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*As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their
needs a disease of the intellect.*—EMERSON.

The Child—and Religion.

In the *Sunday Chronicle* for January 25, "Hubert" discusses the question of "What is the Salient Characteristic of Our Time?" He concludes that it is the changed attitude of society towards the child. In this I am strongly inclined to agree with him, although not for quite the same reason that "Hubert" gives, and at the same time very strongly dissenting from some of the statements made by him in the course of his article. Here is one statement, for example, that specially challenges contradiction:—

"Religion is not changing, that's flat. It is changing its forms, but change is not necessarily decay. There is probably more interest taken in religion in this twentieth century than there has been since the sixteenth; there is more interest taken in it in this year 1914 than there was in 1904. In the eighteenth century there really was a decay of religion; then practically all cultivated persons were sceptics. Today even the most prominent men of science are freely uttering doubts about Darwinism and the mechanical theory of the universe.....Roughly we may say that if the nineteenth century was a period of doubt diversified by faith, ours looks like being a period of downright credulity diversified by doubt."

This is a very positive statement of the present position, and yet nearly every sentence admits of serious question. "Hubert" accepts interest in religion as equivalent to religion being a living force. But there is really no necessary connection between the two. For reasons that will appear presently, I take a very keen interest in religion; but I hardly think that anyone would cite me as evidence that religion was alive. Religion is only alive and healthy when it exerts a distinct influence on human life. When a savage consults his tribal deities before venturing on an expedition, when a Spanish or Italian peasant kneels before a roadside shrine for much the same reasons, these are proving that with them religion is really alive. But how is it with ourselves, or with any other advanced community? We do not look to religion for any real help, we do not trust to it in any great emergency; prayers for rain, for the averting of disease, or for national improvement, are openly smiled at; and in a hundred-and-one ways we see that, while numbers still accept religion as a mere theory, very few seriously attempt to guide their life by it. And if this does not prove decay, what, in the name of all that is reasonable, does it prove?

Unquestionably there is great interest shown in religion. Studies of religion were never more elaborate than they are now, and never called keener brains to the work. But between studies of religion and belief in religion there is a world of difference, and the difference is vital. Consider the significance of a man like Professor Frazer devoting ten large volumes to one work on religion, with another work on religion, also in several volumes, in course of issue. It is not that Professor Frazer is religious. He would probably call himself an Agnostic, while I should certainly describe him as an Atheist. All

that his study of religion proves, all that the awakened interest in religion proves, is that people have discovered that the key to understanding many social and other customs lies in a knowledge of religion in all its phases—particularly the earlier ones. Religion is very early in the field. It is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of man's conscious attempts to subdue nature to his needs. Our social institutions, from kingcraft to matrimony, begin amid a perfect welter of superstitious beliefs. For many, many generations, religion maintains a strong ascendancy in social life. And the consequence is that the man who would understand life must understand the nature of the beliefs in the light of which human nature has endeavored to map out for itself a safe course. No man would insist more strongly upon a thorough study of religion than an educated Atheist. It is not at all a question of *believing* it—merely one of understanding it.

A consideration of the subject from this point of view would have saved "Hubert" from his curious confusion about the eighteenth century and afterwards. It is not true that then "all cultivated men were practically sceptics." There were very many who were not. And even then the scepticism of the large majority was only in relation to Christianity. They would nearly all have professed some sort of a religion. And revolting from Christianity merely as untrue, they naturally ceased to interest themselves in it. But that was before the rise of a really scientific study of social evolution. The science of anthropology was unknown. With the growth of that branch of knowledge men were forced back upon the study of superstition as essential to a right understanding of social phenomena. Interest in religion revived, but it was the interest of scientific curiosity, not that of the convinced believer.

In passing, I may also say, that I do not know the prominent men of science who "are freely uttering doubts about Darwinism." I do know many who are doubtful as to whether Natural Selection alone is adequate to explain the origin of new species; but that is quite a different question. As to doubts about the mechanical theory of the universe, I can only say that men of science were never more "mechanical" than at present. The only reasonable significance of the mechanical theory in this connection is that of the operation of forces that are invariable and ultimately calculable. And far from that view being rejected, the tendency is to bring even the operation of "spirit" within that category.

I have been a long while coming to the child, but it was necessary to say first what has been said, because "Hubert" suggests in an oblique manner that the growth of interest in the child is in some way connected with the revival of religion. Of course, this is not the case. Historically, religions have shown precious little interest in children, and the concern of the modern Church to capture them is, in itself, symptomatic of religion's decline. While religion really controls life there is no need for the Churches to bother about children, because social life impresses religion upon them as they grow up. With the decline of religious belief there arises the need for secluding children, as far as possible, from the influence of contemporary life and thought. The child has to be captured or the adult will be lost. Consequently, the interest of the modern Churches

in the child is no more than that of a number of corporations anxious to secure clients.

The rise of the child originates from a quite different quarter. As a subject of profound educational, sociological, and racial significance, the study of the child is mainly post-evolutionary. "Hubert" thinks that part of the present significance of the child is due to the fact that we have ceased to appeal to the past. This is partly true, but it is also true that it is in a way due to our recognition of the profound importance of the past, and that the child here gives valuable help. When the rise of the doctrine of evolution taught men that the origin of our civilised institutions was to be found in savage life, that both biologically and psychologically growth is always from the simple to the complex, and that, in a general way, individual growth is a *resumé* of racial growth, it was soon seen that the child offered unexpected opportunities for scientific exploitation. Watching the growth of a child's intelligence, of its attempts to grapple with the various phases of life as they successively present themselves, observers were the better able to reconstruct for themselves the part played by religion in the mental evolution of the race. The child became a veritable human document, however blurred some of the pages might be.

One aspect of child study inspired by evolutionary teaching had this reference to the past. Another had reference to the future. This latter was too obvious to have ever been ignored, but it is safe to say that evolution gave it an altogether new significance and importance. Discussions on heredity—Lamarckian, Mendelian, or other, questions as to the selective or modifying power of the environment, all bore directly on the possibilities and capacities and significance of childhood. Even so simple a thing—apparently—as the play of children became a deeply interesting problem, fraught with great possibilities of race culture. The problem widened and deepened the more closely it was studied. Nature and nurture became the key-words of all who dreamed of putting racial development on a really scientific basis. First, the perfecting of the stock, next the preservation of desirable types once we had secured them.

I agree with "Hubert" that the emergence of the child is the most characteristic feature of our time. But with this religion has had nothing to do. The concern of all the Churches in the child is a purely sectarian one. That is the problem there. The scientist has a higher and a better purpose. His object is not sectarian, it is not even national. It is racial. The breeding of a better race is the purpose here, and whether that better race is predominantly British, or German, or Latin, or Slav, is a question of quite subordinate interest. But the main thing I wish to stress here is that the great humanistic and humanising impulse has come from science—which is so often called by short-sighted people and by hide-bound theologians, "cold," "heartless," "materialistic," etc. Materialistic in the ethical sense of the word it certainly is not. Materialistic in the philosophic sense it is and must be if it is to remain science. But it is ultimately the great civiliser and the great humaniser, because it is the great truth-bringer. It shows man what he is, what are his capacities, and what he may become. And beside that message, and beside these lessons, the gospel of theology becomes a mere idiot's tale—sound and fury, signifying nothing.

C. COHEN.

The So-called Christian Facts.

CHRISTIANITY is said to be a religion founded upon facts of history and productive of facts of experience which, it is claimed, is not true of any other religion under the sun. The so-called facts of history, so confidently gloried in by simple-minded and ignorant believers, are being seriously questioned by modern

criticism. Indeed, there are Christian teachers not a few who no longer regard them as true. While adhering as firmly as ever to the conviction that Jesus actually lived, they have abandoned the belief in his miraculous birth and resurrection. That is to say, they have retained the human Jesus at the expense of renouncing the Divine Christ. Those of them who still believe in and worship the Divine Christ, regard him, not as a historical being, but as a theological creation. Of what service the alleged historical Jesus is to them it is difficult to understand, because, like all others, they wholly ignore his teaching and worship only the Christ. Of course, the majority of them, dropping the Christ altogether, call themselves followers of Jesus simply, although few, if any, really follow him, except nominally. Some divines, however, while nominally accepting the conclusions of criticism, yet cling wistfully to the stories of the birth and resurrection, treating them, if not as facts, at least as beautiful poems or parables. "There is a sense," they aver, "in which they are true, though it is almost impossible to express it in words." As we have no religious axe to grind, we do not hesitate to declare that criticism has completely undermined the historical foundation upon which Christianity was erected. Virgin births and resurrections are mythological fancies, not historical facts.

Now nearly all theologians are agreed that, even though the facts of history must be given up, the facts of experience cannot be disputed. "Christ lives," they exclaim; "we enjoy daily interviews with him; he is the way, the truth, and the life within us; and this joyous experience proves the truth of our faith beyond the possibility of a doubt." Again and again are we assured that the testimony of experience is absolutely conclusive, or that experience is the court of final appeal. In the estimation of some, religious experience is synonymous with knowledge. We have heard many a fervid Christian's cry: "I know that Christ lives because I commune with him every day." Here and there, however, we do come across a theologian who is bold enough to cast a suspicion upon the reliability of the testimony of experience. Professor Peake says:—

"When eminent religious teachers stake the truth of Christianity on the testimony of the religious consciousness, and say that this in itself is enough, though criticism do its worst against the New Testament, one may well stand aghast at the recklessness of such a position. The Christian consciousness is a very complex thing; it is rooted in certain historical facts guaranteed to us by the New Testament teaching. Cut the New Testament away, and sooner or later the Christian consciousness will vanish with it" (*Christianity: its Nature and its Truth*, pp. 146-7).

We venture to endorse Professor Peake's criticism. In our opinion the Gospel Jesus and Paul's Christ are identical, in the absence of whom there would have been no Christian experience. No sentence could be saner, or more logical, than the last in the above extract: "Cut the New Testament away, and sooner or later the Christian consciousness will vanish with it." The only rational inference is that Christian experience possesses no evidential value whatever. If a man believes the New Testament with any degree of enthusiasm he is bound to have the Christian consciousness; if he does not believe it, he is denied the experience. The ordinary apologist says: "Prayer and communion with God are as much facts as those of science, and of far greater importance, as affecting the whole man." Of course they are facts that affect the whole man, and no Freethinker ever dreamed of contradicting the statement; but they are facts entirely dependent upon acceptance of the Bible as a Divine Book. We candidly admit that religious experience is a fact which some people thoroughly enjoy, but our contention is that it proves absolutely nothing except that those who have it are supernatural believers, while those who are not are without it.

Professor Peake, we are aware, is a believer in God and the living Christ. To him they are both personal beings in personal relation with mankind. He

believes that he has a blissful fellowship with his loving Heavenly Father and his all-merciful Redeemer. Of necessity, fellowship is the state or relation of being a fellow or associate, or companionship of two or more persons on equal and friendly terms. "Our fellowship," says St. John, "is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). "God is faithful," says another Scripture, "through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. i. 9). If language is to be relied upon, God and man are fellows, associating on terms of closest friendship, and God calls us "into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Such is the Christian creed subscribed by all believers. Is it true? Professor Peake answers for us: "Cut the New Testament away, and sooner or later the Christian consciousness will vanish with it." Can this be a compliment to God as man's fellow? Surely a fellow worthy of the name would not withdraw from fellowship through the destruction of a book? Does not the Professor realise what a terrible insult he offers to God if God there be? Does he not see that in reality he paints God as the very worst fellow conceivable? Not only he will not enter into fellowship with us unless we know and believe the New Testament, but if by any chance this sacred book is destroyed, sooner or later he will cease to be our fellow. Why, the moment you throw the powerful searchlight of reason upon such teaching you discover how infinitely ridiculous it is. If God existed he could and would communicate with all members of his family without the instrumentality of any book or priestly order.

When Professor Peake wrote his memorable sentence, "Cut the New Testament away, and sooner or later the Christian consciousness will vanish with it," he little thought that he was playing beautifully into the hands of his opponents by furnishing them with a weapon whereby to crush the Christian faith. A God who can only come to us through a book or a church, a Savior who can only do his saving work through and up to the capacity of a professional priesthood, is not worth having—is, in fact, far worse than no God at all. Yes, Professor Peake deserves our warmest thanks for having forged in the arsenal of theology an arm of immeasurable strength to the soldiers of reason. We have often heard the statement made by preachers, more noted for zeal than intelligence, that if every copy of the Bible in existence were burnt to-morrow Christianity would be utterly unaffected, because Christ sat on the throne of the Universe and was resolved to bring the whole world to his feet. Being the head of the Church, he would not rest until she embraced the entire human race. But those champions of the Cross were fundamentally mistaken. Deprived of the Bible, the Church would be shorn of all her strength, and without the Church there would be no Christianity. The truth of this is being illustrated before our very eyes. It is a common complaint that people no longer read the Bible. The Sacred Book is so utterly neglected because it has ceased to be regarded as God's Word. The result is that the Churches are steadily emptying, and that with the decay of the Churches Christianity is losing the little hold it ever had upon the population.

The truth is that the Christian religion is supported by no facts. The nativity-narratives, the accounts of the miracle-working career and the sacrificial death, the resurrection and ascension stories, are so legendary as to be practically worthless, while the facts of experience only prove that those who enjoy them treat the legends as if they were literally true, which is absurd, especially in face of the undeniable truth that socially and morally Christianity has been a gigantic failure. All the proud claims made on its behalf have been flagrantly falsified all through the long and dark centuries. The facts are all dead against it. They rise mountains high, and testify in the clearest manner that the Cross has caused rivers of innocent blood to flow wherever its banner has been waved. Even to-day Christian Europe is a vast armed camp.

All possible preparations are being made by every Christian country to shed blood on the largest possible scale. This is the state of things to which Christianity has brought us, and in which all the Churches acquiesce.

J. T. LLOYD.

Science and the Soul.—II.

(Continued from p. 69.)

"The received doctrine is that God puts a soul into every human being at his birth—*i. e.*, that whenever man makes a body God makes a soul, or sends a pre-existing soul, to inhabit it; or that, in some mysterious fashion, with the commencement of earthly life commences also the life of an immortal nature. On the assumption, then, of man's free agency (an essential postulate of all intelligible reasoning on moral questions) it would seem to lie in man's decision how many souls shall be created or incarnated, and when, and pretty much to what earthly conditions and influences. On his determination, or passion, or it may be on his indulgence of a momentary appetite, depends the question whether an immortal spirit shall be called into existence, and shall encounter—*having no voice in the matter*—not only the risks and sufferings of this short human life, but the incalculable and fearful chances of an unending life to come."—W. R. GREG, *Enigmas of Life* (1891), p. 214.

"Can another body, then, avail to stay the hand of death, and shall man by a second nervous system escape scot-free from the ruins of the first? We think not. The laws connecting consciousness with changes in the brain are very definite and precise, and their necessary consequences are not to be evaded by any such means."—PROFESSOR CLIFFORD, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 175.

WHAT can science tell us of the soul or of a future life? Absolutely nothing. There is not an atom of scientific proof that the intellectual faculties can exist apart from the brain; they are extinguished with the life of the body. In the words of Professor Tyndall, in the famous "Belfast Address,"—

"Divorced from matter, where is life? Whatever our *faith* may say, our *knowledge* shows them to be indissolubly joined. Every meal we eat, and every cup we drink, illustrates the mysterious control of Mind by Matter."

The belief in the existence of a soul apart from the body, and its survival in a future life, had been undermined by the Materialists of the eighteenth century. The advent of Darwinism and the theory of evolution shattered it for ever. It now remains a matter of faith, not of knowledge.

In the days when people believed the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, that the world was created in six days, and that God moulded the first man from the earth, it was easy to believe that God placed a soul in the clay whereof he had moulded Adam, as a sculptor fashions a model of the figure he intends to carve in marble.

But when it was discovered that man—instead of being specially constructed in this manner by a divine artist—was the result of countless ages of evolution, and that his ancestors could be traced back into the animal world, from which he had descended, the question at once arose as to where the soul came in? To this searching question the Churches have as yet made no intelligible reply. The case is well put by Sir Ray Lankester, as follows:—

"No one ventures to deny, at the present day, that every human being grows from the egg *in utero*, just as a dog or a monkey does; the facts are before us and can be scrutinised in detail. We may ask of those who refuse to admit the gradual and natural development of man's consciousness in the ancestral series, passing from ape-like forms into indubitable man, 'How do you propose to divide the series presented by every individual man in his growth from the egg? At what particular phase in the embryonic series is the soul with its potential consciousness implanted? Is it in the egg? in the foetus of this month or of that? in the new-born infant? or at five years of age?' This, it is notorious, is a point upon which Churches have never been able to agree; and it is equally notorious that the unbroken series exists—that the egg becomes the foetus, the foetus the child, and the child the man. On the other hand, we have the historical series—the series the existence of which is inferred by Darwin and

his adherents. This is a series leading from simple egg-like organisms to ape-like creatures, and from these to man. Will those who cannot answer our previous inquiries undertake to assert dogmatically in the present case at what point in the historical series there is a break or division? At what step are we to be asked to suppose that the order of nature was stopped, and a non-natural soul introduced? "*

Again, if man has an immortal soul, why deny one to the animals, from which he descended. Says Archbishop Whately:—

"None of those who contend for the natural immortality of the soul have been able to extricate themselves from one difficulty, viz., that all their arguments apply, with exactly the same force, to prove an immortality, not only of brutes, but even of plants; though in such a conclusion as this they are never willing to acquiesce."†

John Wesley saw, and admitted the force of this argument. Southey, in his *Life of Wesley*, says:—

"Some teachers of Materialism had asserted that if man had an immaterial soul so had the brutes, as if this conclusion reduced that opinion to a manifest absurdity. 'I will not quarrel,' said Wesley, 'with any that think they have. Nay, I wish he could prove it; and surely I would rather allow them souls than I would give up my own.'‡

In a footnote to this, Southey observes:—

"On this point Wesley's bitterest opponent agreed with him. 'I will confess,' says Toplady, 'that I never yet heard one single argument urged against the immortality of brutes which would not, *mutatis mutandis*, be equally conclusive against the immortality of man.'"

In one of his Sermons, Wesley conjectures:—

"What, if it should then please him, when he has made us 'equal to angels,' to make them what we are now,—creatures capable of God, capable of knowing and loving and enjoying the Author of their Being?" §

He thought that their appearance would be changed into their "primeval beauty," their corruptible body put on incorruption, when "they shall enjoy happiness suited to their state, without alloy, without interruption, and without end" (p. 71).

There is not a single argument used to prove the natural immortality of man that cannot equally well be used to prove the immortality of animals.

But suppose it be admitted that the horse, the dog, the elephant, and the higher anthropoids share this gift with man; where are you going to draw the line? Why deny it to the rat, the scorpion, the flea, and yet lower vermin not usually mentioned in polite society?

Then, again, no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the plant and the animal kingdom. Some organisms, like *Æthelium septicum*, a fungus common on the surface of tan-pits, under other conditions exhibits all the characteristics of an animal. As Professor Huxley says, there is "an intermediate kingdom, a sort of biological No Man's Land for all these questionable forms."|| The plant world merges, by insensible gradations, into the animal world, just as the animal, by insensible gradations, has emerged in man.

Suppose we grant a soul all round, then we must suppose that, after death, the spirit of man will support the spirit of a flea while riding a spiritual horse, followed by the spirit of a dog—the horse supporting itself on spiritual grass.

Then, again, to cite Ludwig Buchner:—

"Life in eternity, according to the tolerably unanimous opinions of theologians and philosophers, is to be a continuation of or an improvement upon the life in this world. It must therefore seem to be indispensable that each individual soul should at least have reached on earth a certain stage of formation as a

groundwork for its further development to proceed upon. But now only think of the souls of children dying in infancy, of old people who had lapsed into second childhood, of insane persons, of idiots, of badly trained individuals, of irresponsible beings, of savage nations, or of those standing on the lowest rungs of our European society. Are the defects in civilisation and education to be continued in the other world on the same or on a higher scale."*

There are other problems to be considered. For instance, it is reported in the Gospel of Matthew (ch. xxii.) that Jesus, upon being asked regarding the case of a woman who had buried seven husbands, as to whose wife she would be at the resurrection, evaded the question by stating that at the resurrection they would neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Closely connected with this is the question of recognition in the future life, which, as Professor Bonney remarks, "often causes perplexity." He observes:—

"Suppose a married couple to have been parted by death while both were comparatively young, and the survivor to die at an advanced age, how is that one to be recognised by the other; or the child, which has been taken away when its parents were in their prime, to know them when they also, after thirty years or more, cross the dark river—to the 'land of the leal.'"

† The Professor hobbles out of the difficulty by hazarding the conjecture—

"the same person may wear a different aspect to different individuals. Parents may seem young to the child whom they lost in the earlier years of their married life, and old to those who, some forty years later, had been the solace of their age."

So that mothers who died leaving infants in long clothes will know them in that state; those who died when the infants had reached twenty years of age will know them as young men; while others who knew them as old men will know them in that condition. So that the same person will appear to different people as an infant, as a young man of twenty, and as an old man of eighty or ninety.

Such are some of the inextricable confusions and absurdities into which we are led by the theory of an immortal soul.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Goethe.—III.

(Continued from p. 76.)

IN the winter of 1774 Goethe was presented to the young Prince of Weimar, Karl August, and this led to his visiting him at Mainz. In the following year the Prince became the ruler of the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar, and shortly afterwards, while on a wedding journey to Stuttgart, he pressed the poet to visit him as soon as he returned to Weimar with his bride. As the invitation was delayed, Goethe became restless and dissatisfied, and decided to depart for Italy. He had reached Heidelberg when the summons arrived from the Court, and Goethe retraced his steps and appeared at Weimar in the autumn of 1775. This visit he regarded as a brief holiday with a friendly ruler, while in reality circumstances so shaped themselves that his whole future career was completely altered.

Weimar is now a famous city, but before Goethe and his circle made it so it was a mere uninteresting speck on the map of Continental Europe. An old-world walled town, its architecture and inhabitants were reminiscent of the Middle Ages. The city gates and portoullis preserved the defences of wild warlike days. "Saxe Weimar," in the words of Lewes,

"has no trade, no manufactures, no animation of commercial, political, or even theological activity. This part of Saxony, be it remembered, was the home and shelter of Protestantism in its birth. Only a few miles

* Sir Ray Lankester, *The Advancement of Science* (1890), pp. 53-54.

† Richard Whately, *Essays on Some Peculiarities of the Christian Religion*, p. 67; cited in Huxley's *Hume*, p. 173.

‡ Southey, *Life of Wesley* (Bohn's Edition, 1871), p. 369.

§ Sermon lx., "The General Deliverance," Wesley's *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 72.

|| Huxley, *Lay Sermons*, p. 128.

* Ludwig Buchner, *Force and Matter*, pp. 414-15.

† Professor Bonney, *The Present Relations of Science and Religion*, p. 170.

from Weimar stands the Wartburg, where Luther, in the disguise of Squire George, lived in safety, translating the Bible, and hurling his inkstand at the head of Satan, like a rough-handed disputant as he was. In the market-place of Weimar stand, to this day [1854], two houses, from the windows of which Tetzels advertised his indulgences, and Luther afterwards in fiery indignation fulminated against them."

Arrived in Weimar, Goethe and the Duke were soon on terms of the closest intimacy. Envy, hatred, and uncharitableness sent the whisper abroad that the poet and his royal friend squandered their days and nights in graceless gaiety. The ligneous Klopstock sent Goethe a sermon on the subject, and the meddling moralist was politely but plainly informed that he was prying into matters that in no way concerned him, the real facts of which had been grossly misrepresented.

Whatever the true circumstances were, the whirling gaities of Goethe's early Weimar weeks were certainly exciting, and may have led to a serious waste of precious time. As a matter of fact, the young Duke was a gifted man, and his favorite was a brilliant genius. There is hardly a man of outstanding ability in the whole realm of history and biography who has not a dash of the Devil in his nature. Among these Devil-endowed mortals the prince and the poet must be included. But that their sins were serious, or that Goethe led the Duke astray, are the inventions of the poet's scandal-loving enemies. No one who has studied the facts can resist the conclusion that Goethe was the Duke's guardian angel, and that he strenuously exerted all his powers of persuasion to curb the wild, passionate craving for pleasurable excitement which Karl August had inherited from his fierce and warlike ancestors. Both by precept and example, Goethe provided a pattern that any ruler who realised that the prince is but the first of his subjects might copy with advantage. As a result, the Duke became one of the best and most enlightened of German princes.

The young Duchess for a time regarded Goethe with disfavor, but she soon appreciated him at his proper worth, and it fell to the lot of the poet to compose the domestic derangements of the newly-wedded pair. The Duchess Amalia, the young Duke's mother, recognised Goethe's extraordinary abilities from the first, and she was untiring in her efforts to induce him to remain in Weimar.

Wieland was already there, and he and Goethe again met. Despite an old grievance, Wieland was soon won over to Goethe's side, and, as he said in a letter to a friend, he was soon "as full of Goethe as a dewdrop of the morning sun." The post of Court Preacher falling vacant, Goethe earnestly recommended Herder as an excellent candidate for the office; but the clergy, who regarded that philosopher as being little better than an infidel, were by no means willing to welcome him. All opposition, however, was ultimately overcome, and Herder was installed at Weimar in 1773. And it is only just to point out that Goethe secured this favor for his friend at a time when Herder was most bitter in his language towards him.

Karl August's attachment to Goethe was so strong that he was anxious that they should never be sundered. He therefore sounded the State officials as to Goethe's admission to the public service. The sage councillors were aghast at the suggestion; they one and all regarded the idea of a dreaming poet entrusted with the responsibility of State business as utterly preposterous. The Duke and his mother, nevertheless, swept all official opposition aside, and Goethe began his wonderful government career.

At this period Goethe's friendship with the Frau von Stein commenced, a friendship that lasted some ten years. Whether she was highly intellectual or not, she was certainly a woman of culture and character. Goethe's senior by six years, she had been eleven years a wife, and was the mother of seven children. Baron von Stein was a sensible man of the world, who regarded his wife as a honest woman,

which she unquestionably was. Her advice—and very good advice—was always at Goethe's service amid all his cares and anxieties, and to such a nature as the impressionable poet's the sympathy and affection of an intelligent and handsome woman were of incalculable value. Her children, in common with all other children with whom Goethe was brought into touch, were never so happy as when in his company.

Goethe now experienced a profound change in his estimate of life's duties. He began to reproach himself with his desultory versatility. He sternly determined to master his imaginary weaknesses and immolate his passion for pleasure on the altar of self-sacrifice. He became conscientious to a degree in the manner in which he carried out his official duties at Weimar, and he performed his functions like one to the manner born. He was a constant attendant at the meetings of the Privy Council; he mastered every public matter submitted to him; he reformed the currency; he reopened the disused mines of Ilmenau; he brought the ducal army into a state of efficiency; he acted as diplomatist, and he modernised and did much towards rationalising the University of Jena. He employed considerable energy in promoting popular education in Weimar, and established a precedent which afterwards enabled Haeckel to speak his fullest and freest thoughts from the chair of a university which is probably less hampered by sacerdotal interference than any other in the world.

During this laborious period he commanded universal respect. His benefactions were boundless, and he performed his works of charity in secret. Even among Germans the warm-hearted poet is commonly pictured as a cold and austere man. The stately dignity of his old age is to some extent responsible for this, but Goethe's lack of insularity appears to be the chief cause of this misconception. The author of *Faust* was too universal in his outlook to make a good patriot, and he had small faith in the general run of German rulers. To classic Greece and Imperial Rome, to the English Shakespeare, the French Voltaire, and the Hebrew Spinoza he owed and acknowledged allegiance. He sang his songs in the temple of all-creating Nature, and his deity was coextensive with the universe itself.

Before Schiller knew and loved the man who was afterwards to mean so much to him, he was amazed to observe the reverential attitude which Herder displayed towards Goethe. But when Schiller's personal relationship with Goethe enabled him to form a juster judgment, he confessed that—

"It is not the greatness of his intellect which binds me to him. If he were not as a man more admirable than any I have ever known, I should only marvel at his genius from the distance. But I can truly say that in the six years I have lived with him, I have never for one moment been deceived in his character. He has a high truth and integrity, and is thoroughly in earnest for the Right and Good; hence all hypocrites and phrasemakers are uncomfortable in his presence."

After ten years' strenuous service to the State, Goethe could no longer resist the day-dream of his youth, and he made preparations to visit the land of the olive and the vine. Almost in secret he set out on his Italian pilgrimage, and in the southern atmosphere his poetical and artistic powers reasserted themselves. He visited Verona, Vicenza, and Venice, and was enraptured with the splendors of the city by the sea. At Florence he tarried but a few short hours; the City of the Seven Hills beckoned him away. "If I am dragged to Rome on Ixion's wheel," he wrote, "I will not complain." He was fascinated with the capital of the ancient world. He strove valiantly to restore to his mind the palmy days of Rome. But as he mournfully confesses—

"It is a sour and sad undertaking to pick out the old Rome from the new.....One comes upon the traces of a splendor and of a destruction, both of which go beyond our conceptions. What the barbarians allowed to stand, the architects of modern Rome have laid waste."

But this melancholy feeling soon passed away, and

he began to picture in his mind's eye something near akin to the departed grandeur and glory of the Pagan mistress of the world.

The Apollo Belvedere and other masterpieces of ancient art he now studied at first hand, and for the first time realised the immense inferiority of the plaster casts to their inimitable originals. His old interest in anatomical science was revived by his studies of the ancient marbles, and he meditated more and more deeply over the problem of the metamorphoses of plants.

The semi-Pagan art of the renaissance also impressed him profoundly. He was lost in admiration for Raphael's Vatican masterpieces, but he bowed down before Michael Angelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel. "I could," he said of these sublime creations, "only gaze and stand amazed. The inward sureness and manliness of the master, his greatness, go beyond all expression."

Goethe led a retired life in Rome. He made himself known to a few choice spirits, and enjoyed happy intellectual intercourse with Tischbein and Meyer, the artists, with Moritz, the author and traveller, and with the famous Angelica Kaufmann. For a time he essayed to become a reputable artist, and took great pains to improve himself in painting, modelling, and drawing. At the outset he was gratified at his progress, but was ultimately driven to the reluctant conclusion that Nature had denied him the capacity which enables the artist to create things of enduring beauty.

To Italy he had carried various writings to complete or recast. His prose *Iphigenia*, a drama to some extent founded on the play of Euripides, he determined to transform into poetry. In its present form Goethe's *Iphigenia* is a poem of wondrous beauty, but the friends in Rome to whom he read the manuscript were evidently disappointed with it. They looked forward to something more closely akin to the earlier *Goetz von Berlichingen*. Angelica Kaufmann alone appreciated the great merits of the poem. Most competent critics now regard it as a consummate work of art which is in many ways superior to its Greek prototype.

Having received an extended leave of absence from Weimar, Goethe journeyed with Tischbein to Naples, and observed with interest the smoking volcano Vesuvius. He enriched his mind with the art treasures of Naples, and recalled the departed glories of Pagan civilisation as he studied the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum. After a visit to Sicily, during which he half ascended Mount Etna, he reached Messina, whence he embarked for Naples. Once more in Rome, the attractions of the city of the Tiber frustrated his earlier resolve to return immediately to Weimar. For almost a year he lingered in Rome, and in the meanwhile he gave *Edmont* its final form, worked at *Faust*, and gave the finishing touches to some of his minor writings.

The immense services that art has rendered religion were made clear to Goethe when he attended the imposing ceremonies of Catholicism during Passion Week at Rome. The sacrament of the Mass in the Sistine Chapel, and the ceremonies in the same edifice on the morn of Easter Day, were doubtless responsible for some of the most marvellous scenes in *Faust*. At length the hour of parting came, and having enjoyed a moonlight ramble along the Corso, and after paying a farewell visit to the Capitol and the Colosseum, he passed northwards towards Florence and Milan, and in June, 1788, returned to Weimar.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

Poor Old Father!

Tess of the D'Urbevilles on the films is a disappointment. From almost every point of view it is inadequate, and altogether unworthy of a remarkable book. And yet, even when this is said, Mr. Hardy's work has a central incident so vivid and so

unmistakable in its purport that any kind of representation can hardly fail to have other than a salutary effect. The Christian consciousness has manifested itself in a few uglier ways than in its vicious assessment of the relative guilt of man and woman in all forms of sexual irregularity. The heartless treatment meted out to the mother of an illegitimate child, for instance, makes one almost despair of human nature, whilst the extension of the penalties to the hapless infant is surely the last word in meanness and brutality. To waken minds to generosity and understanding on such matters is one of the worthiest of objects. Surely no Englishman can be said to have accomplished more in this direction than Thomas Hardy.

In bringing home to the multitude the stupidity and inhumanity of current judgments on such matters this production should have an excellent effect. There is one respect, however, in which this picture-play is noteworthy and significant to Freethinkers. Readers of the novel will remember that portion of the book in which Tess, believing her baby to be dying, and accepting the Church's teaching that an unbaptised infant will suffer unending torments, seeks to have the state of affairs put right. The clergyman, however, in view of the circumstances of its birth, refuses to perform this office; and Tess, in her great distress of mind, herself performs a ceremony of baptism over the child, in the hope that it will conform to the divine specification. This pathetic incident is reproduced on the film, and, as an advertisement of the crude doctrine of infant damnation, serves a useful purpose. But the full force of the lesson is deliberately circumvented. Immediately preceding the amateur baptism, we are coolly told, by the letterpress, that the FATHER of Tess prevents her having the child baptised. This is outrageous enough to be ludicrous. We wonder whether the promoters, with a view to allaying the force of opposition to the Sunday picture show, have thought it expedient to prove their sympathy with religious sentiment (and methods) by doing the Church such a kindly turn? Or was it that the self-appointed Board of Censors, to whose dictates our picture firms appear to submit with laughable docility, asked for this amendment as a condition for their "fit for production" certificate? Whatever the reason, the presiding spirit over the fate of pictures has had his sport with *Tess of the D'Urbevilles*.

Freethinkers are too familiar with such happenings to be greatly irritated. On all sides we meet with evidences of a disposition to save Christianity from dangerous criticism at all costs. And criticism of the foregoing variety, which represents the Church's practice as an outrage on decent human feeling, belongs to a peculiarly effective type of criticism. The heart has a logic of its own, and when the Church comes into conflict with that, defeat is certain. The graveside scene in *Hamlet*, with its lashing the "churlish priests," who had refused the fair suicide "Christian" burial, has been doing its share towards disintegrating the Christian superstition for centuries. As the bigots may yet require further conciliation, we would suggest to the company exhibiting the Forbes Robertson *Hamlet* that this scene be prefaced with the explanation, "Laertes refuses to allow his sister to have Christian Burial." This, and a few other improvements on similar lines, would surely convince the most rabid opponent of Sunday pictures that they are capable, in judicious hands, of making for righteousness and assisting the cause of Jesus.

The Christian Church was never a pleasant institution; but once upon a time it had a little dignity. Their doctrines, they admitted, sounded brutal, but they were true; therefore, they couldn't really be as brutal as they seemed. So they put them forward in their nakedness, and were not ashamed. But nowadays they are very much ashamed, and the demand for fig-leaves and any kind of decent covering is extraordinary. The Oracles of God are up for alteration and repair.

T. H. ELSTON.

Acid Drops.

It is reported that the Pope will remove his embargo on the Tango if it is called something else. That reservation is supposed to save his infallibility.

Papa Sarto's opinion on photography will be solicited next, we presume. Ladies—most of them, no doubt, good Christians—are already having their bare backs taken; some for friends, and some for publication in the newspapers. It is difficult to see how they can go much beyond this. His "back parts" were all that Jehovah ventured to display to Moses. But you never can tell. Female enterprise is remarkable for great boldness nowadays. A word from Papa Sarto may save us from the "altogether."

What a way truth has of finding its way out! A very pious member of the Government—none other than Mr. Runciman, who became Minister of Agriculture after serving an apprenticeship as Minister of Education—the other day thanked heaven that "cows and swine had no religion." His meaning was that if they had there would be the same quarrels among them as among human beings. And in this we quite agree with him. If cows and swine had religious beliefs they would become a nuisance to everybody—even to Mr. Runciman. The reverse of this truth is that when human beings lose theirs they will probably behave themselves better.

The *Methodist Times* recognises the imputation, and resents it. It says that the questions at issue are hardly religious, but are restricted to the political questions that are raised by the State establishment of religion. Nonsense! The fundamental question is a religious one, and nothing else. It is the question of how to make the rising generation religious before it finds out what is being done. Religion cannot afford to wait. It must catch people young if they are to be turned out good Christians. Leave them alone till they reach years of judgment, and there will be more churches on the market for picture-palace investors.

It is astonishing how eagerly all the religious papers are pursuing the subject of the evil influence of the cinema on young people. One journal, the *Guardian*, remarks that the tendency is for young children to steal money to go to picture palaces; even members of Church Brigades spend their pence that way instead of contributing to the Brigade funds. Pictures are also bad for the eyes and generate a craving for excitement, clothe villainy in an attractive guise, etc. etc. Of course, the moving film may have an injurious effect on sight—we are not sure; but there is a deal of bumbag about the rest. We fancy we have heard of children stealing money for sweets and marbles; and even adults occasionally steal for other purposes. And, of course, there are always chuckle-headed magistrates and other people who will put it into youngsters' mouths, when they have done wrong, to say that it was due to the cinema. We used to hear the same story about boys' books and other things. For ourselves, we always found "boys' bloods" painfully moral, and picture shows seem on the same line. The villain always gets badly used in the end, and virtue is rewarded in a way that doesn't always happen in everyday life. Really, however, the religious papers are not directly concerned about these things. There are plenty of causes for childish wrongdoing about which they remain silent. The real cause of offence is that the picture palace opens on Sunday. It is a rival to the Churches. That is the whole secret of the situation.

Mr. Edward Lovett, a member of the Folk Lore Society, has been investigating the extent to which charms are used for various purposes among Londoners. He finds love charms, charms against the evil eye, and various forms of ailments are still made and sold to an extent not dreamed of by many. Personally, we are not surprised at the result of Mr. Lovett's researches. There is a tremendous mass of superstition current and latent in our population, and, as Professor Frazer once reminded us, its being there provides all the material for a really dangerous revival of superstition. It was the growth of the kinds of superstition noted by Mr. Lovett amongst the people of the disintegrating Roman Empire that gave Christianity its opportunity, and it is not quite beyond the bounds of the possible that a similar thing might not happen again. The only safeguard is the growth of positive or scientific habits of thought, and against that religion in all forms offers the strongest opposition. Religion as it is taught in the Churches does not, it is true, directly

encourage the use of charms and magical incantations, but it does keep alive the frame of mind that considers these things of importance.

There is a general agreement among those who ought to know that drinking amongst women is on the increase. A drunken man is bad enough, but a drunken woman is infinitely worse. And when all is said and done, drunkenness remains one of the peculiar vices of Christian countries. Mohammedanism has at least managed to keep its followers sober, and this appears to be true of the conversions made in Africa, while the Christian black convert takes to drink easily and quickly enough. We wonder what an intelligent Mohammedan would say to the increase of drinking amongst women in this Christian country? We know what some of them have said about drunkenness amongst Christian men, and their opinion of it among women would be worth hearing.

The following is from the *Daily Telegraph* (Jan. 28):—

"Jerusalem is in the immediate future to be lighted by electricity. A tramway line is to be constructed from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and a new water supply will be provided. These works will be undertaken by a French banking firm, which has received a forty years' concession under the new Vilayets Law."

If the "Holy City" had been blessed with electric lighting, tramway lines, and a filtered water supply, nineteen hundred years ago, there wouldn't have been a ghost of a chance for Christianity—which was founded on the story of a spectre. That sort of story never prospers in the densest civilisation. Ghosts never make a reputation in Cheapside, Fleet-street, or the Strand. They have to make it in the semi-rural suburbs of London. "The Charing Cross Ghost" is an absurdity. "The Finchley Ghost" has a possible career.

"There have been times in the world's history," says Prebendary Grane, "when Western civilisation practically meant the Church." Quite so; but Prebendary Grane omitted to point out that this was precisely the time when Western civilisation was at its lowest. Hallam pithily said that the darkness of the Dark Ages was darkest when the power of the Church was greatest. And no one who knows the period will seriously dispute the statement. And the generalisation is the more damning because the Christian Church inherited a civilisation. It took over the civilised Pagan world, with the result that one after another its social institutions decayed, its learning lost, its culture forgotten. And the change for the better began, not with a greater growth of religion, but with the development of unbelief and the rediscovery of all that the Christian Church had neglected for centuries.

A great deal of discussion is going on in the religious press as to whether the population of Wales is mainly Nonconformist or Episcopalian. From statistics collected by the Bishop of St. David's it appears that the Nonconformists number forty per cent. of the population. The Bishop apparently claims the remaining sixty per cent.—which is rather more than others will admit, as no allowance is made for those who have the good fortune to be outside both parties. The discussion is connected with the question of Disestablishment, and quite fails to touch the real issue. Churches were never established by a majority vote, and have never really been disestablished by one. Formally, the last statement may be said to be inaccurate, since it can be pointed out that votes are actually taken whether a Church shall be disestablished or not. This is correct, but does not touch the point we have in view, which is the real significance of an Established Church and of the vote that formally deposes it.

Mr. Gladstone often said that the Church Established was the representative of the collective religious life of the nation. In this he was quite correct. But it is even more than this. It is a visible expression of the idea that religious belief is essential to the well-being of a nation, and that there is the same need for a government providing religious instruction as there is for providing schools or anything else. And so long as this belief continues an establishment of religion in some form is inevitable. That is why the earlier generation of Dissenters very rarely claimed that religion should be separated from the State. All they asked was that a particular Church should be removed. Even to-day this is all that a very large number of Nonconformists have in mind. Not the disestablishment of religion, but the deposition of a Church—which means, in practice, the establishment of some other Church, or of all Churches.

The growth of the more logical idea that the State should not interfere in any way with religion, and should treat

Churches as it treats all organisations—that is, merely protect them in the exercise of their lawful rights—is really due to the conviction that a State, like an individual, can get on very well without religion. If we believe that religious belief is vital to human well-being, it would be nothing less than national suicide to insist that the State should leave it severely alone. And as a matter of fact, although only the minority have actually reached this conclusion, the majority feel that whether a man goes to church or stays at home, prays to God or does not pray, makes very little difference. The logic of facts are too strong for the logic of theory. Life is more powerful than doctrine. Civilised countries all over the world are slowly realising Disestablishment because they are being driven to realise the unimportance of religion to the work of understanding life or establishing a mastery over nature.

Dr. C. F. Aked, once of Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, afterwards of Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, New York, and since of the First Congregational Church, San Francisco, is very likely put on his metal by the movements of the Oracle of the City Temple in London. He is reported to have just given his congregation a new "shocker" in a sermon "of extreme Modernist views," wherein he "avowed his disbelief in the doctrines of the Trinity and the Miraculous Birth." We didn't suppose that this would frighten any Church in the Californian Capital. Mr. Campbell went as far as that in his *New Theology*—which, by the way, was published some seven or eight years ago. We are afraid that Dr. Aked always had more brag than bravery.

The Papacy has just discovered Maeterlinck. After all these years! Just like it. Also just like it to put his books in the Index, and give the people who haven't already perused him an opportunity of doing so. Maeterlinck should give the Pope a bow and a smile for his advertisement.

Maeterlinck tells an interviewer that the Pope's ban is "a prehistoric phenomena without importance." Quite so. But the value of the advertisement remains.

Mr. Hubert Bland is asked a few plain questions in the *Sunday Chronicle* by a casual correspondent. One of them is the following. "Who are those 'prominent men of science' who are freely uttering doubts about Darwinism and the mechanical theory?" That is something for Mr. Bland to go on with. We hope Mr. B. T. Brierley, the writer of the letter, will jog "Hubert's" memory if the performance is needed, as it very likely will be.

Mr. Hubert Bland is an ex-military man and, we believe, a Roman Catholic. He is also a dilettante Socialist of the ultra-Fabian variety. His real value to progressive thought is easily estimated. His journalistic success depends a great deal on the "classy" people he is supposed to know. The English mob, of all parties, do so like the flavor of aristocracy. Any kind of aristocracy will do.

Mrs. Barclay, the sentimental novelist, who doesn't look it, tells an interviewer that "The Bible is true, not only in its theology and ethics, but —." We may spare the rest. What is the use of reading on? The Bible is true. Mrs. Barclay says so. That settles it. Perhaps the lady will now tackle another topic, and tell us whether she has mended that Broken Halo.

The Bishop of Oxford, speaking at a Peace meeting in London, said that the first thing they must look to for the promotion of their object was "the spread of democracy"—the second was "the spread of intelligence and knowledge." Where does Christianity look in?

A muddle-headed Christian, who dates from Lower Edmonton, justifies the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from the local Free Library on the ground that he does not consider the National Secular Society deserves the first adjective in its name. The connection between his one-legged premiss and his two-legged conclusion is not discernible by secular logic. Nor has he any right to call this journal "a paper of the National Secular Society" at all. It gives the N. S. S. free publicity. That is all. It was never owned or controlled by the Society.

CARLYLE AND HELL FIRE.

Professor Tyndall, in his paper of "Personal Recollections of Thomas Carlyle," contributed to the *Fortnightly Review*, gave a very vivid and most interesting passage on the Abolition of Hell Fire, being the setting forth of a conversation he held with Thomas Carlyle. It is as follows: "I accompanied Carlyle to Melchet, the beautiful seat of Lady Ashburton, and rode with him through the adjacent New Forest. We drove to Lyndhurst to see Leighton's frescoes. We frequently walked together. One day, the storm being wild and rude, a refuge from its buffets was thought desirable. He said he knew of one. I accordingly followed his lead to a wood at some distance. We skirted it for a time, and finally struck into it. In the heart of the wood we found a clearing. The trees had been cut down and removed, their low stumps, with smooth transverse sections, remaining behind. It was a solemn spot, perfectly calm, while round the wood sounded the storm. Dry dead fern abounded. Of this I formed a cushion, and, placing it on one of the tree stumps, set him down upon it. I filled his pipe and lighted it, and while he puffed conversation went on. Early in the day, as we roamed over the pastures, he had been complaining of the collapse of religious feeling in England, and I had said to him, 'As regards the most earnest and the most capable of the men of a generation younger than your own, if one writer more than another has been influential in loosing them from their theological moorings, thou art the man!' Our talk was resumed and continued as he sat upon the stump and smoked his placid pipe within hearing of the storm. I said to him, 'Despite all the losses you deplore, there is one great gain. We have extinguished that horrible spectre which darkened with its death-wings so many brave and pious lives. It is something to have abolished hell fire.' 'Yes,' he replied 'that is a distinct and enormous gain. My own father was a brave man, and, though poor, unaccustomed to cower before the face of man; but the Almighty God was a different matter. You and I do not believe that Melchet Court exists, and that we shall return thither, more firmly than he believed that, after his death, he would have to face a judge who would lift him into everlasting bliss or doom him to eternal woe. I could notice that for three years before he died, this rugged, honest soul trembled in its depths at even the possible prospect of hell fire. It surely is a great gain to have abolished this terror.'

EXIT CHRIST.

Since thou hast quickened what thou canst not kill,
Awakened famine thou canst never still,
Spoken in madness, prophesied in vain,
And promised what no thing of clay shall gain,
Thou shalt abide while all things ebb and flow,
Wake while the weary sleep, wait while they go.
And treading paths no human foot hath trod,
Search on still vainly for thy father, God.
Thy blessing shall pursue thee as a curse
To hunt thee, homeless, thro' the universe.
No hand shall slay thee, for no hand shall dare
To strike thy godhead, death itself must spare!
With all the woes of earth upon thy head,
Uplift thy cross and go. Thy doom is said.

—Robert Buchanan, "The Wandering Jew."

THE FAMILIAR GOD.

The manner in which all religions talk of God revolts me; they treat him with so much certainty, levity, familiarity. The priests, who have this name always on their lips, irritate me above all. It is with them a kind of chronic sneeze—"the goodness of God, the wrath of God, to offend God," these are their phrases. It is considering him as if he were a man, and, what's worse, a middle-class man. They are further wild to decorate him with attributes, as savages put feathers on their fetish. Some paint infinity blue, others black. Utter savagery, all that. We are still cropping the grass and walking on all-fours in spite of balloons. The ideal that humanity forms for itself of God does not go beyond that of an oriental monarch surrounded by his court. The religious ideal is, in fact, several centuries behind the social ideal, and there are heaps of mountebanks who make a pretence of falling down faint with admiration in its presence.—Gustave Flaubert.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

A bishop was celebrating his golden wedding, and among the guests was a foreigner, who was puzzled over the term, so asked his hosts to enlighten him. "Well," said the bishop, "this good lady and myself have lived together for fifty years." "Oh! I see," replied the foreigner, "and you now get married."

Mr. Foote's Engagements

March 1, Glasgow; 22, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

- J. W. O'LEARY.—We fear it would not tell. Christians are licensed blasphemers; it is only Freethinkers in whom "blasphemy" is a crime. Besides, it is too late for an appeal in the Stewart case now.
- J. BROCKBANK.—No doubt you would make a better and wiser editor of the *Freethinker* than we are, but we don't quite see how the change is to be effected.
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- R. B., sending his weekly batch of cuttings, adds a note pointing out that the sixpenny edition of Robert Buchanan's *Foxglove Manor* is published by Chatto & Windus, and, not being a nett book, can be bought for 4½d.
- W. C. T. J.—We cannot advise you or your daughter at all in the matter. She proposes to make herself a nuisance in public places in order to call attention to the falsity and wickedness of religion. We have nothing whatever to say on that proposal. It is no business of ours. When you ask "Would she get into trouble?" we can only reply, "Isn't that what she aims at?"
- J. BRASS.—Enthusiasm is no substitute for business particulars. Will somebody be cool enough to send us details of Mr. Cohen's coming visit to Leamington to open a debate for Mr. Walsh? Shouting "hoorah" up our office staircase conveys no information.
- W. BAILY (Manchester).—We note that it is desired to close the Fund to which you are Treasurer by (say) February 16, so as to deal with it a few days later.
- P. G. BARNFORD (Christchurch, New Zealand).—It is an ordinary newspaper letter on a local topic, and would hardly be of interest to distant readers.
- C. A. TURNER.—Glad to hear that a copy of the *Freethinker* is presented weekly to the Battersea Public Library. Also that the Library contains "more books of advanced thought" than most.
- NORTH LONDONER.—Christian Evidence speakers are never to be trusted. It is not true that the *Freethinker* pictures were dropped after our imprisonment. They were dropped during our imprisonment—and necessarily so. They were resumed as soon as we were at liberty again, and continued for several years. The file of the paper at that time speaks for itself.
- W. PALMER.—Next week. The rank and file, as you say, might be a little brisker with their subscriptions. But they don't do so badly, after all. Small incomes have relatively great claims.
- 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.

Changes go on in the *personnel* of the Freethought party, by death, removal, and the hundred and one happenings and accidents of life. Younger faces come forward at the Annual Dinner and older faces disappear. But some of the older faces are very obstinate in their defiance of time. We were delighted to see the veteran Mr. H. Side, of Walworth, once more. He was not able to attend the dinner last year owing to the very inclement weather, although the Side family (several generations of them) were well represented. They were represented again this year, and he himself took advantage of the milder spell of weather and looked in to see his old friends once again. He has just turned ninety, and has entered what we may call his last lap. "I don't suppose I shall see you often again now," he said, as he

shook hands with us—perhaps, as he smilingly suggested, for the last time. But the smile rather belied the prophecy, and the hand was singularly firm for such a great age. We hope it was not for the last time that we wished him good-bye; but, in any case, nothing can alter the fact that he belongs to the small body of human beings who are venerable by age and by character—marked from first to last by courage, constancy, and conviction.

Sir Hiram Maxim was a welcome and pleasant figure at the dinner. His old age is not austere but jolly. Although he has lived in England so long he is still very American, with the twang and dryness of the seventeenth century puritan turned into the twentieth century humorist. We are able to give some extracts from Sir Hiram Maxim's speech on another page. He read from manuscript to make sure of what he was saying, for he is obviously very deaf, and he says that time is making inroads on what was once a capital memory. There was much laughter during his speech and much applause when he sat down.

Amongst the provincial "saints" at the Annual Dinner we noticed Mr. G. L. Alward, of Grimsby. Time is telling upon the color of his hair, but it hasn't diminished the breadth of his smile. Another that we noticed was Mr. W. Bailey, of Manchester, who has always been a bountiful friend of the Secular movement—we may say "at home and abroad," in the language of one of the toasts of the evening.

Mr. Foote regrets that he was unable to travel up from home to London in time for a chat with the "saints" in the anteroom before the Annual Dinner. Unfortunately the arrangement of the tables prevented his getting a chat with many of them afterwards.

The President's Honorarium Fund circular is delayed another week. We did not desire it to start in the new year early enough to conflict in any way with the completion of another fund to which we wish every success. Further postponement is neither necessary nor desirable.

Mr. Cohen pays Glasgow another visit to-day (Feb. 8) and delivers two lectures (12 noon and 6.30 p.m.) at the N. S. S. Branch's interim meeting-place (North Saloon, City Hall). We hope fine weather will be favorable to fine audiences. Nothing else is necessary.

There was a muddle of some sort, we forget exactly how, over the announcement of Mr. Heaford's last visit to Manchester. We have pleasure in stating now (let the printer look out!) that Mr. Heaford lectures to-day (Feb. 8) at the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester, in the afternoon at 3 and in the evening at 6.30, his subjects being "The Meaning of Freethought" and "Why Christianity Has Failed." We hope to hear of good audiences.

We desire to draw special attention to "An English Notebook of Voltaire" in the February number of the *English Review*. The document is said to have been recently discovered at St. Petersburg. Extracts from it are printed in Voltaire's own English, including the spelling. Here are specimens: "England is meething of all religions, as the royal exchange is the rendez-vous of all foreigners." "When I see Christians cursing Jews, methings I see children beating their fathers."

"The Blasphemy Laws, of which a good deal has lately been heard, are, like the Vagrancy Act, one of those tyrannical Statutes which are odious in the judgment of all fair-minded men, yet still permitted to disgrace our civilisation. Why did a Liberal Government allow them to be revived and re-enforced, instead of consigning them to oblivion? It is noteworthy that Mr. McKenna, who has done so much to encourage the recrudescence of the flogging craze, should have also been the Minister to defend the recent operation of these atrocious laws—and by arguments as grotesque as those by which the lash itself is defended. How long is this weakest of Home Secretaries to be entrusted with such grave responsibilities?"—*Humanitarian*.

The conclusion of Mr. Foote's article on "Laws Against Religious Liberty" stands over unavoidably till next week. It is impossible to fit it in without breaking it—and at a very inconvenient point—which would largely defeat the writer's object.

The Rev. F. Ballard on the Bible.

"And Agrippa said unto Paul with but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian."—Acts xxvi. 28 (Revised Version).

SEEING the advertisement of a "Great Christian Defence Mission," by the Rev. Frank Ballard, to be held at the Darlington-street Wesleyan Church, Wolverhampton, under the auspices of the Wolverhampton Free Church Council, I thought I would take the opportunity of hearing what this champion of religion had to say for his faith.

Choosing the subject "The Bible in Modern Light," which seemed more definite than the others, especially the previous one, "What is Christianity?"—to which a hundred definitions might be given—accompanied by a friend, I attended the church.

The lecturer is a man past middle age, with a close-cropped beard. To begin with, his voice was so low that the lecturer seemed to be talking to himself, and though it gained in volume later on, it was never loud.

Probably many came to the lecture with the idea of loading up with ammunition, to repel the infidel attacks upon the authority and truth of the Bible. My friend himself, whose position might be described—if I may say so without offence—as "sitting on the fence" with regard to the Bible, had been brought up in the old orthodox views, but had lately come in contact with the new gospel of evolution, and now declared that he wanted to know whether the Bible was true or false—and he did not care which. What he wanted was certainty. He had heard something of the Freethought attack, and now wanted, quite praiseworthy, to hear the best defence that could be put up on the other side.

Those who came for arguments to defend the Bible, soon had a rude awakening. Not only did the lecturer abandon the defence of the Old Testament, but he delivered a slashing attack upon the sacred volume himself!

He mentioned the names of Colenso, Ingersoll, and Bradlaugh, and evidently had all their arguments at his finger's end. Nor is the lecturer one of those who believe in tempering the winds of criticism to the shorn lamb. His attack upon the Old Testament was as vigorous and drastic as a Freethinker could desire, backed up by a somewhat rasping and supercilious bearing which he displays to two parties: to the believers in the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament on the one hand, and to Atheists and Materialists on the other.

The lecturer, holding the Bible in his hand, told us that it was not the Word of God. That in all the years of his ministry he had never spoken of it as the Word of God. There were hundreds of mistakes, errors, and contradictions in the Bible, he declared. And it was not true, as some defenders said, that these were introduced by the translators. There were as many errors in the originals as in the translations. Ingersoll had written a book on the *Mistakes of Moses*. What did he, the lecturer, care about the mistakes of Moses? The Old Testament was a Jewish book, and it was no part of the duty of a Christian to defend it. Let the Jews defend it, it was their book.

You walk into a Christian Church and you see the Ten Commandments on the walls, he continued; What are they doing there in a Christian place of worship? Nobody kept the Commandments. You haven't kept them, pointing an accusing finger at us. Nobody ever had kept them; nobody ever could keep them. Away with them from our places of worship. Nothing happened. The roof did not fall in. The blasphemer was not struck dumb or dead. He was not even rushed off to Stafford Gaol to join the last blasphemer who lectured in this town.

The lecturer then told us the story of Bishop Colenso and the Zulu. How the savage, pointing out one of the atrocities in the Bible, asked the Bishop if that was inspired by God; which opened

the Bishop's eyes and led to his celebrated attack upon the Pentateuch.

He went on to say that he himself had been led to take up apologetics through going with a friend to hear Bradlaugh lecture. Bradlaugh, the lecturer said, challenged any Christian to come and read a certain chapter in the Bible aloud, and no one responded. No one could. The lecturer declared himself horrified at that meeting; but it opened his eyes; for which, by the way, he shows no gratitude, if we judge by the rough way in which he caricatured Charles Bradlaugh's voice and gesture.

Then we were told how many thousands of innocent women were burned as witches because the Bible declared, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. xxii. 18).

The lecturer next pictured to us the slave owners of America defending slavery from the Bible; quoting texts to show it was a Divine institution, ordained by God himself, and making the Bible the bulwark of American slavery. If he had shown how the weapon of religious intolerance had been forged from the Bible, and given a short history of the obstacle this book has been to scientific progress, his lecture would have been a comprehensive indictment of the sacred book.

What would they have thought of all this at our chapel twenty-five years ago? Why, they discharged one minister because he uttered a few hesitating doubts as to whether the torments of hell were eternal.

Why this sudden change of front with regard to the Old Testament? Why this unconditional surrender of the citadel once so vigorously defended? Mr. Ballard proceeded to enlighten us upon this point, as follows:

In Sheffield, we were told, crowded open-air meetings are held, in which the contradictions, mistakes, and immoralities of the Old Testament are held up to ridicule. "And I cannot always be there to answer them," said the lecturer pathetically. Then the Rational and Secular press has flooded the country with millions of volumes of anti-religious literature, and it is getting into the hands of the man-in-the-street, and he is beginning to find these things out for himself; and he says "These ministers know all about it and say nothing." Then he loses confidence in them and stays away from their services, and that is why the Church membership falls away every year. So says Mr. Ballard, whom we will leave to fight it out with the religious papers, who are always declaring that Secularism and Atheism are dead and done with.

The lecturer was also very severe on those clergy who still teach the old orthodox view of the Bible, and who allow their followers to learn the truth from the enemy.

Mr. Ballard takes his stand upon the life of Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament. The Gospels he considers to be historical and authentic documents, and he thinks that by abandoning the Old Testament to its fate, and concentrating on the New Testament, he will be able to save the situation. Is that possible? Is it probable? It is not. Nothing can now prevent the man-in-the-street from becoming acquainted with the criticism of the New Testament, which is quite as drastic as that of the Old.

Mr. Ballard did not persuade the friend who accompanied me to come down on his side of the fence. But what time has one to consider such matters, with picture palaces springing up on every hand. Perhaps, when football is over, he will go into the subject; it does not do to be too hasty in such important matters.

In conclusion, we wish to offer our hearty thanks to Mr. Ballard, and hope he will continue to spread the glad tidings, and that his labors will be abundantly blessed. For his method seems, to a mere Rationalist, as hopeful as pumping in water to save a sinking ship, or using oil to extinguish a fire.

W. MANN.

Walt Whitman.

HORACE TRAUBEL, in his delightful book, *With Walt Whitman at Camden*, has recorded many sayings and opinions of the sturdy old author of *Leaves of Grass* that must be as shocking to the unco' guid as they are refreshing and interesting to the reader of open mind. Traubel, who was on intimate and most affectionate terms with the old poet, played the rôle of Boswell during some months at Camden in the later years of Whitman's life. And, aware that Traubel would one day make public use of the material he was gathering, Whitman was anxious that the literary picture should be a faithful one, that his failings should not be excused nor his virtues exaggerated. "Be sure to write about me honest; whatever you do, do not prettify me; include all the hells and the damns." Such was the poet's charge to his young friend, who tells us that in the preparation of his narrative he never lost sight of that command.

Referring on one occasion to the gratuitous visit of a Christian minister, who had come a considerable distance to give him his opinion of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman remarked: "The ministry is spoiled with arrogance; it takes all sorts of vagaries, impudences, invasions, for granted; it even seizes the key to the bedroom and the closet."

Traubel one day found a visitor with Whitman, a Mr. Corning, who was a candidate for the pulpit at the Unitarian Church on Benson-street. "And what may be the subject of your sermon to-morrow?" the old poet inquired. "My subject? Why the tragedy of the ages?" "And what may be the tragedy of the ages?" "The crucifixion." "What crucifixion?" "The crucifixion of Jesus, of course." "You call that the tragedy of the ages?" "Yes. What do you call it?" "It is a tragedy. But the tragedy? O no! I don't think I would be willing to call it the tragedy." "Do you know any tragedy that meant so much to man?" "Twenty thousand tragedies—all equally significant."

They were speaking one day of newspapers, when he called Traubel's attention to a remark of a Methodist minister at a recent conference: "I propose to discuss this subject from a minister's point of view." "What in hell's name," he said, "is a minister's point of view?" If he did not approach life as a man, or as an American, or as a lover, or even as a hater, Whitman failed to see in what other way he could possibly deal with the subject.

In answer to the question put to him by someone: Do you think the Church could be safely destroyed? Whitman replied, "Yes, why not? Men make Churches; men may destroy Churches. I see no use for the Church; it lags superfluous on the stage." "I always feel," he said on another occasion, "that to one in the swim—in the swim of modern science, democracy, freedom—the atonement, the Mosaic records, are not worth the dignity of consideration, of a reply. To any man who thinks, to any man who is alive to the revelations of modern science—it is an insult to offer the doctrines of the Church; it is as if you approached him to say: 'What a damned fool you are, anyway!'"

Speaking once of his family history, he mentioned to Traubel the fact that his father knew Thomas Paine, remarking: "Did history ever more thoroughly victimise a man? The most of things history has to say about Paine are damnably hideous. A good deal that gets written once is repeated and repeated, until the future comes to swear by it as gospel. I have always determined that I would do all I could to help set the memory of Paine right." Something Joseph Cook had been saying about Paine, Traubel says, aroused Whitman's ire. "It is always so," he said; "the tree with the best apples always gets the worst clubbing."

One day, at their friend Harned's house, Whitman got hold of a San Francisco portrait of Ingersoll from the mantel and regarded it long and intently. "That is a grand brow; and the face—look at the

face (see the mouth); it is the head, the face, the poise of a noble human being. America don't know to-day how proud she ought to be of Ingersoll."

Harned told Whitman that Gladstone had come out with a reply to Ingersoll. This excited Whitman's humor. He laughed gently, and said: "Gladstone is no match for Ingersoll—at least, not in such a controversy. Of course, he is a great man, or was—has had a past—but in questions of the theological sort, in questions of Homeric scholarship, he is by no means much. Oh! there will be a funny time of it." Here he put his hands together scoop-wise. "Bob will take him up this fashion, turn him over (all sides of him), look at him sweetly, even so sweetly, smile, then crunch him!"—to illustrate which he worked his two hands together as if to crush their imagined burden—"yes, crunch him, much as a cat would a mouse, till there's no life left to fool with."

Someone present demurred somewhat to Ingersoll. "Ain't you exaggerating his importance, Walt?" "Not a bit. Ingersoll is a man whose importance to the time could not be over-figured; not literal importance, not argumentative importance, not anti-theological Republican party importance, but spiritual importance—importance as a force, as consuming energy—a fiery blast for the new virtues, which are only the old virtues done over for honest use again."

Traubel read to Whitman a letter written by Ingersoll to the friends of Leonard Whitney, dead. (Published in Unity, Chicago. Whitney was a Unitarian preacher. In the Civil War was Chaplain of Ingersoll's regiment.) Whitman said: "How graphic, touching, powerful that is! What a substantial, rounded fellow the Colonel certainly proves himself to be! He is in a way a chosen man. There always was something in the idea that the prophets are called. Ingersoll is a prophet—he, too, is called. He is far deeper than he is supposed to be, even by radicals; we get lots of deep sea fruit out of him. Read that once again: I want to hear it again."

He had been reading Gladstone's reply to Ingersoll in the *North American Review*. Whitman shook his head: "It won't do, Mr. Gladstone; you may try: you have the right to try—you try hard; but the Colonel carries too many guns for you on that line." On the appearance of a later article: "Gladstone is neither here nor there: he is long-winded and indefinite—he doesn't make his mark clear and then drive to it: he goes all over the country looking for his game. Ingersoll is every way different—knows exactly what he wants and gets it at once."

Whitman, strangely enough, had little taste for religious controversy. On one occasion he even returned unread a copy of Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* lent him by a Philadelphia Quaker. He said to Traubel: "I hate theological, metaphysical discussion so heartily that I run at the sight of a controversial book—always, of course, excepting Huxley and Ingersoll, as you know." He had been looking over a Huxley book just out—controversial. "It is far more crushing of its kind even than Ingersoll's—it is superb. It does seem as if Ingersoll and Huxley without any others could unhorse the whole Christian giant. They are master-pilgrims with a fighting gift that would appal me if I was in the opposition." His admiration of Ingersoll is seen in all his references throughout the book. "Ingersoll," he said to Traubel, "could not come to my reception in New York; was out of town or busy; but he sent a note containing excuses and some fine things (witty, beautiful things) better than excuses. The Colonel is always my friend—always on the spot with his goodwill if not in person."

Traubel incorporates in his book many interesting letters from literary celebrities which Whitman at different times gave to him. One of these is from Ernest Rhys, describing a round of studios, etc., with a friend in New York. They began by breakfasting sumptuously (fried shad, omelettes, tomatoes, buckwheat cakes, strawberries, coffee, etc.) and then turned in to see Colonel Bob Ingersoll. Referring to this letter, Whitman

said: "I don't envy Rhys his big breakfast and dinners and all that—I only envy him his call at Colonel Bob's! I am told those nights at Bob's are halcyon nights. Next to being lucky enough to be there yourself is being lucky enough to hear about them from others who have been there."

Whitman seems to have been a source of much anxiety to the pious, and was often pestered with their offensive attentions. When he related to Traubel the visit of the Christian minister already mentioned, and his insistence on a hearing, Whitman said: "I don't believe anybody but a minister of the Gospel would do such a thing—would have been guilty of so egregious an impertinence. I told him I had plenty of opinions of *Leaves of Grass* nearer home—all sorts of pros and cons, damns and hallelujahs. But he didn't even laugh or seem deterred, he went right on with his message." Having a suspicion that Whitman wasn't listening to him, the preacher said, "I don't believe you're hearing a word I say, Mr. Whitman." To which the old man replied: "I shouldn't wonder—I shouldn't wonder." Rising to take his leave, the minister again said, "I was told you wouldn't take any advice, even good advice." "I shouldn't wonder—I shouldn't wonder," added Whitman. He laughed as he related the incident, exclaiming, "That's a tale worth putting down in the book."

Traubel said he could match that story. His grandmother, who was well on to eighty, was one day sitting on the front step, quietly looking about at things. A clerical came along and saw her, stopped and sat down on the step at her side. "Madam," he said, "you are very old; are you prepared to die?" She was, of course, annoyed, and said to him tartly: "Sir, if you were half as well prepared to die as I am you would be a happy man!" Whitman was very much amused. "Yes, that's a good match; that's worth being put down in the same book."

And in this simple way did Traubel gather his material for a very interesting volume. Innumerable little items get "put down in the book" which show the homely and amusing side of Whitman's character, and form as pleasing and truthful a piece of biography as will be found in the realm of literature.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

London Freethinkers at Dinner.

THE Annual Dinner of the London Freethinkers, under the auspices of the National Secular Society, was held at the Restaurant Frascati, on January 28, and was remarkable for the extremely large number of ladies who graced the tables. The handsome dining-hall was filled comfortably, and many veterans in the movement were present. Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the N. S. S. and editor of the *Freethinker*, occupied the chair.

A graceful tribute to the popularity of the President was a singularly charming collection of artificial roses and greenery which graced the top table.

At the outset Mr. Foote put everyone in a good humor by quoting a sentence from Shakespeare in the way of "grace," and the dinner passed off splendidly, the catering leaving nothing to be desired.

In his "Chairman's address," Mr. Foote was extremely felicitous, his introductory remarks concerning his unhappy "immolation" raising much laughter. In a different vein he said he was getting rather tired of taking the chair, and yet when he went like an ordinary diner and filled a plebeian chair, it did not please everybody. Nobody could be quite sure of anything. He himself might turn Christian; nobody knew what softening of the brain might do. His contemporaries, he added with fine scorn, got softer and softer in that direction. So great a man as Swift "died from the top downwards." Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, by the way, ought to be reprinted for use in the Kikuyu controversy. Secularists like to make the most of the life left them, because when a man is dead he is dead a long time. There is always the great drama of life left even when one is weary of the fight, and he could always think of that man who lay on his bed of helplessness at Leamington, who was stricken down as a Christian, and yet thought himself into Freethought, and to-day found the highest pleasure in watching the fighting

of others. The torch of progress did not drop into oblivion when it passed from the older hands; it was held aloft by younger hands and gained greater brilliancy from the increased rapidity of its flight. Remember great men. Shakespeare, Cæsar, Cromwell, Darwin, Shelley, Meredith, Bradlaugh, Ingersoll; these great men redeemed the world from commonplace. They are our greater brethren. "Our loftier brothers, but one in blood." Refreshment was to be found in the biographies of great men. If Shakespeare could be so great and Bradlaugh so brave in this very world, victory was bound to come in the end. The next day was the birthday of Thomas Paine. Conway's *Life* was a masterpiece of industry, but Paine's life had yet to be written. Paine was a cosmopolitan by nature before he was a cosmopolitan by principle. When a boy of eight he was shocked at hearing a sermon on the atonement. At eighteen he was a finished Freethinker, and at the close of his career a sublime example for the world. Born in England, the only thing this country ever did for him was to try to hang him. America gave him his first task. Whether a tax is eighteen shillings or a pound is an unworthy subject to engage the genius of a nation; but not the question as to the rights of the men demanding the tax. Pym, Hampden, and Cromwell fought for a principle. The English people had cut off the head of a king. There have been kings since full of divine right, even to the Kaiser, but they have walked gingerly. Paine was the first voice in America that was imperial, and he told the Americans to call themselves the United States. There will never be peace in Europe until Victor Hugo's words of fire, "The United States of Europe," is realised. It was the pen of Paine as much as the sword of Washington that founded the United States of America. Never listen to the cackle of the old monarchies concerning the great republic across the Atlantic. The republic is laying the bases of a great civilisation. Every man of genius in England, for a hundred years, has found his first real supporters in America. Bradlaugh was the lineal descendant of Paine. Paine was the penman and Bradlaugh was the great orator of Freethought. He went one step farther than Paine, because he came a hundred years after. Bradlaugh was an Atheist, and was brought to Freethought through the Carlile family, who had passed years in prison championing the right to print the *Age of Reason*. Genius was a question of foresight. Bradlaugh and Paine both saw that the world had been cheated, the baby in the cradle and the boy and girl in the school had been deceived. Paine found out that the Age of Reason must precede the Rights of Man. Bradlaugh's name is as sure of immortality as any name in the century he adorned.

To Mr. Arthur B. Moss fell the toast of "The National Secular Society," which he described as the oldest society of its kind in the world. He said that a book had been published with the title, *What are the Churches Doing?* He knew, however, what they were not doing. They were not converting Freethinkers to Christianity. The Freethought aim was to dispel superstition from men's minds, and all the great educational forces were on the side of Freethought. The more men knew of the universe, the less they believed in gods. It was the fault of Freethinkers that lecturers were not always at work. That great organ, the *Freethinker*, ought to be read by every man and woman in this country. He desired to make the National Secular Society one of the greatest organisations in the country.

Mr. C. Cohen responded in a humorous and philosophical speech, in which he said the toast of the Society was an equally old toast with the Chairman's address. It was difficult to say anything fresh on the subject. He looked forward to an encounter with some parsons at Leamington, who belonged to the same Society as Mr. Walsh, who was bedridden. He had rashly promised to go and lecture on the trifling subject, "The Existence of God," and, if he could get the door locked before he began the debate, he anticipated a really pleasant evening. If he disappeared towards the end of the month, his friends would know what had happened to him. Life itself was the greatest enemy of the Church. Christians might stamp out the National Secular Society, but they could not stamp out life, and the force pulling the Churches to pieces was life. An idea that depends on a man can only be galvanised into life by a man. Freethought is independent of men. Ideas use men more than men use ideas. He had had a quarter of a century's battling against religion, and there was no better work than fighting for an idea. One thing comforted him. Where the great Catholic Church failed to arrest Freethought, the petty, mean, little Churches of to-day were not likely to succeed.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd also responded. He stated that religion was dying, and the Churches were being weakened year by year. At the Islington Conference all the clergy agreed that the religion of fifty years ago was no longer preached to-day. Christianity was dying before Christians have discovered what it was, and nobody will ever know that now.

Freethought is destined to conquer and to bring reason to its thrones.

The toast of "Freethought At Home and Abroad" was in the hands of Mr. Heaford, who said that metropolitan Freethinkers did not confine their attention to Londoners, but thought of the countless workers under the noblest banner that ever waved over the heads of humanity. Such a toast put them into communion with thousands throughout the world who were working to emancipate humanity from the thralldom of priestcraft. There were heavier clouds overhead than a year ago. An English Freethinker was languishing in prison, and he feared he would not be the last. A wave of reaction had set in, and who knew but that next year Sir Hiram Maxim and Mr. Foote might not both be deported to Africa as undesirables? Reaction was sweeping throughout the world, and the attack against the Freethought Republic of Portugal was an example. The clergy were doing their utmost to prevent the 1915 Freethought Congress taking place at Prague, which it was hoped to hold on the five hundredth anniversary of the death of John Huss. Wherever the Freethought flag waves the principles of Freethinkers are being defended. The message was that all should work, strive, and educate for the dawn of a better day.

At this point Mr. Foote introduced Sir Hiram Maxim to the company, and Sir Hiram immediately responded to the toast. He said that Lord Salisbury had remarked that he (Sir Hiram) had prevented more men from dying of old age than any other man; but although his inventions had commended themselves to people, his ideas had not. At Worthing the local vicar did not like his sermonettes; and when he was in the Bosphorus, and his boat bumped a Turk's, the Oriental cursed him as a miserable, unbelieving dog of a Christian. As a fact, there was no religion that did not make the believer an infidel in three-quarters of the world.

A selection of passages from Sir Hiram's speech appears in another part of this week's *Freethinker*.

During the evening a fine program of music was rendered by Miss Haidee Hamilton, and Messrs. E. W. Harrison, Keith Woods, and Will Edwards, jr. Madame Lucie Thomas was the accompanist, and also played selections.

C. E. S.

Sir Hiram Maxim's "Remarks"

AT THE LONDON FREETHINKERS' ANNUAL DINNER.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I do not know why I, practically an outsider, should be called upon to speak to the toast of "Freethought at Home and Abroad" when there are so many others present who are much better able to deal with the subject.

I, however, have received instructions from Miss Vance—"God bless her!"—who tells me that speakers generally wander from their subject and spin it out too long. This, of course, is a hint that I should not occupy too much of your time.

I think we may say that Freethought is booming at the present time—not so much on account of what we are doing ourselves as from what our religious friends are doing for us. There have been several cases in the United States where parsons and priests have gone to the extent of murdering their sweethearts in order to get rid of them, and one murder of this kind does more for our cause than a thousand lectures in favor of Freethought. There are also numerous cases in Europe where the priests and parsons have gone wrong, and all these count in our favor.

Recently the Bishop of Madagascar has been pitching into the Bishop of Bungleboo because Bungleboo placed little wafers of bread on the tongues of people who did not belong to his particular brand of religion. The Bishop of Madagascar looked upon this transaction very much as railway officials would look upon passengers who are travelling with bogus tickets. These people, who did not belong to the Episcopal High Church, of course had no right to get into heaven at all; but it appears that, by having this little bit of bread placed on their tongue, they swallowed a part of the body of Jesus Christ, and therefore were able to slither into heaven without paying for their tickets. This underhand way of getting into kingdom-come was not approved of by the Bishop of Madagascar, and the result is a devil of a row. All this does a lot for Freethought.

A very pious Roman Catholic priest, with the appropriate name of Furniss, has written a little book entitled *A Sight of Hell*. I have bought hundreds of these books, and circulated them where they would do the most good. Of course, the good priest thought he was doing a lot for his Church by bringing out this publication, but as a matter of fact the whole idea is so ridiculous that it does a great deal more for Freethought than it does for superstition.

Only a relatively short time ago the French nation was so intensely religious that their priests were able to murder seventy-five thousand heretics in one day. This, however, did infinitely more for Freethought than for religion, and to-day France is the leading Freethought country in the world.

A few years ago, when I was travelling in Northern Italy, I found that the large crucifixes erected at the corners of the roads were nearly worn out by being stoned. There were bushels of stones about each of them, and it would appear that nearly everyone in passing picked up a stone and had a fling at the image on the cross, or what there was left of it. This indicates that the Italians, especially in the north, have commenced to think. The very fact that the Pope has been deprived of his temporal power shows that some advance is being made even in the Holy City itself.

Every little thing that sets people thinking on religious subjects brings grist to our mill.

I have not, and do not, in the least dispute the efficacy of the bit of bread that the Bishop of Bungleboo placed on the tongues of the people. I am quite satisfied that none receiving this bit of bread will ultimately find a place in the lower regions to be burnt for all eternity, but I do dispute that the Bishop of Bungleboo or any other bishop, has any more power to prevent people from going there than I possess myself; I am also of the opinion that bread is no more effective than many other substances. Having made a profound study of this subject, I now propose to administer the Holy Communion myself.

I have here a new form of wafer that is a great improvement on the old one; they have been duly consecrated by a machine driven by a steam engine, and I can assure everyone present that if those who are only moderately wicked will take one and swallow it in the ordinary way, they will never get even a smell of burning brimstone, they will surely be saved, and that is what we are all after. I would, however, advise who are very wicked to take more than one wafer; take three or four, just in proportion to their wickedness; take enough so as to make a good job of it.

[The wafers were chocolate creams.]

GENERAL GRANT ON SECULAR EDUCATION.

The following is from what is perhaps the most famous speech ever delivered by General U. S. Grant. It was made at a soldiers' reunion at Des Moines, Iowa, in 1876: "In a Republic like ours, where the citizen is the sovereign and the official the servant, where no power is exercised except by the will of the people, it is important that the sovereign—the people—should possess intelligence. The free school is the promoter of that intelligence which is to preserve us as a free nation. If we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will not be Mason and Dixon's, but between patriotism and intelligence on the one side, and superstition, ambition, and ignorance on the other. Now, in this centennial year of our existence, I believe it a good time to begin the work of strengthening the foundation of the house commenced by our patriotic fathers one hundred years ago at Concord at Lexington. Let us all labor to add all needful guarantees for the most perfect security of free thought, free speech, and free press, pure morals, unfettered religious sentiments, and of equal rights and privileges to all men, irrespective of nationality, color, or religion. Encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar of money appropriated to their support, no matter how raised, shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian school. Resolve that neither the State nor nation, nor both combined, shall support institutions of learning other than those sufficient to afford every child growing up in the land the opportunity for a good common-school education, unmixed with sectarian, pagan, or Atheistical tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the Church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the Church and State forever separate. With these safeguards, I believe the battle which created the army of the Tennessee will not have been fought in vain.

Obituary.

We regret to record the death, which occurred on Thursday night, January 29, of Mr. Wordsworth Donisthorpe, the well-known Freethinker, philosophic Anarchist, and Social Economist. Mr. Donisthorpe's writings were brilliant and incisive, but they were somehow or other far less influential than they once promised to be. Despite his great abilities he did not find a "career." Perhaps he found something better.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, J. J. Darby, "The Teachings of Jesus."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, E. Clifford Williams, "Superstition."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (North Saloon, City Hall): C. Cohen, 12 noon, "Religion and the Breeding of a Better Race"; 6.30, "The Challenge of Unbelief."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): Wm. Heaford, 3, "The Meaning of Freethought"; 6.30, "Why Christianity has Failed." Tea at 5.

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