being disorderly that it is possible to predict them. Whether good or bad, they are always orderly. That is to say, all deeds are determined by the laws of heredity and environment.

We now pass on to the second fold of the alleged evidence:—

"The testimony of our moral instincts. If sin were merely the natural imperfection of an incomplete development there would be no sense of guilt; for, as Erasmus puts it, we would have no more reason to lament that we are sinful than a horse that he is ignorant of grammar. But the sense of guilt is here, demanding explanation; and, to my mind, there is no explanation apart from a primal Fall."

This is the worst fallacy of all, though sound theology. The sense of guilt, in the theological sense, is not here by nature. It is a sense whose genesis is due alone to religious instruction. It is not a moral instinct at all, but a religious emotion peculiar to believers in God. Atheists are devoid of it, and their offspring know of it only by hearsay. Professor Smith's illustration undermines his case:—

"When a beggar sees a rich estate he covets it; but it is a more painful emotion that is stirred in the breast of a spendthrift by the sight of the broad lands which he has lost through his own wickedness. He curses himself and blushes for the folly which has robbed him of his heritage. The problem lies in this sense of shame, this instinct of self-reproach in the human breast; and the doctrine of the Fall is its solution—the only and, to my mind, the inevitable solution."

We confess our utter inability to comprehend the last sentence in that extract. Why, the sense of shame after committing a harmful act is entirely natural, and to reproach one's self for it is certainly to furnish no proof of "an initial catastrophe." We are acquainted with a sheep dog and a fox terrier who are bosom friends. They have been together for years without a single quarrel. Occasionally the terrier attempts to steal his friend's biscuit, when naturally he gets punished; but no sooner has the penalty been inflicted than the transgressor is affectionately licked. Now, is it not a sense of shame, or an instinct of self-reproach in the sheep dog's breast,

that induces him to kiss his offending brother? But surely there is no problem here the only solution of which is to be found in "an initial catastrophe" that overtook the canine race some four thousand years ago. It is the social instinct that solves the problem involved in the sense of shame. Man's sense of shame on account of a wrong act is so much stronger than a dog's simply because the social instinct in him is immeasurably more fully developed, and should be regarded, not as suggestive of a Fall in the far distant past, but as the outcome of a succession of ascents.

That we are fallen sinners needing redemption through the shed blood of an innocent Christ is an essentially degrading doctrine. The truth about us is that we have risen, not fallen, and that we need education, self-development, not restoration by an outsider. Divested of its theological connotations, sin denotes social offence, and is a sign of imperfect adaptation to environment; and in this sense, deliverance from sin is possible only as the result of our own efforts.

J. T. LLOYD.

Science and the Soul.

"As to the other great question, the question what becomes of man after death, we do not see that a highly educated European, left to his unaided reason, is more likely to be in the right than a Blackfoot Indian. Not a single one of the many sciences in which we surpass the Blackfoot Indians throws the smallest light on the state of the soul after the animal life is extinct. In truth all the philosophers, ancient and modern, who have attempted, without the help of revelation, to prove the immortality of man, from Plato down to Franklin, appear to us to have failed deplorably."—LORD MACAULAY, *Essays*, vol. ii., pp. 541-2.

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no preeminence above the beasts: for all is vanity. All go into one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him back to see what shall be after him?"—The Holy Bible (Revised Version), Ecclesiastes iii. 19-22.

"Just as our consciousness comes out of nothing in the first months, or years, of our life, so it will pass into nothing at the end of our life."

"Science cannot admit the immortality of the conscious soul, for consciousness is a function of special elements in the body that certainly cannot live for ever."—PROFESSOR METCHNIKOFF, *The Nature of Man*, pp. 160-285.

THE majority of people, in this country, are taught from earliest childhood to believe that they possess an immortal soul. So deeply rooted is this idea—like most of the ideas authoritatively taught during childhood—that people are surprised when first they meet with someone who has doubts upon the subject, and still more so at one who denies the existence of an immortal soul altogether.

Yet there is not a scrap of scientific evidence to prove that man possesses a soul that will survive the death and dissolution of the body. Even Professor Fiske, the author of *Through Nature to God*, regretfully admits: "It is not likely that we shall ever succeed in making the immortality of the soul a matter of scientific demonstration, for we lack the requisite data. It must ever remain an affair of religion rather than of science."* And if scientists know nothing of a soul, the philosophers have been equally unable to supply evidence of its existence. Upon this point we have the express testimony of Bishop Watson, who, in his *Apology for the Bible*, written in reply to Paine's *Age of Reason*, declared:—

"Notwithstanding the illustrious labors of Gassendi, Cudworth, Clarke, Baxter, and of above two hundred other modern writers on the subject, the natural mortality or immortality of the human soul is as little understood by us as it was by the philosophers of Greece or Rome. The opposite opinions of Plato and Epicurus, on this subject, have their several supporters amongst the learned of the present age, in Great

* Fiske, *The Destiny of Man* (1890), p. 108.

Britain, Germany, France, Italy, in every enlightened part of the world; and they who have been most seriously occupied in the study of the question concerning a future state, as deducible from the nature of the human soul, are least disposed to give from reason a positive decision of it either way. The importance of revelation is by nothing rendered more apparent than by the discordant sentiments of learned and good men (for I speak not of the ignorant and immoral) on this point. They show the insufficiency of human reason, in a course of above two thousand years, to unfold the mystery of human nature and to furnish from the contemplation of it any assurance from the quality of our future condition.*

Moreover, the idea of an immortal soul and a future life is not only rejected by millions of the more enlightened inhabitants of Europe, but it always has been rejected by millions of the followers of a religion which numbers more adherents than Christianity—namely, Buddhism.

Mr. G. T. Bettany tells us that "Buddhism even does not allow that there is a soul distinct from the body. Practically, it only recognises the combined being that is seen or is conscious of itself, and that suffers; and it has no explanation beyond."† This is confirmed by Professor Rhys Davids—our highest authority upon the subject—who says: "Buddhism does not acknowledge the existence of a soul as a thing distinct from the parts and powers of man which are dissolved at death, and the Nirvana of Buddhism is simply extinction."‡

The ancient Jews themselves had no idea of a future life. The Bible did not give us the idea of immortality, says Ingersoll:—

"The Old Testament tells you how you lost immortality; it does not say another word about another world from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse in Malachi. There is not in the Old Testament one burial service. No man in the Old Testament stands by the bed and says, 'I will meet them again'—not one word. From the top of Sinai came no hope of another world."§

In Genesis we read that God placed Adam and Eve in a garden, giving them permission to eat of the fruit of every tree except the tree of knowledge—knowledge appears to be as much feared by God as it is by the priests. Adam and Eve having, in spite of this arbitrary command, eaten of the tree, we are told,—

"the Lord God said, behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.....he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. iii. 22-24).

We read nothing whatever of any promise, or hope, of a future life after death. Later, in the Hebrew God's covenants with Abraham, all the good things promised are to take place in this world, his seed will outnumber the stars in the heavens and the sands of the sea (Gen. xxii. 1-7), he is to be the father of many nations, and in return Abraham, to fulfil his part of the contract, is to see that "Every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. xvii. 10), Abraham's own reward being, "And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age" (Gen. xv. 15). Again, in the Ten Commandments delivered to Moses, the Lord tells the people to honor their parents, not that they may inherit eternal life, but "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. xx. 12).

Plenty of children, wealth, and a good old age were the rewards held out to the Jews if they placed all their religious business with the house of Jehovah, and had no dealings with disreputable firms like Baal, Moloch, Dagon, and other competitors.

Bishop Warburton wrote a great work—great in size, we mean—entitled *The Divine Legation of Moses*, to prove that God did not reveal the idea of a future life to Moses. Voltaire describes Warburton, in this work, as "ranging through a hundred labyrinths, and fighting all he met with on the way."*

When the translators of our Authorised Version of the Bible came to the passage in the book of Ecclesiastes which declares that man, in his death, has no pre-eminence over the beasts that perish, they were shocked that the Holy Ghost should have inspired the writer with such infidel sentiments, calculated to cut at the very roots of religion. So they quietly altered the inspired words to read, "the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth" (Eccle. iii. 21). The true reading is rendered in the Revised Version, as given at the head of this article.

They also accomplished many other pious frauds, notably the celebrated passage in Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," which the Revised Version has not corrected, although every Hebrew scholar knows that the original says nothing at all about a Redeemer, but speaks of an Avenger who will put a curse upon Job's enemies in this life. In fact, Professor Dillon, in his learned and scholarly work, *The Sceptics of the Old Testament*, has demonstrated that the authors of the book of Job, Ecclesiastes, and of the sayings of Agur, in the book of Proverbs, were thorough-going sceptics when divested of the orthodox trimmings added by priests and translators. The Messiah, whose coming is foretold by the prophets, was not regarded as a heavenly ruler, but as a victorious king upon earth, who would restore the kingdom of Israel and place the Gentiles under their feet; and, in fact, the Jews still look forward to the coming of this Messiah, steadfastly rejecting the claims of Jesus Christ to that title, through nearly two thousand years of blood and fire.

Even so orthodox a defender of the Bible as Mr. Gladstone, the author of *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, admits that "the truth concerning a future state does not appear to have constituted a specific element in the divine commission entrusted to the Hebrew race."† And when Gladstone abandoned an orthodox defence, the case was indeed a hopeless one.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

"THE LIGHT THAT FAILED."

A generation or two back badly lighted churches were the rule. In one of Edward Fitzgerald's letters to Fanny Kemble, he narrates the following, which was told him by "a pious but humorous man":—

Scene.—Country Church on Winter's evening. Congregation with the "Old Hundredth" ready for the parson to give out some dismissal words.

Good old parson, not at all meaning rhyme: "The Light has grown so very dim, I scarce can see to read the Hymn."

Congregation, taking it up: to the first half of the "Old Hundredth":

"The Light has grown so very dim,
I scarce can see to read the Hymn."

(Pause, as usual: Parson mildly impatient): "I did not mean to read a Hymn; I only meant my eyes were dim."
Congregation, to second part of the "Old Hundredth":

"I did not mean to read a Hymn;
I only meant my Eyes were dim."

Parson, out of all patience, etc.: "I didn't mean a Hymn at all—I think the Devil's in you all!"

Two little girls, returning from Sunday-school, were discussing the progress they respectively had made.

First girl: "I'm past original sin."

Second girl: "O! that's nothing, I'm past redemption!"

* Richard Watson (Lord Bishop of Landaff), *Apology for the Bible* (1820), p. 138.

† G. F. Bettany, *The World's Religions*, p. 227.

‡ Professor Rhys Davids, Article "Buddhism," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Ninth Edition).

§ Ingersoll, *The Dying Creed*, p. 31.

* Voltaire, Article "Soul," *Philosophical Dictionary*.

† *Nineteenth Century*, 1891.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Winston Churchill never suffered from attacks of modesty. He put it on record that divine aid was consciously vouchsafed to him when he escaped from captivity by the Boers. He promised to explain the whole incident some time in the not too distant future. But that time has not arrived yet, and probably never will, unless the right honorable gentleman lives long enough to be senile. At that stage of life it is common to indulge in pious reminiscences.

One would like to have had Kruger's opinion of Mr. Winston Churchill's escape. The old man would in all likelihood have sneered at the young Britisher's story of heavenly assistance. That sort of thing was, of course, enjoyed exclusively by the Boers, and mainly by their godly President, who occupied a prominent place in the celestial visiting book.

Whoever goes to the Admiralty will spend more and more millions—if he can. What is wanted is a great body of Navy Scouts, all good Christians, and all able to imitate Jesus by walking on the sea—as Jesus said they would if they only believed. That would be an immense saving in ships. At present the members of the British Navy cannot walk on the sea at all, and sometimes not on shore.

Miss M. Edith Durham, in a letter to the *Nation*, quotes the following passage from a communication from an inhabitant of Kortcha in Albania—where the Greeks are said to be doing so much good:—

"Pen can never describe the misery and discontent which prevails among the poor population. The above-mentioned incidents are insignificant as compared with the cruelties which I can never write down on paper. The world must surely be amazed that nations, calling themselves Christians, can, either through anger or greed, commit such barbarisms on their brethren. What we expected from the Turks we got in abundance from these Christians. Instead of the liberty and peace for which we fought during so many years, they brought all the debasing elements of their 'civilisation,' with unbridled passions, which are a great disaster to all our invaded places. Yes; the 'Allies' fought side by side simply for the extermination of our nation, and is it surprising, when I say the plain truth, that the population at present under the Servian and Greek banners are calling for the rule of the Crescent and not the Cross?"

Miss Durham used to be a light-hearted friend of the Balkan Christians. She recognises now with a sad heart that they are inferior to the Mohammedans.

Cassell's *Saturday Journal* is bound to provide its readers with something religious in the list of contents. In the last issue a Mr. Parkes Withers answered the question "If We Lost Our Religion?" He thinks we should lose very little for a time, but afterwards there would be a hell on earth, such as he fancies existed before Christianity was introduced. But the fact is that there never was such a hell on earth as this gentleman imagines; and there is hell enough on earth now, after nearly two thousand years of Christianity, to satisfy the appetite of the worst devils conceivable. Christian civilisation seems to be finally winding itself up in a war fever, although it is always declaring that its Founder came to bring Peace on earth, in spite of the fact that he himself said that he came not to send peace but a sword. More of the fruit of man's labor is spent every year on preparations for war. Huge armies of anti-social celibates are maintained at the cost of the better elements of human society, which is cursed and impoverished thereby. And when fighting actually takes place, as in the Balkans lately, it is found that the "Soldiers of Christ," as they call themselves, easily out-distance all rivals in cruelty, murder, and lust. The real truth is that nothing could be worse than Christianity, and almost anything else would be better.

Why did the great Christian Powers keep out of that Balkan cockpit? Simply for their own advantage. All other alleged motives were hypocritical pretences. The combatants were restricted to certain areas. That is all. There was no compassion or humanity in Western diplomacy. The Concert of Europe did not save one man's life, or one woman's honor, or one child's future promise. Yet it might have prevented the whole evil if it had only been minded to do so.

Mr. Parkes Withers argues—if it can be called arguing—that if we lost Christianity altogether "We should without

a doubt speedily degenerate into a set of human furies, resorting to all the disorder, violence, and ruthless gratification of our basest animal nature." That is precisely what happened in the case of the Balkan armies, not *without* Christianity, but *with* it. And it has been happening in Albania since what is supposed to be the conclusion of the war. Soldier of Christ has always meant Soldier of Hell.

Dr. J. J. Willis, one of the two bishops whose action in Uganda has led to the Kikuyu controversy, preaching at Westminster Abbey recently, said that the missionary pioneers "died a thousand miles from anywhere." How exact! It reminds one of the customary opening of fairy tales, "Once upon a time."

Lord Charles Beresford, writing in the current issue of *Nash's Magazine*, says that "religion is an accident of birth." It is an accident that leaves lifelong traces.

"You may live anywhere now," says the Rev. A. C. Hill, "from Cornwall to John o' Groat's, and no one will ever suggest to you that you should go to chapel." We beg to differ. We receive scores of circulars during the year, and so do most other people, inviting us to church or chapel and suggesting a grave infringement of duty if we stay away. And what about the house-to-house canvassing that is every now and then attempted? Mr. Hill's excuse for small attendances is too thin. And if it were not, the phenomenon would need explaining. Why is it that, whereas attendance at "Divine Worship" was once thought indispensable it is now negligible? Does it not look as though people are discovering that whether they go to church or stay away, pray or cease to pray, makes no real difference? When people have got hold of a really good thing they usually stick to it. That they have not done so in the case of church attendance speaks volumes to those who read things aright.

Mr. Hill says that no man is now religious for what he can gain either in loaves and fishes or social position. And he adds that social prestige is outside, not inside, the Church. The Church is the home of the poor and the lonely, as it always has been. Well, this is simply not true. It may be admitted that in very many cases a man may stay away from church, and, *if he is silent*, not suffer. But let him open his mouth about religion. Let him exercise the same freedom of speech about the falsities of religion that other people do about its assumed truths, and then see what will happen. In a very large number of cases he will find that social prestige is all on the side of a respectable hypocrisy that aims at pretending to believe in the truth of religion even while it is known to be false.

How else are we to explain the silence of so many public men who are known to be anti-Christian, even anti-religious, in opinion? Are they silent because they do not desire to speak? We do not believe it. Very few men are willingly hypocrites, or remain silent when they might speak. Certainly it is untrue of men who show by their whole life that they have a deal of the propagandist in their make-up. No, the truth is that their social position would be ruined if they spoke out. Religious bigotry does not always approach the heretic with the jailor's key, or with the bribe of solid cash. It would succeed if it did. But the pressure of social boycott tells where other things would fail; and it is only the few that can stand out against that.

As for the Church being the home of the poor and the lonely, Mr. Hill knows better. The one cry of the clergy is that they cannot get the poor to attend Church. Let anyone stand outside a church or chapel on Sunday and note the entrants. How many poor and forlorn will he see enter? And who supplies the funds? Do these come from the poor and lonely? Mr. Hill must try again. His next attempt cannot easily be worse.

"Good Americans, when they die, go to Paris." It seems as if Ella Wheeler Wilcox is bound for the same goal. She has a poem on "Heresy" in *Nash's Magazine* which should guarantee the lady a free ticket. A stanza runs:—

"The world has a thousand creeds, and never a one have I:
Nor church of my own, though a million spires are pointing the way on high.
And heretic, though I am, outside of the pale of creeds,
I have love in my heart for god and man: and I think it is all one needs."

A lengthy discussion has been going on in the *Guardian* respecting the supply of the clergy. The complaint is that the quality is poor and the quantity inadequate. The general agreement arrived at by the correspondents and by the editor is that the question is almost entirely one of funds. If better incomes can be provided, better men and more men will be attracted to the ministry. We do not quarrel with this conclusion, save that no amount of money will ever again be able to purchase the kind of intellects that once figured in the Churches. Life has become too vast, and theology too obviously artificial, for that to occur. Money may purchase advocacy, but it cannot buy convictions. And the really great men of the past had sound convictions. That has now become almost an impossibility for men of first-rate intelligence. The Church to-day must either "suffer fools gladly," or buy the ability of men who are for sale, and who fail to convince others because there is no sincerity in themselves.

Apart from this, we quite agree that the question of the supply of the clergy is a question of funds. And no one has even the moral right to object to a clergyman being paid by those who require his services. But if this is so, why keep up the hollow cant about the clergyman being "called" to his work, as though it were a species of super-natural selection? Why not admit plainly that the profession of a clergyman is adopted exactly as that of a lawyer, or a doctor, or a banker. It is one of many methods of gaining a living. Once a man is a clergyman, the profession involves quite enough of self-stultification without its being initiated by an act of hypocrisy.

We don't know what is to be done with the Committee of the Swinton Poor Law Schools. Probably something in the boiling oil line might meet the case. Anyway, this band of reprobates has actually gone so far as to provide the children under its care with cinematograph shows on Sunday evenings. The *Guardians* have been asked by the Bishop of the diocese to consider attendance at picture theatres as a proper way of spending Sunday evenings. We don't know whether the Committee is considering the gravity of its offence, but obviously its duty to the Bishop and the clergy is to provide customers for the clergy as far as they can. Picture shows on Sunday evening! And for poor-law children too! If they cannot be made to attend church on Sunday, then the situation is indeed hopeless.

The *Church Family Newspaper* deserves some special award for its daring. Commenting on the coming performance of *Parsifal*, it remarks that Wagner's opera stood for something more than art and music even at its best; "it was the outcome of fervent religious devotion at its best." Wagner the Atheist as an exponent of religious devotion at its best! It would be a pity to spoil such a gem by further comment.

The Rev. Allen Edwards of South Lambeth, has published an appeal in the *Daily Mail* for Sunday clothing for 3,500 Sunday-school children. This appears to be an English adaptation of the manufacture of "rice Christians," so well-known in the mission fields.

Bishop Tucker has had a fit of mock heroics. Speaking of the present Bishop of Uganda, he said that "if he is sent to the stake I am prepared to go with him." Christians are not martyred for their opinions nowadays. They prefer to penalise Freethinkers.

The death of General Picquart recalls the Dreyfus trial, for the dead soldier took a prominent part in that affair. The great hero of the Dreyfus case was the Atheist, Emile Zola, whose swift live pen set Europe ablaze with indignation, and led to the reinstatement of the unfortunate Jewish officer.

The authorities, who found that Westminster Abbey was too full at the deaths of Herbert Spencer, Swinburne, and Meredith to permit of further burials, have promptly offered to the family the privilege of having Lord Strathcona's remains interred in the Abbey. The clergy do so love the "poor."

The so-called debate held at the Little Theatre on "Miracles" by Mr. G. K. Chesterton was referred to as the "Magic Debate" by the *Daily Sketch*. The whole performance was a miracle of politeness, for few of the speakers ever got near the subject in discussion.

One of the principal jokes in the farce of the "Do Miracles Happen?" debate at the Little Theatre was the presence and participation of the Rev. Dr. J. Warschauer—the gentleman who debated with Mr. Foote at Caxton Hall and made such an exhibition of himself by losing his temper. It was gravely announced in the *Chronicle* that Mr. Warschauer came up all the way from Bradford on purpose. His purpose, we presume, was to save London from being misled. With characteristic modesty he concluded that London was likely to suffer that calamity if he were not there to avert it. So he "came," and we dare say he added the rest of Cæsar's boast "I saw," "I conquered." We understand that the reverend gentleman returned to Bradford. We shudder to think of what might have happened there if he had not done so. To save one place and lose another is such doubtful economy.

"There are things in nature," says Mr. A. C. Benson, one of the most interesting of present-day religious essayists,

"which one cannot see without a horror of indignation. One sees weak, innocent, well-meaning, harmless people tortured by disease, by miserable delusions of the mind, by wretched misfortunes. I am not now speaking of the victims of the cruelty of man, but of what seems to be the cruelty of nature. No effort of reason, no easy optimism, no ingenious hypothesis is of the smallest avail to explain away these things."

Quite so; but need we try? We can accept them—we must accept them—as part of the order of things, and do our best to remedy them. But need we bother about explaining them? We do not "explain" why, if a man's head gets in the way of a falling brick, the man gets damaged. We accept the circumstances as in themselves sufficient. But if we knew that a man's hand threw the brick so that it would encounter the head, then we should want to know why he did it. So with nature. Eliminate the idea of an intelligence behind nature ordering events, and Mr. Benson's perplexity disappears. It is a problem that owes its whole existence to an accepted theory. And there is not the slightest need for the theory. That is why Atheism is by far the more hopeful and helpful position. It does not create difficulties, but it learns to face obstacles boldly. The same problems face Atheist and Theist, but the Atheist is not depressed by feeling himself the sport of an intelligent force quite beyond his control, but apparently quite callous to human suffering.

Mr. Benson finds some "help" in the reflection that sometimes some of our greatest trials have ended well, "and if that is so in one single instance, it is a basis for faith." We do not think so. Granted that in one case out of a large number we benefit from a trial or a misfortune. How can we reconcile that (1) with the idea of a Deity who could as easily have given us the benefit without the misfortune, and (2) with the fact of others getting the same benefits without the misfortune? Besides, it is not true that one case of goodness emerging from evil gives a basis for faith. The reverse of this is the case. One case of undeserved suffering, one case of unmerited disaster, destroys the basis of faith. It certainly destroys all basis for belief in a Deity whose love and mercy is over all his works. At most it leaves man the sport of a capricious intelligence that could have made him better had it chosen to do so, and even now awards favors and punishments with little or no regard to individual merit.

Mrs. T. R. Ferens, wife of one of the Nonconformist M.P.'s, offered a year ago a sum of a guinea to all mothers in Hull with newborn babies, if their children were living a year hence. Mrs. Ferens has now been called on to pay nearly four hundred pounds. The *Methodist Times* says that this is just one illustration of the effect that may be produced when public attention is directed to any particular matter. In the course of our weekly newspaper reading we come across a deal of rubbish, but this is a gem. We wonder that the mothers of Hull don't rise up and lynch the editor of the *Methodist Times*. Does he imagine that these four hundred mothers only kept their babies alive for a year in the hope of getting a guinea from Mrs. Ferens? If any of them did this, we strongly decline to discriminate between the mothers who allowed their children to die, and those who kept them alive for the sake of a paltry guinea. Of course, we do not believe that the offer of a guinea made the slightest difference to the infant mortality in Hull. The incident only shows what an exalted idea of human nature Christians possess.

Mr. Cresswell, M.P., the labor leader in the House of Assembly, was arrested at Johannesburg under Martial Law, and has since been sentenced to a months' imprisonment for what he might have done in England with absolute impunity. Evidently the authorities must have considered

him a very dangerous character; nevertheless they thought a month's imprisonment a sufficient punishment for his offence. Over here, in the old country, a judge calls it a lenient sentence when he gives a mere nobody four months' imprisonment for certain vulgar words about the Christian religion. The truth of what he said is not disputed; the charge against him is made on grounds of *taste* and *feeling*.

How much the people of England, and especially the Liberals, really care for religion, may be measured by the following incident. Sir John Simon, M.P., the Attorney-General, in the course of his recent speech at the Oldham Reform Club, made some gibing observations on several Conservative leaders, including Mr. Balfour. What would be the surprise of a political Rip Van Winkle who fell asleep in 1905 and had only just returned to consciousness? "He would find," Sir John said, "the old, ingenious, astute, and delightful leader of the Conservative party lecturing on religion at Glasgow." This was greeted by the audience with loud laughter. There was something irresistibly absurd in the drop down from the Tory leadership to lecturing the British people on religion. Oh what a fall was there!

Truth, like murder, will "out" sometimes. Some of it was uttered at Plymouth the other day and got reported in the *Western Daily Mercury*. There was a large congregation in the Union Congregational Church to hear a special sermon by the Rev. G. E. Darlaston, of Crouch End, London. We quote the following passage from the *Mercury's* report:—

"He remarked that hundreds of people did not believe in Christ because of the terrible condition of their big cities. An embassy was recently sent from Japan to study the social conditions of our country with a view to adopting Christianity. They, however, saw the awful conditions of the slums, and went back to Japan and told the Mikado that Christianity in England was a failure. In their slums there was a terrible scene; immorality, vice, and drunkenness reigning supreme."

"How were they going to stop it?" the reverend gentleman asked. Ay, there's the rub. His own recipe was Christian unity. But how is that to be obtained? There's another rub—and the worst of all.

"Mack, the Sky Pilot" is the subject of a report in the *Daily Mail*. He is collecting money "to alleviate the lot of the camp-worker in Canada and other parts." What are the employers doing? We rather suspect it is the "spiritual" lot of these hard workers that "Mack" is seeking to improve.

Rev. Preb. David Jones, Rector of Llanfechain, Montgomeryshire, left £10,484. Another poor servant of Christ is hardly worth mentioning after that:—Rev. Arthur Williams, Mount Wise, Newquay, Cornwall, left £1,299.

John D. Rockefeller, who follows Jesus Christ's teaching about the blessings of poverty by becoming and keeping the richest man in the world, delivers pious addresses as a Christian amateur. Having a mania for saving, at anybody's cost, he has been advising the Sunday-school boys and girls to save all they can, and contribute the result to missionary work. Some of them must have winked. They were listening to one of the greatest jokers of the age.

Rev. R. J. Campbell seems to be sailing on a new tack. He preached the other day at the Digbeth Institute, Birmingham, and spent a good deal of his time in disparaging the human intellect. He quoted the old text about increasing knowledge increasing sorrow. To think, he said, is pessimistic. "The shadow of tragedy," he said, "was over all we do; he defied anyone to say otherwise; intellect was calamitous. There was Swinburne the poet, no man had been able to write more passionately than he, but he saw no glorious to-morrow for mankind." Indeed! It was not thus that we read Swinburne in the days of our youth. Forty years ago, on the title-page of a little book called *Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought*, we put the following verse from Swinburne:—

"Have we not men with us royal,
Men the masters of things?
In the days when our life is made new,
All souls perfect and true
Shall adore whom their forefathers slew;
And these indeed shall be loyal,
And those indeed shall be kings."

Forty years have rolled by and we say "Amen" still to that noble verse. Let it be remembered that the death of the old Lord God in the *Hymn o Man* was accompanied by

"the love-song of earth," that Swinburne sang of—

"Reason and love, whose names are one,
Seeing reason is the sunlight shed from love the sun."

that he sang, not to the fancied deities of a dreamland faith, but—

"To the pure spirit of man that men call God,
To the high soul of things, that is
Made of men's heavenlier hopes and mightier memories."

And now let Mr. Campbell read the magnificent finish of the splendid "Epilogue" to *Songs Before Sunrise*, and then ask himself whether what he said of Swinburne was really true.

Mr. Campbell commits a blunder which is very common to "believers." They fancy themselves with their present feelings and a different set of beliefs. But a little reflection would convince them that this is an impossibility. You cannot go on fearing you will lose heaven, for instance, when you have come to believe that there is no heaven to lose; neither can you dread going to hell when you once believe there is no hell to go to. Your feelings adjust themselves to your beliefs in all cases. You may suffer in all sorts of ways—personal, domestic, social, and political—by a change in your convictions; but you cannot suffer in the way that Mr. Campbell imagines. You may suffer while the change is going on, but you cannot suffer when the change is completed.

The feelings that gather round anti-theistic convictions—for that is what Swinburne called himself—are naturally very different from the feelings that gather round convictions like Mr. Campbell's. And the preacher might have seen, if he had read the poet more attentively, that the psychological adjustment was as complete in the one case as in the other. Not believing in God or in a future life, Swinburne had to look (and did look, and was satisfied) to natural instead of supernatural "consolations." His ideas of life and its meaning were more stoical than the preacher's, they were also less egoistic, and one is puzzled to see how they were less "glorious." Take this stanza, for instance, from the "Prelude" to *Songs Before Sunrise*:—

"For what has he whose will sees clear
To do with doubt and faith and fear,
Swift hopes and slow despondencies?
His heart is equal with the sea's
And with the sea-wind's, and his ear
Is level to the speech of these,
And his soul communes and takes cheer
With the actual earth's equalities,
Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and streams,
And seeks not strength from strengthless dreams."

Swinburne, like Meredith (in a letter to Mr. Foote) had no love for "smoking priest's opium." Mr. Campbell, with the cheap tears in his eyes, and the cheap grief round his mouth, seems unable to find comfort in anything else. But he is *not* a Swinburne, and *not* a Meredith; and a little calm reflection on that fact might do him a great deal of good.

Father Bernard Vaughan has been chuckling over the fact that the Church of England was created by Act of Parliament, and he prophesies that it will die by Act of Parliament. Yes, and there will be no vacancy created—not even for the Catholic Church.

We don't understand the surprise caused by the Abbé Lemiere's resigning one of the four vice-presidencies of the Chamber of Deputies, in deference to the Pope's objections. A Catholic priest is a priest first, and a citizen afterwards to say nothing of the separation of Church and State.

Seats in the pit were sixpence in Shakespeare's time. Prices were doubled on Sunday afternoon when new plays were introduced.

Canon Sutton ought to find the Holy Ghost quite enough in the ghost line to preach to the Church people of Dearham, in Cumberland. One old-established ghost might be forgiven. But when the reverend gentleman starts a ghost-shop of his own he goes too far for an age of cheap books and compulsory elementary schools. The one about the girl with the sealskin coat in the moonlight, which he saw on the roadway when riding home after dining at Davenby Hall, suggests a number of questions, which we prefer to leave to the reader's imagination.

London dealers took advantage of the prolonged bitter east wind to raise the price of coal several shillings a ton. They then denounced the greediness of the coal porters who demanded an extra penny a ton for their share of the business. And this is a Christian country.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

March 1, Glasgow; 22, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

- ROLAND WOOD.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- JOSEPH BRYCE.—Proof in due course. Always glad to hear from you. We hope the pressure of business has its compensations.
- E. B.—Your cuttings are always welcome.
- J. B.—Probably he was "associated with Bradlaugh and Foote" as a man in the street watching the royal procession might have been associated with Queen Victoria on Jubilee Day. Thanks for the cutting. We daresay the man Musgrave has found it "better to be with Jesus."
- J. W. BURGESS AND OTHERS.—We are not passing your letters over to Mr. Repton. There was no need for the promise he made at the end of his article. We understand that there is a sixpenny edition of Buchanan's *Foxglove Manor*. That price puts it within the reach of everyone who wants to read it, without troubling Mr. Repton or anybody else in the matter.
- W. DAVIDSON.—We are much obliged. We wish others would take as much interest in promoting our circulation. See also paragraph.
- A. J. MARRIOTT.—We see no analogy. Your letter was not ignored, it was answered, all the pith of it being given in the reply. This has always been our policy, and nobody is deceived. We have never laid ourselves open to publish a lot of correspondence; our space is insufficient to do anything of the kind; nor is it within the scope of our object in carrying on the *Freethinker*.
- A. E. MADDOCK.—Received and shall appear.
- G. HULL.—Figures reprinted from a publication dated 1892 are not exactly up-to-date in 1914. Are they?
- H. R. E.—We have printed official figures again and again after Christian Church Conferences. The decay of the Churches, in point of numbers, is a common-place of every Annual Meeting.
- W. DODD.—See paragraph in "Sugar Plums." Thanks.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. J. Atherley Jones, who has retired from North-West Durham, after representing it for so many years, has taken the post of Judge in the City of London. He was a good Radical and his father was Ernest Jones, the famous Chartist leader. Mr. Atherley Jones was engaged by the National Secular Society's solicitor as senior counsel for the defence of Harry Boulter in the "blasphemy" prosecution six years ago. He called upon the jury for an acquittal, which he did not obtain, for the judge was evidently in favor of a conviction. But it is certain that Mr. Atherley Jones's speech—which was reported verbatim at the time in the *Freethinker*—had a great deal to do with the lenient way in which Boulter was treated. He was allowed to give an undertaking not to repeat such language as he had been prosecuted for, and was liberated on his own recognisances. Even when he broke his undertaking, a year or so afterwards, he was only sentenced to a month's imprisonment.

Mr. Foote conducted his own defence at the time of the *Freethinker* prosecution in 1883, but Mr. Avory and Mr. Cluer were retained to watch the case on points of law. Mr. Avory has become a "red" judge, and Mr. Cluer is a well-known and highly esteemed London magistrate. It is curious that the court he presides over is situated in Old-

street. The Hall of Science, Bradlaugh's headquarters from 1869 to 1890, was situated in the same street. It has long ceased to exist, having been demolished to furnish a portion of the site of the huge Bovril block of buildings.

Our principal point has still to be pressed home. All who have stood, even legally, against the Blasphemy Laws, have made their way in the world. In spite of all the bigotry in England they have gained honor by serving the ends of justice. There were K.C.'s who declined to accept a brief in the Boulter case. It is to Mr. Atherley Jones's honor that he accepted it as a matter of duty.

Mr. Lloyd visits Glasgow to-day (Feb. 1) and delivers two lectures (noon and evening) for the local N. S. S. Branch in the North Saloon, City Hall. We hope the local "saints" will give him the audiences and the welcome he merits.

The President's Honorarium Fund Circular will appear in next week's *Freethinker*, together with acknowledgment of all subscriptions for 1914 received up to date. Those who desire to be in the first list should remit by Monday, February 2.

Commissioner Lamb, of the Salvation Army, had a long puff of the Army's work in Canada—a long puff and a very brazen puff too—in the Edmonton local newspaper—the *Weekly Herald*. It was followed, in the exigencies of make-up, perhaps, by a bright little letter from Mr. Walter Davidson, leading up to the announcement that he intends to offer to supply the Edmonton Free Library with a copy of the *Freethinker* every week. Mr. Davidson will also "place at the disposal of our opponents a ten years' file of the *Freethinker*, for anyone of them to point out the passages which render the paper unfit for the public. If they fail (he adds) to make their case good no reason will then remain for refusing the offer." What answer can there be to this offer? It shows Mr. Davidson's absolute *bonâ-fides*.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Aneurin Williams, the Liberal candidate at the North-West Durham by-election, is in favor of "religious equality for Wales." We hope he was also heckled about religious equality in England. We mean with respect to the prosecution, which is also persecution, of Freethinkers. The woes of Nonconformists are always being trumpeted; listening to the Rev. Dr. Clifford, you might imagine that every Church parson kept a Dissenting minister a captive in his cellar; but one hears very little, even from them, of the wrongs and sufferings of Freethinkers. We confess to feeling our ardor somewhat damped by Nonconformist selfishness. We do not mean that all Nonconformists are indifferent to the rights of others. Mr. Halley Stewart, for instance, is a friend of justice and liberty all round.

HUMAN AND DIVINE JUSTICE.

Surely the perfection of human justice is measured by its efficiency. That system is best which most diminishes crime. But if we apply this rule to divine justice we get into hopeless difficulties. We must suppose that the Creator wishes to diminish wickedness as much as possible, for otherwise he would inflict useless suffering. Yet we have to suppose that he inflicts punishments—infinite and eternal, according to the most logical theologian, in such a way that the reforming influence is a minimum and the suffering a maximum. If a human ruler admitted that the punishments inflicted by his laws had very little deterrent effect, but argued as a set-off that he kept the greatest part of his subjects in perpetual confinement and incessant torture, we should certainly say that, whether by his misfortune or fault, he had a very ill-regulated kingdom. Yet, when we try to reconcile ourselves to the existing evils by assuming the existence of this supernatural balance, we necessarily present the universe after this fashion. Whether it is an edifying theory or not I cannot say. I do not see how it helps to strengthen our belief in the safeguards of morality. The explanation is simple enough. The world is what we see it, abounding in misery and wickedness. If you believe in a moral governor you are bound to put extraordinary limitations upon his power to vindicate his benevolence, or to limit his benevolence in order to vindicate his power; and, in either case you take away with one hand that safeguard to morality which you give with the other. Meanwhile, in any case, you have to stop all logical gaps by talking about mystery. It is simpler to admit that the whole is a mystery, and to cease the effort to play ourselves with words.—Leslie Stephen, "Science of Ethics," pp. 455, 456.

The Cross Roads.

HE was playing on an old string of the ministerial lyre—a string, I imagined, that had been played done. There were two-and-a-half newspaper columns on the Cross Roads of Life; and, according to the news-note, the sermon had been preached to a large audience mostly composed of young people. Evidently they had enjoyed a debauch of verbosity. My first thoughts after reading the sermon were smothered in the awful perils these cross roads presage; the stress and trial; the courage and glory and renown; the strength and grandeur of character; the weakness, humiliation, darkness, and despair; the unutterable hardships, and disgrace, and sorrow; all these things, and many more, came sweeping around my mind from this fantastic place named the Cross Roads of Life.

It is, or was, a favorite subject with our enemies. Instinctively you connect it with young men, who are always invited particularly to be present. Girls do not matter. Their road is always a straight one to the household and the pew. When the supply of young men becomes more limited, and the ministry is on the rocks for human raw material, perhaps it will be discovered that girls have cross roads.

We see a wide road stretching before us, delightfully shaded, in places, by rich foliage. It is the way of youth. There are fields on both sides where the happy days speed quickly, passed in the sunshine; and the shade, what is it but the close safety of the home, with the strong paternal arms around us, and the deep love to mellow our young lives? But the trees are growing farther apart as we walk along; the fields are not all free; some even have barbed wire fencing; and the clouds often obstruct the sunrays. The shadowy places are not quite so safe nor so comfortable; and the road is often rough and wearies the feet. Self-reliance comes as a substitute to the fatherly care; but its coming is frequently fitful, and often frightens us. As yet we are too timid. And then the trees are left behind. Rocks and morasses guard the roadway. The glare of the sun fills our eyes, and the rain comes plashing down. The road curves, too; and often we feel as if we toiled through a foreign country. And then, suddenly, we hesitate, afraid; for before us are the Cross Roads.

Up to this interesting point the young man never knows where he is going. Without warning the necessity of selection comes into his unprepared mind. He is called upon by circumstances to exercise faculties of which he has been more or less unconscious. Difficulties have to be met and overcome; dilemmas that harass and confuse the brain have to be tackled; conclusions have to be reached; conclusions upon which a life's happiness may rest, or from which a life of misery may ensue; all of which represent rather a strenuous undertaking for a brain entirely untrained in the unravelling of the intricacies of human affairs.

The peculiar strain of the circumstances is intensified also by the strange lack of verifiable data. Although so much depends upon the direction in which the young man will go, the information regarding the various roads is exceedingly lean. And what there is of it possesses the weak character of the unprovable. It appears to be a fairish amount of assumption backed up by a goodly amount of dogmatism, and not very much else.

However, be that as it may, the young man has reached the cross roads. Before him are three finger-posts; and the pastor has a fine opportunity for picturesqueness of language. Never yet have I been disappointed in this respect. When you strip off the verbiage you discover that one road leads to Worldism—that is, Materialism, the place where there are plenty drinks, plenty gambling chances, plenty women, and evil things like these. It is an enjoyable place, for a time; but it is Hell. The finger-post that points the other way bears no instructions. It just points. That road leads nowhere

at all; and only young men who "don't care a hang" go there. Needless to say, the road is crowded; and the pastor implores his young hearers to think well ere they start to traverse the way of apathy and indifference. He waxes woeful on the soul-destroying influences of thoughtlessness. While the hell-road kills the soul quickly, the unassuming perils of the unnamed road accomplish the same result slowly. The pastor is not very sure whether the lingering death is not the more terrible.

The third road is the one that leads straight on. It is but the continuation of the happy road of youth. The finger-post says, "To Heaven," mystic words, out of which so much courage has been drawn, and from which so much refreshing hope has been obtained after the hardships of early manhood!

With many flourishes of arms, and with many passionate intonations of voice, young men are strongly advised to overcome the alluring fascinations of the road that leadeth to destruction, to despise the easy way of apathy, and to choose the path of Godliness, that which bringeth peace of heart passing all understanding, and by the side of which floweth the waters of everlasting life. Despite this advice, the young man must e'en make his own choice. Upon his own soul rests the responsibility of his selection. He, himself, must decide upon eternal life or eternal death.

It is a fairy tale. As a matter of fact, young men simply do not have cross roads to throw them into a state of extreme mental exhilaration. They drift into religion and drift out of it. They slip into human indiscretions and into the mire, if they have been born out of it, just as they slip into moral strength if they happen to have been born outside virtue. The process is generally a slow one. Choice never exists. Ninety-nine per cent. of young men are sublimely unconscious of any struggle previous to finding themselves on this or that road; and the one per cent. suffers from delusion.

The picture of a young man standing, chin in hand, head downcast, in the orthodox attitude of deep thought, at the hypothetical cross roads of life is pathetic. "Perhaps," says the cynic, "the poor pastor refers to other things beside religion. Mayhap he means love. But here again he is slightly off. The young man in love is never out of cross roads."

The cross roads of life, in the pastor's estimation, are really named Religion and No-Religion. Their existence is imagined, and then forced upon minds more or less religiously receptive. When the youthful eyes begin to sweep wider and ever wider ranges of the activities of life; when the home influence is superseded by the more powerful outside environment; when the young mind finds within itself the potentiality to weigh things in the balance; and when it discovers that there are many contradictions to the teachings of the fireside; then it is that the ministerial fraternity tremble at the possibility of another loss. They imagine a stopping-place where none exists. They dream of pitfalls on a smooth road. They vision an upward path and a downward where there is really the one broad highway of human life.

Young men, as a body, obey the law of averages. The majority of them never escape from the average mentality. They never experience the intellectual anxieties imagined and exploited by priests. The exceptionally gifted young man may pass through many mental crises. He may be drawn up sharply by a startling absurdity in his beliefs, and a shadow may be cast upon his mind. New knowledge may pull a foundation-stone from the temple of sacred truth, as he deems it, and he may feel the first shiver of the falling building. A swiftly flying shaft of criticism may penetrate to the depths of his most cherished opinions, and he may writhe as he finds himself secretly at war with his best friends. But, even for him, there are no cross roads, as the priest pictures them. His Freethought is a slow process of evolution. It needs time, study, patience, and perseverance. Ordinary reasoning can dispose of an

example of religious fatuity; but much study is required to satisfy the mind regarding the genesis and survival of that fatuity.

The cross roads fallacy is a religious fly-paper hung from the pulpit to catch the unwary; but thanks to the teachings of Freethought the average intelligence of young men to-day is more 'cute than it used to be; and there are fewer flies on the paper.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Goethe.—II.

(Continued from p. 59.)

YET, despite this proud beginning, Goethe was musingly mournful. This was not traceable to love, say some, or blank despair, or unrequited affection. "He had longings," says James Sime, "which the actual world seemed incapable of satisfying, and the more he reflected on life, and sought to comprehend its meaning, the more he was oppressed by the old, old mysteries which have baffled and saddened so many a noble mind." He seems to have been as melancholy as Hamlet, without that brooding thinker's tragic excuses. In all likelihood, however, Goethe's despondency was mainly attributable to the semi-morbid emotions which so frequently accompany the generative phenomena of adolescence.

In addition, his idolised sister Cornelia was at this time married, and her loss was no small matter; his loved Lotte also took to herself a spouse, and his friend Merck went away. He also quarrelled with his truculent friend Brentano, and all these untoward circumstances conspired to give birth to a clever, if morbid, work from Goethe's pen. This story, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, is a fragment of highly colored autobiography in its main outlines. The incident upon which the suicide of Werther turns is as old as the world. We are confronted by the usual three, husband and wife and lover, and the lover shoots himself, and the lady lives unharmed. Charlotte is cutting bread-and-butter for the children when Werther sees her for the first time; and if Thackeray is to be trusted, she went on with this same congenial occupation after Werther's body was borne before her on a shutter, lying cold and dead.

Werther gave Goethe a European reputation. It ran like wildfire through Germany. In was enthusiastically acclaimed and it was sternly reprobated. Napoleon read it over and over again. Various governments—so like governments—gave it a splendid advertisement by attempting to suppress it. As Oscar Browning writes:—

"It was printed, imitated, translated into every language of Europe, criticised in every periodical, with the fullest meed of praise or scorn. It made the round of the world, and penetrated even to China. The *Werther* fever wrung the hearts of men and women with imaginary sorrows; floods of tears were shed; young men dressed in blue coats and yellow breeches shot themselves with *Werther* in their hands. It opened the floodgates of pent-up sentimentalism.....which the calamities of the next generation were sternly to repress."

Crowned with the laurel leaf of fame, the author of *Goetz* and *Werther* now produced various trifles such as *Clavigo* and other immature pieces. He was now a man of consequence, and could afford to make literary experiments. Men of letters eagerly sought his society. Klopstock was too woodenly religious for Goethe's taste. The scoffing Basedow he found interesting. Lavater, the celebrated physiognomist, decidedly attracted him, despite his dogmatism and intolerance. In a way, Lavater's religiosity formed a bond of union between the two men. Goethe was able to compare the theological ideas of Lavater with the spiritual strivings of Fraulein von Klettenberg, the friend of his youth, whose religious aspirations and meditations are immortalised in *Wilhelm Meister* in the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul." Her influence on Goethe, then and subsequently, was undeniably great. But this, as Lewis states, "was

not so much the effect of religious discussion as the experience it gave him of a deeply religious nature. She was neither bigot nor prude. Her faith was an inner light which shed mild radiance around her."*

That Goethe's attachment to Lavater was purely psychological in character, and that he in no way sympathised with his quaint religion, is made manifest enough in the comic pen-picture the poet painted, in which he sits like a worldling with a prophet on each side of him. Goethe eats a chicken with epicurean relish, "while Lavater explains to a country parson the mystery of the Revelations, and Basedow astonishes a dancing master with a scornful exposure of the inutility of baptism."

Goethe was still sweet and twenty; a quarter of a century of his life had rolled away. Jacobi saw in the wild and wayward youth an extraordinary creation of God, endowed with a nature "which develops itself as the flower does, as the seed ripens, as the tree grows into the air, and crowns itself." Speaking of him at the same period, Heinse said, "Goethe was with us, a beautiful youth of five-and-twenty, who is all genius and strength from head to foot, his heart full of feeling, his soul full of fire and eagle-winged." The youth had yet to attain the full proportions of manhood, but the ripened experience which procures this was materially assisted in Goethe's case through the influence of Spinoza.

He had read one of the innumerable "answers" to the Jewish philosopher. But, as he says, "It made little impression upon me, for I hated controversies, and always wanted to know *what* a thinker thought, and not what another conceived he *ought* to have thought." He now re-read Bayle's malicious essay on Spinoza with pronounced dislike. He was prepared to judge the tree by its fruits, and the philosophy which nourished and sustained such an ethical personality as Spinoza's must, so Goethe reasoned, be vastly different to that execrated by its assailants. Goethe now studied Spinoza himself, and he writes of him:—

"This man, who had wrought so powerfully on me, and who was destined to affect so deeply my entire mode of thinking, was Spinoza. After looking around the world in vain for the means of developing my strange nature, I met with the *Ethics* of that philosopher. Of what I read in the work, and of what I read into it, I can give no account; but I found in it a sedative for my passions, and it seemed to unveil a clear, broad view over the material and moral world. But what especially riveted me to him was the boundless disinterestedness which shone forth in every sentence.....The all-equalising calmness of Spinoza was in striking contrast with my all-disturbing activity; his mathematical method was the direct opposite of my poetic style of thought and feeling, and that very precision which was thought ill adapted to moral subjects made me his enthusiastic disciple, his most decided worshiper."

At an earlier period Goethe had been attracted by the luckless Italian humanist Bruno, whose life, labors, and martyrdom he had read of in Bayle's imperfect sketch. And now he for the first time began to realise the grandeur and glory of Bruno's greatest disciple and successor. At the same time he was anxious to form an impartial judgment of the merits of the Christian faith. The influence which Fraulein von Klettenberg and the Moravian Brethren had exerted over him began to wane. The Christian doctrine of the fall of man was repugnant to him, and he found that he was really of the company of those who, while "admitting the hereditary imperfections of man, ascribed to nature a certain internal germ of good which, animated by divine grace, was capable of growing up into a joyous tree of spiritual happiness."

These and similar thoughts led him towards the idea of writing an epic on the Wandering Jew, in which he intended to rationalise the story of Jesus' mission and death. But although the subject long recurred to him, his contemplated treatment of the legends of Ahasuerus and Christ in poetic form was never realised.

* Goethe, p. 31. Third edition, 1875.

Another theme at this time haunted his mind. Goethe meditated long and deeply over man's position in relation to Nature or God, and he was more and more impressed with the importance of human individuality. What more natural, then, than that he should turn to the Greek myth of the Titan, Prometheus? As he himself tells us:—

"The fable of Prometheus lived within me. The old Titan web I cut up according to my own stature, and began to write a play expressing the incongruous relation in which Prometheus stood with respect to Jupiter and the later gods, in consequence of his making men with his own hands, giving them life with the aid of Minerva, and thus founding a third dynasty."

Although the *Prometheus* of Goethe remains a fragment, it is a fragment of such splendid quality that had it been completed it might have rivalled *Faust* itself. It rises to height of grandeur that extremely few of his subsequent writings approach. As George Henry Lewes pointed out, the Prometheus of Æschylus glories in his audacity, but

"while glorying he complains: the injustice of the tyrant wrings from him cries of pain, cries of physical and cries of moral agony. The whole tragedy is one wild outburst of sorrow. The first words he utters fling his clamorous sorrow on the air, call on the Divine Ether, and the swift-winged winds, on the sea springs and the multitudinous laughter of the waves, on the Universal Mother, the Earth—and on the all-seeing Eye, the Sun, to witness what he, a god, must suffer."

In the *Prometheus* of the modern poet the Titan never indulges in self-pity. He defies the unjust Zeus in terms of sublime scorn. Inscrutable Destiny, which creates Titans, is likewise the parent of the gods, and will witness their decline and fall. Prometheus knows full well that the brutal tyranny of Zeus is not eternal, and he looks forward with calm resignation to the better and the brighter day. It is also true that the Titan of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* never flinches, as witness the wondrous lines:—

"To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than earth or night;
To defy power which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent."

And now note the even grander majesty of conception which leaps in Goethe's sublime lines:—

"Curtain thy heavens, Zeus,
With clouds, with mist!
And like a boy that crushes thistle-tops,
Loosen thy rage on oaks and mountain ridges.
Yet must thou leave
Me my earth standing;
My hut, which myself built;
My hearth with its bright flame
Which thou dost envy.
I know nought so pitiful
Under the sun as ye gods!
Scantily nourishing
With the forced offerings
Of tremulous prayer
Your divinity!
Children and beggars,
And fools hope-deluded,
Keep ye from starving!
Who gave me succor
From the fierce Titans?
Who rescued me
From slavery?
Thou! thou, my soul, glowing
With holiest fire!
Yet didst thou, credulous,
Pour forth thy thanks to him
Who slumbers above!
I reverence thee? Wherefore?
Hast thou lightened the woes
Of the heavily laden?
Hast thou dried the tears
Of the troubled in spirit?
Who fashioned me man?
Was it not almighty Time—
And Fate eternal,
Thy lords and mine?
Here I sit and shape
Man in my image:
A race like myself,
That will suffer and weep,
Will rejoice and enjoy,
And scorn thee,
As I!"

(To be continued.) T. F. PALMER.

Freaks of the Saints.

ONLY those who, like the unfortunate writer, have waded through the refuse rubbish heaps of blood, mire, and putrefaction known as ecclesiastical history, and turned over, in the hopes of discovering the lost secret of Christianity, the records of folly and fanaticism in the lives of the saints, can fully realise the mingled atrocities and absurdities which go to make up Christian history. Christianity always seems to me like the brigand of the story, who, after accumulating wealth by the most nefarious means, sets up as a millionaire prince, posing as a philanthropist, and imposing on those who knew not his past history. The records of Christian sectarian strife, of the crusades and other wars of religion, of the persecution of Jews, witches, science, and torture of the Inquisition, and other items of past Christian history, are so abominable and appalling that no sensitive mind can even read its red record without trembling and tears. Fortunately, with the long tragedy there is mixed some elements of comedy and even of broad farce. As it is probably better to smile at Christian folly than to frown at its fanaticism and fraud, we may look back on these with some amusement, even though the knowledge of the sombre background forces sobriety into our mirth.

The student of the humors of Christianity might find a wide field in the comicalities of its sectarian disputes; the quarrel between the Homoiousians and the Homoiousians, whether the Son was the same or similar to the Father; whether he is co-eternal as regarding his sonship; whether he has one or two natures; and the great split between the Greek and Latin churches on the momentous question, whether the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father or from Father and Son combined. Gibbon, the great master of the lofty sneer, has touched on many of these points, but in the records of synods and councils there is an extensive field of humor which even Gibbon did not completely explore, or at any rate did not expose.

What a field of mirth might be found in the questions solemnly discussed by learned bishops and divines, such as whether Christ was not an hermaphrodite; the method by which Mary was impregnated; whether Christ resumed the portion of his person which he lost by circumcision when he resurrected; and many similar delicate subjects, in which celibate priests and monks have ever delighted. Then the philosophical questions of the schoolmen in regard to quiddities, essences, remission, intention, proportion and degree, nominalism and realism, the nature of God and angels.

"Whether angels, in moving from place to place,
Pass through the intermediate space;
Whether God himself is the author of evil,
Or whether that is the work of the devil.
When and wherefore Lucifer fell,
And whether he now is chained in hell."

One learned synod, over which Pope Boniface IV. presided, resolved the question as to whether monks, being dead to the world, could perform episcopal functions. It was demonstrated that they could, because monks were angels, which was proved by the following "sillygism": "All animals with six wings are angels. Monks have six wings, the cowl standing for two, and the four extremities for four more—*ergo*, monks are angels."—Q. E. D.

But the most amusing records of Christian insanity are to be found in the stories told of the Christian saints. The forthcoming writer of the *Comic History of Christianity* will here discover matter enough, not only as Fabian says, for a May morning, but to occupy many volumes. Some of the Gospel miracles, as, for instance, turning water into wine and devils into pigs, are comical enough, but they are beaten by the miracles of the saints. Here are a few instances:—

St. Paul, of Thebes, outdid Elijah, who is now said to have been fed by Arabians instead of by a raven. We are told by St. Jerome he was fed daily for sixty

years by a crow. When St. Anthony, he who the Devil tickled at night and tempted in the shape of a nude female, visited St. Paul, the obliging crow always brought a double allowance. Probably it was like manna, the angels' food baked in heaven after the prescription for *Kosher* baking supplied to Ezekiel.

When St. Catherine of Sienna visited the tomb of St. Agnes of Monte Palciano, and the living saint sought to kiss the feet of the dead one, the latter lifted up her leg through an excess of humility, so that St. Catherine might not bend too low to perform the osculation.

St. Bonaventura, not being able to take any food in the ordinary way, by reason of a violent disorder in his internal regions, had the pyx placed outside, and the holy wafer thereupon penetrated into his bowels. Who that believes that Christ fed five thousand on a few loaves and fishes, should doubt it?

St. Clare, of Montefalco, had meditated so constantly upon her Savior's passion, that all the instruments—cross, hammer, nails, scourge, and crown of thorns—were found engraved upon her heart after death. These stigmatics are quite common, and the effect of mind on matter is further shown in an image of Christ at Naples, which an impious wretch stabbed. So sensitive and sensible was the statue that it put its hand to the wound, and it has stayed there ever since.

St. Barbara's father was a heathen; and when he discovered that she had become a Christian, he drew his sword to kill her. She prayed to God, and a large stone opened itself and received her body into the cavity, and carried her to a mountain full of caves. She was discovered by a shepherd, who, for his insolence in approaching the virgin, was turned into a marble stone, and his herd into locusts. This is, perhaps, as true as that Lot's wife was changed into a pillar of salt.

The Devil was always tempting the saints and getting the worst of it. He once impertinently intruded his person into the chamber of St. Juliana, at an unseemly hour. It was a dangerous thing to do. To intrude into female saints' chambers at unseemly hours is ever perilous. He found it so. She engaged Boeizobab in a pitched battle, and fought tooth and nail, throwing him down on the floor and trampling him with her feet, till he was glad to escape with his tail between his legs, howling all the way back to hell. St. Juliana ought to be the patroness of the prize ring.

The devils, unable to obtain any triumph over the chastity of Marie Angelique, resolved, with refined malignity, to insult her modesty by standing her on her head in the presence of credible witnesses. They did so, but an immediate and truly extraordinary miracle was wrought simultaneously. The law of gravitation was suspended with regard to her clothes. They remained stiff and immovable around her virgin limbs, as the marble drapery of a statue. The blood may have been drawn into her face by her peculiar attitude, but there was not the slightest occasion for a blush.

The usual method of meeting the assaults of the Devil was by self-flagellation. One saint, when he saw a female, rolled himself in snow. Another went naked among briars. St. Macarius, having one day killed a gnat, by way of atonement went into the marshes, and there for six months exposed himself to all winged and creeping insects, till his flesh was swollen and ulcerated. This legend is one which shows that Christian monkery was brought westwards by the monks of Buddhism. In the full odor of sanctified filth, St. Macarius once returned to his monastery humiliated by the sense of his own inferiority, exclaiming: "I am not yet a monk, but I have seen monks." He had fallen in with two of these wretches stark naked. The saint was accustomed to carry about with him eighty pounds of iron. His disciple, St. Eusebius, outdid him, carrying one hundred and fifty pounds of iron, and living for three years in a dried-up well. Some, however, objected to nakedness, also to soap and water. The

latest addition to the Romish calendar, St. Labre, never washed himself for forty years. St. Athanasius boasts of St. Anthony's holy horror of water, with which he never contaminated his feet, save in the direst necessity. St. Euphrasia joined a convent of one hundred and thirty nuns who never washed their feet and who shuddered at the mention of a bath. St. Ammon had never seen himself naked. On one occasion, coming to a river, he was too squeamish to undress. He prayed to be spared this indignity, and an angel transported him to the other side. No wonder Jortin remarks of a miraculous monk, whose corpse was said, like that of St. Philip Neri, to emit a heavenly perfume, that it was not surprising that he should smell like a civet-cat when dead, who had smelt like a pole-cat when living.

But the subject of the freaks of the saints is too extensive to be comprised in a single article.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

IMMORTALITY.

On no subject, perhaps, has so much weak reasoning been permitted to pass current as on this of the immortality of the soul; partly because men had already a faith secured to them on quite other authority, on quite other grounds, than those reasonings which served very pleasingly and eloquently to fill up the page. In old woodcuts one sometimes sees a vessel in full sail upon the ocean, and perched aloft upon the clouds are a number of infant cherubs, with puffed-out cheeks, blowing at the sails. The swelling canvas is evidently filled by a stronger wind than these infant cherubs, sitting in the clouds, could supply. They do not fill the sail, but they were thought to fill up the picture prettily enough.

Most of these arguments resolve themselves into passionate wishes to prolong some experienced delight, or to gratify some thwarted desire. A fragment of this present life is torn from all its necessary conditions, and perpetuated in the future world. Sometimes the action of the drama, broken off on earth, is to be carried on elsewhere; the revenge is to be completed, the calamity to be redressed. Sometimes the happiest scene of all the drama, alas! so transitory here, is represented as stationary and eternal there. Loving souls love on for ever. They see themselves like a group of beautiful sculpture, placed, safe and changeless, in Elysian bowers. Beautiful sculpture it must be; for life, as we know it—the very life they would transfer into eternity—is perpetual change, is growth and decay, extinction and reproduction; and our present human consciousness is built on, or interlaced with, the incessant movements of a vital form, that grows, blossoms, and dies like any other flower of the earth.—*William Smith.*

PROPER SELF-RESPECT.

At the gates of Heaven an angel prest,
An angel newly and properly made;
And she was—and she knew it—so very well drest
That nothing in Heaven could make her afraid.

Through the gates of Heaven she peered at the Blest,
As through Paradise streets they wandered and strayed
And gave audible thanks that *she* was well drest—
For *they* were in garments most shockingly made.

Every angel she saw—and to see them thus drest
Brought a blush to the cheek of this *à la mode* maid—
Wore a radiant garment, cut, it must be confest,
Like that in which mortals in sleep are arrayed.

A positive pain wrung her sensitive breast
At the sight of this garb, which decorum forbade—
And the dread that she also must be thus undrest
On her sensitive face cast a visible shade.

Saint Peter advanced with a bow of the best
(For the Saint liked the looks of this trim little maid),
And he graciously said: "When you're properly drest,
Your harp is all ready, and waits to be played."

Just one glance all disdainful she cast on the Blest,
In their garments of white, to Saint Peter salaamed,
And replied: "If in Heaven one can't be well drest
I'll go—Somewhere Else, and be well drest and damned!"

TRUE SECULARISM.

Love each other, help each other,
Juggle not with dreams and phrases—
Make ephemeral existence
Beautiful, in spite of God!

—Robert Buchanan.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Mr. Miller's, 8 Matthias-road, Stoke Newington): 7.30, Business Meeting—the Season's Program, etc.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity in its Cradle."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (North Saloon, City Hall): J. T. Lloyd, 12 noon, "The Passing of the Christian Sabbath"; 6.30, "The Lying Gospel."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, E. Egerton Stafford, "Dreams in Relation to Religion."

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