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Great is the debt of humanity to whomsoever can free it from the accumulated burden of its past.

—ALLEN UPWARD.

“SpooF.”

A WELL-KNOWN journalist wrote a play, which he called *Magic*. But the play lacked the kind of magic that draws the public and gladdens the heart of author and manager. So the journalist's friends on the press came to his rescue. They “wrote up” the play. They told the public that it should go, and a good number went, and the hearts of author and manager were gladdened accordingly. Then as the play was called *Magic*, and dealt in some way with miracles, a debate was arranged on the subject of miracles in the theatre itself. Speakers were selected who might be trusted to say nothing very startling; the terms of the discussion were drawn up so that they might be called to order if they ventured on anything so reprehensible; and they talked, and talked, without ever coming within reasonable distance of the question at issue. Lastly, a journal published a report of the proceedings—24 pages, which would ordinarily have been sold at a penny or twopence—at the price of sixpence. And some bought it because of the well-known names that took part in the discussion, while others purchased because, like the present writer—perhaps as an expiation for sins committed in a previous incarnation—they *must* read the nonsense talked by present day defenders of superstition. No doubt *Magic* has reaped the benefit of all this advertising.

Such seems to be the real inwardness of the discussion on “Do Miracles Happen?” held recently at the Little Theatre. The participants were Mr. G. K. Chesterton, Mr. Joseph McCabe, Mr. H. Belloc, Dr. Warschauer, Mr. J. A. Hobson, Mr. A. P. Sinnett, and Mr. Cecil Chesterton. Mr. Kenelm Foss occupied the chair, and he was evidently struck by the odd arrangements made. He pointed out the difficulty of debating the subject of “Do Miracles Happen?” without discussing whether they ever did happen. In a discussion that really meant business this could not be done. Still, it would have been possible, even within the ridiculous terms of the discussion, to have presented the Freethought case against the belief in the miraculous in such a way as to shatter the Christian claims. But even this was not done. The Christian speakers were away back in the Dark Ages, and those who represented the Freethought view never seemed to get nearer contemporary times than the eighteenth century. It was, from this point of view, a noteworthy discussion; it served to show how solemnly an absurdity can be carried to a conclusion.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton contributed the first speech to the discussion, and for a moment or two touched bottom by pointing out that when a miracle did happen you were brought face to face with the result of a personal God. But he soon wandered away on to the question of evidence for and against, in which he was promptly followed by Mr. McCabe, who also spent his time discussing evidence—as though that has, or ever had, much to do with the belief in miracles. Dr. Warschauer, whose besetting

fault is a desire to be scientific with hopelessly unscientific beliefs, also laid it down that the question “resolves itself simply and solely into a question of evidence,” and pointed out, although it has little connection with this topic, that “the quantity and quality of the evidence required to prove any event varies in inverse ratio to the probability of the event.” Quite a good rule in its proper place, but quite inconclusive here. Anyway, the one point upon which all the disputants were agreed was exactly the point that had least to do with the question. Evidence did not establish the belief in miracles, and the absence of evidence did not disestablish them.

Let us be quite fair to the Supernaturalist. Mr. Chesterton practically accepted the definition of a miracle as given in the Oxford English Dictionary: “A marvellous event occurring within human experience which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity or some supernatural being.” This is a quite good definition. It is what miracles have always meant to everyone who really believed in them. A miracle must be something marvellous, that is, it must be unusual, and it must not be even conceivably explainable in terms of the operation of natural forces. If it is admitted that it may be so explained, those who make the admission concede the point that ignorance and miracles are convertible terms. This criticism is not removed by its being urged that some being greater than man may so control natural forces as to produce a miracle. The distance between man and his assumed superior being may not be greater than that which divides Edison from a Hottentot, and what this superior being does man himself, given the knowledge, may one day do. A miracle must not act in accordance with natural laws, known or unknown, it must contravene them.

So far Mr. Chesterton was correct in saying that a miracle is difficult to prove (he added it was also difficult to discuss, which it is not), and the request of his critics—Christian and Rationalist—for evidence, or their complaints that miracles could not be reperformed for their benefit, shows that they had not grasped the real point at issue.* The reply of the believer in miracles to such criticism is obvious. He says, A miracle is by its nature a rare event; it is performed under special circumstances for a special purpose. Where, then, is the sense of asking that this miracle shall be reperformed in order to convince certain people that it has already occurred? To arrange for the performance of a miracle is an absurdity. For it to become common is to destroy both its character as a miracle and the justification for its existence. A miracle must carry its own evidence, or it is not a miracle at all. Discussion on those lines must end in a stalemate for the Supernaturalist.

Fundamentally, the question is one of the belief in a God of the kind described by Dr. Warschauer—

* The exposure of spiritualistic mediums has really nothing to do with the question of miracles. Spiritualists do not claim to perform miracles, and their performances, even if genuine, are only wonderful, not miraculous. All the Spiritualists claim is the ability to demonstrate the operation of certain forces not at present recognised by science. And that is a question of evidence. But with miracles it has nothing to do.

personal, purposing, intelligent, causal, creative, and almighty. I do not know how this is done—he might just as well have added a square, circular, eternal, evanescent being—but once a man professes to believe this a suspension or a contravention of natural laws, or uniformities, becomes always a possibility. There is nothing in our thinking or in our philosophy of things to prevent our believing in them. The personal, purposing, intelligent, causal, creative, almighty monstrosity believed in should be capable of anything. And if he exists, I, for one, am quite willing to believe he is. The man who believes this is capable of believing anything.

In the next place, miracles, as I have already said, are not established by evidence nor disproved by evidence. Evidence of a kind there may be (the ink mark on the wall caused by Luther throwing an ink pot at the Devil is evidence to some that the Devil really appeared), but nothing really worthy of the name exists. What amount of evidence does a Christian missionary produce to make a number of savages believe in the miracles of the Bible? What amount of evidence did the early Christian missionaries produce to convert the various tribes within the Roman Empire? What evidence was offered to make people believe in witches flying through the air on broomsticks? And, on the other hand, how many people have disbelieved in miracles because they set themselves down to weigh the evidence in their favor and found it wanting? I never heard of any such case, and can't easily conceive its having happened. The man who begins to weigh evidence for and against the possibility of miracles has already begun to disbelieve in them.

Look at young children. What evidence do they require of the existence of fairies, or of Santa Claus? What evidence is ever produced to make them give up the belief in fairies? At one stage of life it is there, at another stage it has gone. Not reasoned out, not "evidenced" out, but simply outgrown. In infancy the child's conception of life is so inchoate that there is room for all kinds of fantastic beliefs. In more mature years certain things are automatically ruled out by the growth of a conception of things that leaves no room for what during childhood seemed perfectly reasonable.

This is quite on all-fours with the question of miracles. The question here is essentially one of psychology. It is determined by the character of the psychological medium in which one is born and in which one lives. Given an intellectual medium which is, scientifically, at its lowest, and the belief in miracle flourishes. At the other extreme, miracle languishes and decays. Tell a savage that you can raise a man from the dead, and he may—ether things equal—believe. Tell that to an educated person in the twentieth century, and he calls you a liar or a fool. Tell a peasant in some parts of our own country that an old woman has bewitched somebody's cattle, and he merely marvels at the wickedness of people. Tell a city dweller the same story; he does not inquire what evidence there is—he simply marvels at some people's ignorance. We do not reject the story of Jesus turning water into wine merely because there is a lack of evidence in its support. Evidence has nothing to do with it. We reject it because, with our knowledge of the constituents of water and wine, we know it to be a sheer impossibility; and because, with our knowledge of psychological evolution, we know the conditions that generate such beliefs. People who accept miracles believe in them before they happen. They would not happen if they did not so believe. People who reject miracles do so because their whole conception of nature forbids even the possibility of their occurrence. That is the sum and substance of the matter.

Of course, people go on talking about miracles long after they have ceased to believe in them. But they do not *trust* them. They will not fit in with what they know to be true. And so they bamuse themselves with much talk about our still extensive ignorance of nature, about the operation of higher

and undiscovered "laws," and a dozen other things that have little or nothing to do with the question. The whole ground for the rejection of miracles, and the impossibility of their occurrence, might have been pointed out in a five minutes' speech at the Little Theatre had the people there meant business. But the promoters of the discussion knew what they were about. They know the public; and that is the high water-mark of journalistic and dramatic wisdom.

C. COHEN.

God's Risks.

GOD is represented as being the maker and governor of a Universe the fortunes of which are so uncertain as to be a source of perpetual anxiety to him! He does not know what may happen next. The possibilities of the future terrify him while the events of the past fill his heart with unspeakable grief. To be a God is thus to be at the mercy of the products of his own omnipotence. We do not even pretend to make such a statement on the authority of our own personal knowledge; but we do make it on that of one of the best-known of God's professional spokesmen. The Rev. Thomas Yates, of Kensington, is reported to have said, a Sunday or two ago, that the Divine Being is always running tremendous risks. He waxed exceeding bold and exclaimed: "There is not one of us who is not one of God's colossal risks." The report proceeds thus:—

"He did not believe that God could be defeated, and if the Church fails in this great hour, which is a decisive hour of the world, Christ would shape for himself a new home, make for himself a better Church, but there is a risk that the great opportunities opening before the Church will fail to be used."

Mr. Yates had already referred to the fact that he and his hearers "believed in human freedom, and that the human will has a very real share in the making of history." Now, if man is free it necessarily follows that he is capable of defeating God. The assumption is that there are two wills at work in the Universe, the Divine and the human, and there is no possible escape from the conclusion that the latter has proved itself to be considerably stronger than the former. The Church also, it appears, is in possession of the same perilous freedom, with the result that the Church is another of "God's colossal risks." The utter fallaciousness of this argument is clearly seen the moment we begin to examine it. The Church is spoken of as the creation of Christ, but since it has failed to win the world for its Maker, we must infer that it was somewhat badly made, and Mr. Yates assures us that Christ could make for himself a better one. We venture to affirm that the reverend gentleman ran some risk in giving that assurance, because if the existing Church is Christ's institution we have no evidence that he can frame for himself a more efficient one.

This is a point which we must press. Father Wright, S.J., speaking at an important meeting of the Catholics of Preston, lately, sorrowfully admitted that there are thousands in this country who lose the Faith every year. There was an article in the *Month* some years ago in which it was stated "that in England and Wales there were 188,000 Catholics under twenty-one years of age needing different degrees of care in the matter of their religion, of whom 97,000 were practically lost to the faith." Father Wright continued thus:—

"A well-known London priest gave it as his opinion that nine-tenths of the boys educated in Catholic elementary schools absented themselves from Mass and the Sacraments when they left school. It was worth while to see what this really meant. Statistics showed that there were in attendance at Catholic elementary schools in England and Wales 353,000 children; of these they might take it that about ten per cent., i.e., 35,000, left the schools annually. According to the statement of the London priest, then, over 31,000 of these were lost to the faith."

The same general statement might be made in regard to the various Protestant Churches. In these

also there is annually a very serious leakage, in spite of the amazing perfection of the machinery and the ideal fidelity to duty of the officials. This has been the case for many years; yet there is no indication that Christ is about to make for himself a new and better Church. He prefers to run the risk of seeing it universally discredited and discarded.

Another of God's great risks is the present missionary situation. In point of fact missions have always been most risky enterprises. Indeed they were never successful on any large scale except when the alternative to conversion was death by the sword. Mr. Yates's treatment of this subject is commendably frank. He implies that Mohammedanism might never have been heard of had there been a decent Christian missionary in the fifth century to tell the boy Mohammed what Christianity really is; but it does not seem to have occurred to him that, in a God-made and God-governed world, the rise of a false religion, like Mohammedanism, as a dangerous rival to the true one, would have been entirely impossible. We conclude, therefore, that the absence of that decent Christian missionary in the fifth century shows that God, if God there be, was quite as favorable to Mohammedanism as to Christianity. Surely, from a religious point of view, there can be no other rational explanation of the appearance of Mohammed, on the one hand, and of the non-appearance of the Christian missionary on the other. Mr. Yates suggests, further, that "there may be in some obscure village in China or in India one whose career will alter the whole current of history." Very likely; but there is nothing whatever to show that he need be a Christian missionary. On the contrary, if and when he comes the probability is that he will be Nature's prophet, preaching a higher system of morality in the sole name of science. Both East and West have had more than enough of supernatural religion, and are yearning for that intellectual and moral emancipation which will bring them close to Nature's heart.

The idea of a God of infinite power, wisdom, and love running colossal risks is altogether too funny. To run a risk is to incur hazard, to encounter harm or danger. When an author publishes a new book he runs the risk of injuring his reputation. A soldier on the field of battle incurs the risk of losing his life. According to Mr. Yates, the risks God runs are "colossal"; but to say that is to put the Deity on a level with ourselves. Most certainly a being of infinite power, wisdom, and love would of necessity be absolutely above all risks. And yet, on the assumption, however inconceivable, that such a being created the Universe, or superintended its gradual evolution, reason drives us to the conclusion that by so doing he both risked and lost his title to the attributes of infinite wisdom and love, which is equivalent to saying he never had them, or, in other words, that such a being never had anything to do with the creation, evolution, or government of what we call Nature. The God-idea, in its Christian form, and Nature heartlessly give each other the lie at every point.

In reality, it is the theologian, not God, who runs risks. A theologian is one who confidently theorises in the total absence of knowledge, and then offers his wild theories as revealed truth to be fervently and devoutly held by the credulous. The preacher is a man who undertakes to speak for a Deity who has never uttered a word for himself, or afforded the slightest token of his existence. Nothing in the world is easier than to be oracular as the spokesman of an imaginary being. But the messengers of the Cross are impertinent as well as dogmatic. What greater insult can be inflicted upon the Jews, for example, than to organise a society the one object of which is to convert them to Christianity? Those of them who are religiously inclined are quite satisfied with their own religion, and resent the attempt to induce them to substitute Christianity for it. After cruelly persecuting them for so many ages, scornfully denying them the common rights of citizenship, it is nothing short of a piece of gross

impudence to send missionaries to them, thus still treating them as inferior people. Are they not, on the average, as well-educated, as intelligent, honest, honorable, and socially well-behaved as Christians, and have they no teachers of their own who are fully as competent for their work as the Christian clergy? Well, particularly as regards the Jews, and generally with reference to all other nations, the proselytising policy pursued by the Christian Church only exposes its own narrow-minded and selfish bigotry. A growing realisation of this truth is the only thing that accounts for the persistent decay of interest in home and foreign missions. Thousands of Christians even are beginning to see the utter absurdity of endeavoring to Christianise China, India, and Japan, with the result that they no longer contribute to missionary societies.

Even Mr. Yates, Christian minister though he be, is not blind to the fact that foreign missions are in a parlous condition. He trembles as he peers on the threshold of the future. The signs of the times are by no means encouraging. It is true that the history of civilisation might have been very different had Mohammedanism never appeared, and there are those who even think that civilisation might have been in a more advanced state to-day had Christianity never arisen; but what the attitude of the East is likely to be to Christianity is a problem that puzzles the Church a great deal just now. Mr. Yates is of opinion that "the present missionary situation presents the aspects of one of God's great risks." If there were a God we would feel profoundly sorry for him because of all he suffered at the hands of his vicegerents. As we believe neither in him nor his colossal risks, we avail ourselves of the present opportunity to remark that the risks run by his champions are so colossal as eventually to inflict upon them fatal injuries. Escape is impossible. Such is the rush of modern knowledge that all supernatural claims are doomed to extinction. At last their days are numbered. At last the fruit of the tree of knowledge, so long sternly withheld, is being freely offered to all who have an appetite for it. The forbidding cherubim and the flame of a sword which turned every way have vanished, in consequence of which the life-imparting and life-nourishing tree is easily accessible to all. And they who enter and partake and grow strong RUN NO RISKS.

J. T. LLOYD.

Science and the Soul.—IV.

(Continued from p. 100.)

"Physiology declares itself decidedly and categorically against individual immortality, as against all theories in general which include the special existence of a soul. The soul does not enter into the fœtus, as the evil spirit does into the possessed, but it is produced by the development of the brain, just the same as muscular activity is produced by the development of the muscles, or secretion is produced by a development of the glands."—CARL VOËT, cited in Buchner's *Force and Matter*, p. 402.

"Instead of mind being, as assumed, a wondrous spiritual entity, the independent source of all power and self-sufficient cause of all causes, an honest observation proves incontestably that it is the most dependent of all the natural forces. It is the highest development of force, and to its existence all the lower natural forces are indispensably requisite."—DR. MAUDSLEY, *The Physiology of Mind*, p. 125.

"Unless arterial blood circulate in the brain, mental activity ceases. Not only is the blood needful for repairing the waste of tissue which follows cerebral activity, but arterial blood seems to be a necessary factor along with the nervous tissue in all manifestations of cerebral activity. The blood stands to the brain action as the acid does to the zinc and copper plates in a galvanic pile."—DR. W. IRELAND, *The Blot upon the Brain*, 321.

If the thinking faculties are due to some unseen, immortal, spiritual being secreted in the brain, what becomes of this mysterious ruler when a person falls into unconsciousness?

M. Richerand, a French physician, had a female patient, who, in consequence of disease, had lost part

of the bone of the skull, leaving the brain exposed. One day, while washing this part, M. Richerand—

"chanced to press with more than usual force; and instantly the patient, who the moment before had answered his questions with perfect correctness, stopped short in the middle of a sentence, and became altogether insensible. As the pressure gave her no pain, it was repeated thrice, and always with the same result. She uniformly recovered her faculties the moment the pressure was taken off."*

Combe also cites another case, as follows:—

"Professor Chapman, of Philadelphia, mentions in his Lectures that he saw an individual with his skull perforated, and the brain exposed, who used to submit himself to the same experiment of pressure as that performed on Richerand's patient, and who was exhibited by the late Professor Wistar to his class. The man's intellect and emotional faculties disappeared when pressure was applied to the brain: they were literally 'held under the thumb,' and could be restored at pleasure to their full activity."†

A still more remarkable case, as Combe rightly remarks, is that of a sailor named Jones, recorded by the famous surgeon, Sir Astley Cooper. This man was rendered unconscious by a wound in the head, while on board a vessel in the Mediterranean. He remained unconscious at Gibraltar for several months, and was subsequently removed to St. Thomas's Hospital, London, where, says Combe,—

"Mr. Cline, the surgeon, found a portion of the skull depressed, trepanned him, and removed the depressed part of the bone. Three hours after this operation he sat up in bed, sensation and volition returned, and in four days he was able to get up and converse. *The last circumstance he remembered was the capture of a prize in the Mediterranean thirteen months before.*"‡

What was this man's soul, or spirit, doing during those thirteen months? Did it go on a journey, and arrive back just in time to take possession of the body again directly the surgeon lifted the piece of bone from the skull?

Not a thought was evolved in this man's mind since he received his wound; for he took up the thread of his life just where it became a blank, thirteen months before. Is not this a proof that mind is a product of the brain, and that when the brain is thrown out of gear, intelligence ceases until the brain is restored to its natural functions? To expect the mind to survive the existence of the brain is as reasonable as to expect an electric battery to continue to generate electricity after its destruction.

How much mind is there in a child during the first few days of its existence? None at all: it has only the rudiments of one or two of its five senses; it has not so much mind as a dog. The mind commences to evolve and passes through successive phases of development; it follows by slow degrees the successive progress of the evolution of the nervous apparatus which are its basis. The average weight of the brain of man, among Europeans, is 49 oz. If the brain of a grown person, says Gratiolet, falls below 31 oz. the mind fails to develop; it is impossible for him to attain to ordinary human intelligence—in other words, he will become an idiot. Carl Vogt puts it somewhat higher. The result of investigations, he says,—

"enables us definitely to assert that a certain weight of brain is requisite for the manifestation of intellectual faculties; that idiocy and mental weakness begin below this weight, and that this weight, as regards the white race, or central European nations, is about a kilogramme for the male, and about 900 grammes for the female."§

That is between 34 and 35 oz.

Dr. Marshall examined the brains of two idiots of European descent, and he found the convolutions to be fewer in number, less complex, and smoother than in the ape. In this respect, he says, "the idiot's

brains are even more simple than that of the gibbon, and approach that of the baboon."

Dr. Wilder records the weight of the brain of an idiot woman, 42 years of age, as 10 oz. Says Buchner:—

"Persons whose heads are less than 16 in. in circumference, are invariably imbecile or weak-minded. 'An exceptional smallness of head is always found in idiocy' (Valentin). The famous poet Lenau became insane and died in idiocy; his brain, atrophied and ruined by disease, weighed only 2 lb. 8 oz."*

To quote the same author again: "The convolutions of the brain of Beethoven, the great musician, were, according to Dr. J. Wagner's report, twice as deep and numerous as usual." On the other hand, Longet shows that in the brains of idiots, or creatures who are born imbeciles, the convolutions are less deep and the grey matter is less thick than in normal brains. A child, also, despite the large size of his brain in comparison with that of his body, has but very imperfect convolutions, and only develops these after reaching a certain age. Prior to the ninth month of pregnancy, the convolutions are not even visible; until then, the human foetus has a smooth brain, like that of the lower vertebrates.†

The contents of the brain consist of nerve-cells, the grey matter of the brain, and fibrous tissue, dead white in color. The function of the fibrous, or white, matter is to carry messages to and from the nerve-cells—the grey matter—which has been termed the brain-mantle, because it covers the folds and windings of the convolutions of the brain. There are also islands of grey matter in the interior of the brain. There is not the slightest doubt whatever that it is the nerve-cells, or grey matter of the brain that must be regarded as the seat of all intellectual and mental activity, of mind, thought, and imagination. It varies in depth from the thickness of a pin to that of a pencil. It also varies greatly in thickness and quantity in different individuals. Says Buchner:—

"Thus Dr. Jessen perceived to his great surprise that the brain of a female idiot, called Nasmer, 23 years old, showed numerous well-developed convolutions on the surface, but he soon found the solution of the difficulty when, on dissecting the brain, he saw that the grey matter had become atrophied, apparently from disease contracted in early childhood, and thence it had become very thin and narrow."‡

Therefore, a man may possess a very large brain, but if it has few, and shallow, convolutions, and is lacking in grey matter, it will be of no advantage to him; whereas a man with a comparatively small brain may make up the deficiency in the convolutions and excess of grey matter. But, as we have seen, there is a limit of weight below which the brain may not fall and the owner possess reason and sanity.

The average weight of the brain of civilised man is 3 lb. The brain of Cuvier, the famous naturalist, weighed 4 lb.—a proof that it combined weight with quality. As Dr. Maudsley remarks:—

"It is strangely overlooked by many who write on this matter, that the brain is not a dead instrument, but a living organ, with functions of a higher kind than those of any other bodily organ, inasmuch as its organic nature and structure far surpass those of any other organ. What, then, are those functions if they are not mental? No one thinks it necessary to assume an immaterial liver behind the hepatic structure, in order to account for its functions. But so far as the nature of nerve and the complex structure of the cerebral convolutions exceed in dignity the hepatic elements and structure, so far must the material functions of the brain exceed those of the liver."§

Why should we place an immaterial soul, or spirit, behind the brain, any more than we require to place a spirit behind the liver to make it perform its functions? A shrewd thrust that.

* George Combe, *On the Relation Between Religion and Science* (1872), p. 291.

† Combe, p. 291.

‡ Combe, *On the Relation Between Religion and Science*, p. 292. The italics are ours.

§ Carl Vogt, *Lectures on Man*, p. 87.

* Ludwig Buchner, *Force and Matter*, p. 27

† *Force and Matter*, p. 269.

‡ *Force and Matter*, p. 271.

§ Dr. Maudsley, *Body and Mind*, pp. 215-16.

From the foregoing we can see how it is that the ape and the chimpanzee cannot attain to the speech and reason of man, because a brain weighing only 15 oz. cannot attain the intelligence of one weighing 49 oz. It should also be borne in mind that the descent of man cannot be traced to any existing simian types, such as we see them to-day in the gorilla, the ape, the chimpanzee, or the gibbon. All these types branched off from the ancestral tree from which also man had his origin more than a million years ago.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

The Flight of the Gods.

ONE Saturday afternoon in June, two or three years ago, I met my old school chum again, this time in Greenwich Park by appointment. We had a glorious time in the Park before we began to discuss any topic of interest to Freethinkers. There were hundreds of children in the Park, some poor, ragged, ill-fed urchins, shoeless and unkempt, from the poverty-stricken neighborhood of Deptford or the waterside population of Greenwich, and a goodly number of children from more prosperous districts, better cared for by their parents, who had come to spend the afternoon in innocent amusement in this grand, natural, old Park, on the hills or under the shadow of the trees, on this beautiful day in June. Children are very democratic and do not attach too much value to the philosophy of clothes.

It was, therefore, very pleasant to watch them at play on the hills. My friend and I could remember, too, the time when we had been brought to this Park as children on a day's excursion, and enjoyed our outing as much as though we had been taken many miles away into the country. What glorious sport children can have in Greenwich Park! And grown-up people, too, for a matter of that. Every form of enjoyment can be had there, or on Blackheath—which adjoins it—at holiday times.

And so we plodded our way through the Park, stopping now and again to take note of some particular object of beauty, until we came to the great avenue of trees and carriage-drive up to the Observatory. We looked at the quaint old twenty-four hour clock, and explained to some intelligent children who were anxious to learn the meaning of fifteen minutes past seventeen. I showed my friend many places of interest along the winding river, which we could see so well from our position on the famous hill. And then we sat down and talked.

For some time we spoke only of the great shipping trade that is still done on the banks of the Thames between Woolwich and London Bridge, and then we gazed at the Observatory, and began to talk of the wonders of astronomy.

At length I remarked, "Astronomy has always seemed to me to be the most atheistic of sciences. When I used to go to hear (the late) Sir Robert Ball lecture on the stars and the immense distance that divided them in the heavens, and the billions of miles that many of them were away from this little planet, I could not help wondering what point in space the Christian God, or the God of the Deist, occupied, from which he directed all the operations of these celestial bodies."

"Ah, but," said my friend, "Thomas Paine was of opinion that astronomy was the great science which unmistakably revealed the wisdom and goodness, as well as the omnipotence, of Deity."

"Yes," I replied, "but Thomas Paine never defined in precise terms what he meant by God. He used the word to express his belief in some intelligent kind of being, at the back of phenomena, who caused all the happenings in the universe as observed by man. But he did not seem to realise that in giving his God intelligence like unto man he was really making his God an anthropomorphic being, and that his conception of God was open to the same kind of

objections that he himself applied to the old Jewish God, Jahveh."

"I suppose," remarked my friend, "that you believe that all the heavenly bodies move by virtue of their own inherent properties?"

"Certainly. They move with mathematic precision, which can be calculated with extraordinary accuracy by astronomers. For instance, they can tell, as you know, the precise day and hour upon which the next transit of Venus will take place."

"But, surely, you do not think that the material universe originated without some intelligent being to call it into existence?"

"The matter of the universe seems to me to be eternal—I can neither imagine it beginning to be or ceasing to be."

"Then you do not think much of the argument for a great 'First Cause'?"

"No. I cannot conceive of a First Cause. Cause is a word which represents that which precedes an effect, and which consummates itself in the effect; but every cause is an effect of some previous cause, in an endless chain of causes and effects, and in an infinite regression there can be no First Cause. But in what sense can God be said to be the 'First Cause'? To know whether he is 'first,' we must carry the inquiry further back, as the child frequently does, and ask, 'What caused God?' and if the theologian says that God is without cause, may we not ask whether it is not far more reasonable to suppose that nature—which appears to be infinite, and which it is impossible to conceive either as beginning or ceasing to be—is without cause—that is, infinite and eternal, than to say that God is the uncaused causer of nature without defining what is meant by God?"

"Thomas Paine and other Theists conceived of God as an infinite and intelligent being who created the universe and man, and who rules and governs the movements of the whole planetary system, including the little globe upon which we dwell," responded my friend.

"Yes, I am aware of that; but I do not understand what is meant by an infinite being—especially an infinite being who exists apart from the material universe, which is also infinite as far as we know. Moreover, in my judgment no man can have an idea of God, if by God is meant an infinite being."

"Why not?"

"Let us consider for a moment. What is an idea? It is an image of the mind. As an illustration, let me say that the human mind is a mirror upon which nothing is reflected but the external objects of nature. Man has never had any ideas but those which result from the study and observation of nature. For instance, if I were to say to a man, 'Think of a horse, or an elephant, or a man,' he would at once get a picture on the mirror of his mind of these beings; but if I were to ask him to picture some being he had not seen or heard described, he could not do it. In like manner, man can never give an intelligible idea of God, because in point of truth he has no idea of God. His highest conception is that of a big man, with amplified human qualities."

"I do not agree with you," said my friend, "that man cannot picture on his mind's eye, Horatio, things that he has not seen. What about ghosts?"

"Hundreds of human beings believe that they have seen ghosts, and if they have not seen them they certainly have heard them described. But most of the ghosts when they do appear come like the Ghost of Hamlet's Father, clothed in fine raiment, and, in his case, armed from top to toe."

"So that," responded my friend, "what you say is that all the gods are but ghosts—in other words, figments of the human imagination?"

"Precisely."

"What do you think of the 'Design argument'?" I remember that John Stuart Mill said in his posthumous essay on *Theism* that he considered the design argument a very good one."

"Not quite that. He said it was a good argument of its kind, but he did not think much of the kind, otherwise he would have accepted it. Paley's argument from design is full of defects. First, it is alleged that things wrought by human ingenuity show marks of design; but they only manifest these marks to persons who know something of human workmanship. An intelligent man can see that a watch has been designed; he judges that its mechanism is arranged by an intelligent being to effect a certain definite purpose, but then he invariably concludes thus, because he knows something of the designers of watches. A savage would not conclude that a watch was designed by an intelligent being: he would be more likely to think it was alive. But what analogy is there between something made out of materials by man and a product of nature? Who would ever conclude that a blade of grass had been designed, or a tree, or a mountain? Surely, no one. Nature's process of growth is different altogether from the manipulation of some object of nature into a new form by the work of man."

"Yes, I agree to all that," said my friend; "and yet I cannot understand how all the races of mankind have come to some idea of a being whom they call God, who produces all the wonders we observe in the universe."

"You are not quite right there. Some races are so low down the scale of development that they have never yet formed any idea of a God; but when the savage man did for some idea of a being behind phenomena, he did not get into his untutored mind the idea which the cultivated Theist formulates to-day. No; what you have to study is the evolution of the God idea. You will see that it is all a matter of growth. It begins in the primitive ideas of our savage ancestors, who thought there were beings behind each and every occurrence; then from fetish worship up to the anthropomorphic conception of some of the writers of the Bible, and then through various stages up to the pure Theism of the late Professor Newman or the 'Social Deity' of Mr. Arthur Balfour. And so, one by one, the gods vanish—disappear—take their flight, so to speak, out of the human mind."

"That, then, is the end of the gods, according to your view," said my friend, after a pause.

"Yes, that is the end. After that, man finds nature performs all her wonders 'without the meddling of the gods,' as Professor Tyndall said in his address at Belfast as far back as 1876."

As the sun went down we walked over Blackheath to Morten College and on to New Eltham. In the evening, on our way home, my friend looked up into the heavens and remarked that the stars looked particularly brilliant that night. "Yes, I said, look at the millions of them. There are millions, my friend. As Sir Robert Ball used to say: 'there are millions. If you doubt it, they are up there, count them.'"

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

THE LATEST CHRIST.

Not Baal, but Christus Jingo! Heir
Of Him, who once was crucified!
The red stigmata still are there,
The crimson spear wounds in the side,
But raised aloft as God and Lord,
He holds the money-bag and sword.

A wondrous god! Most fit for these
Who cheat on change, then creep to prayer;
Blood on his heavenly altar flows,
Hell's burning incense fills the air,
And death attests in street and lane
The hideous glory of his reign.

—Robert Buchanan.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Phillip Carr, who is connected with the Little English Theatre in Paris, being interviewed by the *Daily News*, delivered himself as follows:—

"I could not help seeing the extremely insular point of view taken by the French in regard to the achievements of other countries. The English are accused of insularity, but the French are a thousand times more so. Until quite recently they did not recognise the existence of the works of art or literature outside their own country. Even of Shakespeare they knew little or nothing."

Clearly the speaker is talking from a plentiful lack of knowledge.

Some of Shakespeare's plays have always held the French stage—notably *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Later years have seen the production of *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Julius Cæsar*. Victor Hugo's son made a complete translation of Shakespeare into French, and his notes are often of the finest quality. Victor Hugo's own book on Shakespeare is one of extraordinary power. No such tremendous eulogy of Shakespeare was ever written in any other language. The tributes to Shakespeare from Diderot down to Flaubert and Taine are simply astonishing from that "insular" people. Diderot said of Shakespeare that the greatest of other writers might walk under him without bending. Flaubert said "this man overwhelms me." A hundred golden sentences of glowing praise might be quoted from Victor Hugo. Does Mr. Carr imagine that these great French authors are not read in France?

When it comes to translations the French show a better muster than the English do. France has, and has long had, good translations, not only of the great German philosophers such as Kant, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, and Haeckel, but also of the great English philosophers such as Locke, Berkeley, Mill, Spencer, Hamilton, and Huxley. She had able and accurate translations of Darwin thirty and forty years ago. No such translations of French thinkers existed in England. But why pursue this refutation of Mr. Carr's absurd statements?

We have said as much as we have on this point, not as a piece of literary criticism, but because we don't want to see the British philistine encouraged in his silly old notions of superiority over "infidel" France.

Our prophetic soul is not as good as Shakespeare's, but it has its merits nevertheless. Ever so many years ago, when we ceased to respect Christianity and took to ridiculing it, we remarked that Jesus Christ fed thousands of people on five penny loaves and a few sardines. The penny loaves are still hypothetical, but the sardines seem fairly well established—unless the *Daily Mail's* other name is the only appropriate one. Our contemporary's correspondent at Jerusalem telegraphs that a sardine factory is being established on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Sardines abound there and are of the finest flavor.

By the way, if the sardines are as satisfying as those used in the Gospels to feed the five thousand, they should command good prices.

A lady writer in the *Vineyard* says that "religious Free-thinkers," no less than Romans, Anglicans, and Puritans, need a Saints' Calendar. As it happens, Freethinkers have a better one than the Christians, and it includes such names as Giordano Bruno, Richard Carlile, and Ferrer.

"Some race-quality in the English blood, which escapes any risk of contamination by foreigners, differentiates the British from the rest of mankind." So says "Vanoc" of the *Referee*. And if "Vanoc" is a fair sample of the race quality in the English blood we should say it is profoundly (and sadly) true.

"Dagonet" of the *Referee* has annexed "God" to the "Unionist" party. He speaks of "Ulstermen who are loyal to their King, their country, and their God." It is a fairly practical demonstration that there is no God, that Mr. Sims is allowed to take his name in vain in this fashion. "Dagonet" writes this hypocritical stuff with his tongue in his cheek. He believes in it as much as we do.

"Breathings on the Glass" is one of "Dagonet's" sub-headings. "Bleatings on the Grass" would be better.

The *Christian World* is responsible for the statement that at Beirut two gendarmes prevent women entering the picture palaces to see the *Quo Vadis* film. This is because of the picture of Christian heroism in the arena, and the uplifting influence of Christian conversion has such a striking influence on the women who see it. We are greatly inclined to take the story with a grain of salt. By this time Mohammedans have had enough to do with Christians to know that when it comes to persecution Christianity can hold its own with anyone or anything. And these particular pictures are all "fake" in a double sense. First, because it is mere acting, and attendants at cinema shows know it. Secondly, because the alleged persecutions of the Christians are very largely part of an elaborate "fake" that Christian writers have foisted on the world. Most recent critical writers have been puzzled to account for the stories, and have invented more or less ingenious theories to account for the absence of evidence. Of course, for those who take their Roman history from Sunday-school tracts and cinema films questions of probability scarcely exist.

It is peculiar that Sienkiewicz should be known in this country chiefly by *Quo Vadis*? which is positively one of his worst and least trustworthy books. This is, of course, due to the fact that the author was here exploiting the Christian portion of the population. The same thing was seen with Wilson Barrett and the *Sign of the Cross*.

The Salvation Army—inspired by the profits made by its emigration business—is still booming Canada, and encouraging poor people to go out. It admits, now that it can no longer be denied, that there is a deal of unemployment in the towns and cities, but points out that the demand for farm labor is keen. Probably so; but it should also be pointed out that farm labor is only required during a few months in the year, and then the laborer is left stranded. For sheer self-preservation he drifts into the towns, and so helps to swell the already large number of unemployed. The official emigration agencies have for some months been warning people against emigration. The Salvation Army continues to cater for business. "We find you a situation," they say. Perhaps so, for a time. It is what happens afterwards that supplies the tragedy.

The *Alliance News* also booms the Salvation Army's temperance work in a recent issue. The information, we expect, is supplied by the Army itself, although to those unacquainted with the way in which the press is worked, it appears like independent testimony. As it is, the information is delightfully vague. About the Hadleigh Colony we are told that "many inebriates have been received, and these transformed into sober men." So also with other places. Bearing in mind the Army's fondness for statistics, when they serve its purpose, the vagueness of the above is instructive. What one would like to know is how many the Army get hold of, under what conditions they remain, and what proportion is cured? In New Zealand, we learn that the Army has control of two islands in the vicinity of Auckland Harbor, which are practically prison settlements. The residents are committed for from one to two years. Even under these conditions the Army only claims to make thirty per cent. cures. But why this should be placed to the credit of the Army is more than we can discover. It seems only part of the prison administration. We wonder how much per head the Army charges for the people it receives?

Rev. J. Cyril Walter has built and equipped a model theatre, costing about £700, at Averham, near Newark. It will accommodate 160 people. All that is wanted now is the appearance of J. C. and the Twelve Apostles on the stage. Prayer ought to be able to manage that.

Hans Schmidt, the Roman Catholic priest, at New York, who murdered Anna Aumuller in such brutal circumstances, is sentenced to be electrocuted. The press reports say that "He heard the sentence with apparent satisfaction." Many other people have heard it with similar sentiments. The wretched creature is now trying to turn poet. Here is a verse he handed to the newspaper reporters before leaving for Sing Sing:—

"Beyond this vale of tears
There is a life above,
Unmeasured by the flight of years,
And all that life is love."

He overlooks the "life below." Pious people are generally egoists.

What with a large—and compact—Roman element, and its black population, the United States has two pretty

problems for the future to deal with. And it is significant that two of the greatest dangers in the future may be closely connected with Christianity. For black slavery in the States was of distinctly Christian origin. It was taken there by Christians, developed by Christians, for the profit of Christians. When we are considering the influence of Christianity on civilisation, this should never be forgotten.

Noticing the new edition of the memoir of the late Very Rev. Sir James Cameron Lees, D.D., the *Westminster Gazette* printed the following:—

"After Cameron Lees was 'called' to Edinburgh he had a stormy time for a number of years, but he kept a brave heart and a smiling face to all his troubles. He was a great traveller, and paid a visit to Australia, which he enjoyed exceedingly. On leaving Melbourne a stalwart farmer handed him a piece of bog-oak as a memorial. On the homeward voyage he looked over his treasures—for he had got many gifts at the Antipodes—and on examining the oak case found it had a screw lid, and when it was unscrewed a thousand Australian sovereigns glittered inside, and a card with the inscription—'A thank-offering for restoring the faith of Christ.' That money he unfortunately invested, with additional sums, in some of the Australian banks before the crisis, which many still remember, and lost it all."

We wonder if our contemporary saw the joke. It was in the land where he had restored the faith of Christ that the reverend gentleman lost all his money in rotten banks—including the money he got for the work of "restoration."

The London County Council is supplying a bowdlerised version of Charles Reade's *Cloister and the Hearth*, but it still allows little children to read the unexpurgated Bible, which contains accounts of unnatural vice, rape, and other abominations.

Our readers know that we have a great respect for the English language. We hate to see it abused, and it is that feeling, rather than mere pedantry, which prompts us to protest now and then against conspicuous instances of that offence. There is the word *aggravate*, for instance; it really means to increase the weight of a thing. It is possible to aggravate a crime or its guilt, but it is impossible to aggravate a human being,—there and then, we mean, though one of the advertised fattening processes might do it in a reasonable time. Yet people will say they are aggravated when they mean that they are annoyed, exasperated, or incensed. Charles Dickens himself, great writer as he was, used *aggravation* in that slipshod way. And now we see his son, Mr. H. F. Dickens, K.C., using it in the same manner. "Were you annoyed?" he asked a witness lately at the London Sessions. "I had no cause to be," the witness replied. "Was Atkinson's behavior aggravating?" was the next question. We know that this is very common slipshod, but a K.C. ought not to be guilty of it in an open court of justice.

There are so many dull, solemn, or pompous speakers in the House of Commons that a wit or humorist is thrice welcome, at least by a reader of the parliamentary reports in the morning newspapers. One likes to see Mr. Birrell's name in the discussion; and he is none the less wise for being witty. He has to apologise to his more owlish fellow members now and then. This occurred during the recent Home Rule debate. Mr. Birrell begged pardon for having said that "a collision between a Catholic and a Protestant mob had no more religion in it than the impact of billiards." He was wrong—he ought not to have said it. But he could not resist adding, "You would not call such a collision a religious service." The knife was in and he turned it round. One likes to see the jester stab. It gives the fools a lesson.

Essentially, of course, we should agree with Mr. Birrell. Technically, we should differ. No religion in the collision of Catholic and Protestant mobs? That is just what there is. It is apt to be the sincerest of religious services. They mean what they say then. Yes, and what they do. And more.

The death of the Rev. J. Brierley—"J. B." of the *Christian World*—deprives Nonconformity of one of its ablest and most tolerant writers. He was not advanced enough to do much good in the outside world, but his influence in a good direction within orthodox circles must have been considerable. It is pleasant to admit that he was thoroughly opposed to the Blasphemy Laws. And not unpleasant to add that many of his articles have been dealt with in the *Freethinker*, particularly by Mr. Lloyd. We remember dealing with some of "J. B.'s" articles in the old *National Reformer* (Bradlaugh's journal) as far back as the eighteen-seventies.

"J. B.'s" last article in the *Christian World* was on "Life's Loose Ends," and contained the passage: "You are in a world of loose ends—but the farther ends are not loose. They are gripped by a Hand, that is Love and Omnipotence." This is writing down to the lowest intelligences, for such religious teaching is vastly popular in the Gold Coast. As the Christian Evidence lecturer once said, "Everywhere you find the footprints of an Almighty Hand."

Mr. G. K. Chesterton says that he begins to believe in witch-burning. In time Mr. Chesterton ought to be a perfect Christian. But he'd have to train down a bit for the part of Messiah.

"The cricketing parson," it is announced, has accepted the living of Bermondsey. A theatrical parson lives at Brixton. Why are the clergy picked out for the bestowal of labels outside their duties? One never hears of a "golfing general" or "tennis-playing admiral." Is the soul-saving profession falling into disrepute?

Miss Edith Durham's recent lecture at Essex Hall was honorably plain-spoken. She said she was convinced by bitter experience that no Red Cross aid should ever be sent out in a war. Men's wounds were healed, and they were sent back to the front again as soon as possible, only to prolong the war indefinitely. All the "liberators" in the Balkan war were selfish and cruel. As for the cruelty of the Servians, she said, they burnt, in one outburst, twenty-six villages with petroleum, and prevented the people's escape with bayonets. Soldiers of the Cross!

Horribly cold and blustering weather has increased the death-rate in New York. People have even been frozen to death in their beds. President Wilson has been confined to his bed, but his illness is not serious.

Rev. Henry Lewis, rector of Bermondsey, left £3,774. It isn't a big fortune in itself, but it is a lot for a Christian, and it must make Councillor A. B. Moss's mouth water. Mr. Moss, of course, is an Atheist, and Atheists are not quite as good as the "blessed-be-ye-poor" people at making money.

Rev. Arthur Thomas Chapman, Cambridge, left £12,195. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth."

Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., is a nephew of Mr. Charles Chancellor who was such a help to Mr. Foote and the *Freethinker* in the difficult days, early in the present century, when a gang of pretended friends and open enemies did their best to ruin both. We are glad to see the nephew as good a Radical as his uncle was, and especially glad to see him sound on the question of the Blasphemy Laws. But we regret to see him contracting a certain taint from the Nonconformist and other religious company he keeps. He spoke at Chatham Town Hall recently with the Bishop of Croydon in favor of Sunday Closing. We can understand a bishop playing that pious game. He has an interest in filling churches somehow, although he is mistaken in supposing that shutting public-houses will do it. But when a man like Mr. Chancellor plays this pious game we can only see the baneful influence of partisan politics on a capable and honorable public man.

Public-houses are already closed altogether on Sunday in Scotland. They are closed during most of the day in England. We defy anybody to show why they should be closed during the rest of the day except as a concession to the self-interest, the bigotry, or the fanaticism of the Churches. We are serious in saying that we should be very glad if a competent advocate of Sunday Closing would take up this challenge. Why not Mr. Chancellor himself?

Mr. Andrew Carnegie, after giving £2,000,000 to the Peace cause, is now supplementing it with a gift of £400,000 to promote the cause through the churches of the various denominations throughout the world. It looks like magnificent generosity. But it will be observed that Mr. Carnegie's gifts are always calculated to produce the greatest possible advertisement of his noble self. The Churches will all be talking about him now.

Rev. J. Scott Lidgett is one of Shakespeare's puritans who think "because they are virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale." He voted (and spoke, of course) for the non-sale of intoxicants in the Crystal Palace grounds in the interest of "good order." Good order is the rule at the

Crystal Palace already. Why then stop the sale of what Jesus Christ enjoyed? He was no teetotaler.

According to the *Daily Chronicle*, writing on Mr. Hardy's remarriage, he is "the only novelist on whom has been conferred the coveted Order of Merit." What of the late George Meredith? We may be mistaken, but we understood that he was a recipient of the "coveted Order." Perhaps the writer had only *living* novelists in his mind.

It takes two to make a marriage. That is presumably the reason why Thomas Hardy married his lady secretary in a church, when his own views of church doctrines and ceremonies are so well-known. And the deed was done a long way from *his* home and very early in the morning.

One sign of the decadence of religion is the altered form and tone of what we may call the benediction at the end of the King's Speech. Listen to the latest specimen:—

"Your labors upon these and all other matters I humbly commend to the blessing of Almighty God."

Could anything be more formal and perfunctory? "Almighty God" in the House of Lords is just about as real and vital as the Speaker's Mace on the table of the House of Commons. Cromwell called the latter "a bauble." He might call the former so if he lived now.

The wish is often father to the thought in pious people. The authors of a book on the *Churches and London* tells us that "Agnosticism, which seemed to be gaining some hold on the working-man 10 or 15 years ago, appears, in London, at any rate, to have had its day. Blatchfordism is a spent force." How exact! Secularism captured the working-man, not Agnosticism, which appealed only to the classes. The National Secular Society is the oldest organisation of its kind and the *Freethinker* is the doyen of Freethought journals, both being secularistic. As for "Blatchfordism" (whatever that may mean) Mr. Robert Blatchford edits a Socialistic, not a Freethought paper. There are more Freethinkers and less Christians in the world than ever before.

American papers state that the bridge which is being constructed at Hell Gate, New York, will be the largest in the world. If Christianity be true it will need to be a record size.

It is rather amusing to find the *Church Times* presenting Christians as suffering from the intolerance of Freethinkers. In a recent pamphlet—which we hope to notice at some length later—Mr. George Trevelyan expresses his belief in a "society of sincere Christians and sincere heretics, living in friendly social intercourse with each other, working together for the innumerable objects that good men have in common, and sharing together not a few spiritual emotions." On this the *Church Times* observes, "We could so live with Mr. Trevelyan. But can he give us any guarantee that the heretics will tolerate us? They must have changed their temper strangely if they do." We are not aware that Freethinkers have declined either meeting or working with Christians on behalf of any objects they have in common. Quite the contrary; they have been ready to efface themselves almost to the point of censure, and allowed Christians to secure a credit that did not properly belong to them, so that the desired object should prosper. On the other hand, there are many cases on record of prominent Christians declining to meet Freethinkers on the public platform, and in private life this feeling is carried very much farther. It is really too late for the *Church Times* to convincingly portray the Christian as one whose humane and social sympathies overpower his religious and sectarian feelings.

A religious reviewer of the two concluding volumes of Professor Frazer's *Golden Bough* decides that the work is not a scientific study of man's religious ideas, because "it is not a critical investigation of the problems of Religion." We wonder what this writer would consider a scientific study of religion? Probably an examination of the validity of Anglican Orders, or a study of vestments, or some similar fantastic foolishness. In showing the roots of religious beliefs in savage ideas and practices, Professor Frazer gives us the only possible scientific religion, since he affiliates religious beliefs to frames of mind that are inevitably generated by the savage's ignorance of the nature of his surroundings. And this is certainly the only line of study that is of real value. That is, perhaps, the reason why professional religionists so carefully boycott it. They feel that if the truth of the analysis conducted by men like Frazer is admitted, the whole structure of religion is blown into the air. So the safest policy—for a time—is to pooh-pooh these investigations as of no value.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

March 1, Glasgow; 22, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £29 15s. 8d. Received since:—R. B. Harrison, 2s. 6d.; Robert Avis, £1; James Moffat, £1; G. T. Hart (Canada), 4s. 1d.; George Smith, 10s.; N. M. X., £1; Thomas Robson, 10s.; John Sumner, £3 3s.; W. H. Harrup, 10s.; J. Burns, 15s.; F. M. (Ficksburg), 10s. 6d.; A. H. Deacon, 2s. 6d.; Edward Snelling and Wife, £1;

R. H. CHANDLER.—Glad to have your wife's good wishes as well as your own. "Exposure of G. W. Foote" is, as you say, amusing. Your hope that we may survive it is likely to be realised. Our "neglect" of Richard Carlile is quite a comical accusation. We have praised him hundreds of times. Scarcely any other man has been more the object of our eulogy. But we have praised him, not so much on account of what he said—for he was not a poet or a seminal thinker—but on account of what he did. He fought the battle of the free press like a hero—like a super-hero. He was as firm and tenacious as the oak and the granite of his native county.

C. W. THOMAS (New Zealand).—Quite right. We have passed it over to the treasurer.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings.

JAMES MOFFAT.—We remember you in connection with Yeovil very well, and are pleased to hear from you again. We were afraid you had joined the majority.

W. P. BALL.—Cuttings are always welcome.

W. DAVIDSON.—They can safely be left to you.

E. SCHMIDT.—Glad to hear that Hamburg, at least, is civilised enough to let the children of Freethinkers be withdrawn from religious instruction in the public schools. Glad also to have your thanks for "the hours of pleasure the *Freethinker* gives you."

G. T. HART (Canada).—A secular (that is, a civil, non-religious) marriage is easily arranged in England. You give the legal notice on both sides, then you go to the registry office, and go through the usual ceremony of taking each other as husband and wife, in the legal sense of the words. That is all which concerns the public officials. The morality and the poetry concern yourselves only—except as the world is all the better for such things being present.

J. TOMKINS writes: "Will Mr. Mann kindly give the date of the *Times* containing the review of Sir Hiram Maxim's book which he (Mr. M.) referred to in his article?"

EDWARD SNELLING.—Obituary appears. We remember the family well.

S. BEARDALL.—There are other readers of the *Freethinker* than yourself in Nottingham, though they don't deal at your news-agent's. Still, we should like a good many more.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Tuesday is late, but we have strained a point in the circumstances. We had a paragraph already in type at Mr. Walsh's suggestion.

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.

Haeckel (we drop other designations as unnecessary) celebrated his eightieth birthday on Monday (Feb. 16). We do not choose to fill our columns with useless matter. Haeckel's name is enough for the present occasion. We salute the Grand Old Man of science and Freethought, and offer him our profound homage.

Mr. Foote's long postponed visit to Glasgow takes place next Sunday (March 1). There is pretty sure to be a rally

of his friends from all parts of the South of Scotland. His subjects, also, are new—as far as Glasgow audiences are concerned, and should prove specially attractive in themselves.

Perhaps we had better announce Mr. Foote's subjects on this occasion. They are "Shakespeare's Humanism in the *Merchant of Venice*," and "Mr. Balfour on God." The local "saints" wish Mr. Foote to deal with the Gifford Lectures that Mr. Balfour has been delivering at Glasgow.

Mr. Foote will probably be lecturing again at Queen's Hall before the present winter season closes.

Mr. Lloyd lectures at the Failsworth Secular Sunday-school this evening (Feb. 22). District "saints" will please note.

Miss Kough lectures at the Manchester Secular Hall to-day (Feb. 22) both afternoon (3) and evening (6.30). This arrangement looks as though it might clash with Mr. Lloyd's lecture at Failsworth; but, after all, there are plenty of Freethinkers in the district to provide them both with good audiences.

We have not received any news from Liverpool lately. We should be glad to hear that the local "saints" are still doing good work.

The Secular Education League holds its Annual Meeting at Caxton Hall on March 25. After the formal business is transacted there will be a public meeting, addressed by various speakers, including Mr. Halley Stewart, the Rev. Dr. Walsh, and Mr. G. W. Foote. Fuller details will appear later in our columns.

Mr. Frederic W. Walsh, of Leamington, of whom our readers have heard lately, being physically incapable, as they well know, of delivering a public address himself, has arranged for Mr. Cohen to take his place at a projected meeting on Tuesday evening next (Feb. 24) at the Café Royal, Bath-street. The chair is to be taken at 8 o'clock by the Rev. Leslie G. Berrington, and admission is free, without a ticket. Mr. Cohen's subject is "God and the Soul in the Light of Science." Discussion will be allowed after the lecture. The arrangements are in the hands of the Leamington Literary and Philosophical Institute, of which Mr. Walsh is a member.

A party of "saints" are going over from Birmingham to Leamington, leaving Snow Hill Station at 6.20. Tickets (return fare, saloon) 2s. 8d., obtainable of J. Partridge, sec., 245 Shenstone-road, Rotton Park.

"Why Christianity Has Failed" is the subject of Mr. W. Heaford's lecture for the West Ham Branch this evening (Feb. 22). There should be a good audience.

Mr. John Sumner, a constant Birmingham subscriber to the President's Honorarium Fund, sending his cheque for the new year, says:—

"It is sometimes with mixed feelings that one signs one's cheques, but in writing mine for this excellent object, I only experience pleasure at being able to respond. Three hundred pounds is a poor enough sum at which to aim. Fortunately your rich natural endowments compensate to no small extent, enabling you to extract more from life than usually falls to the lot of wealthy men."

Once a year one may print these things. They show the perhaps too generous spirit in which one is regarded by one's friends.

Mr. William Repton pleaded for the insertion of some rather personal lines which appear from his pen. "I wish," he wrote, "you were not the Editor, for a time at least. If you can conquer that pride in yourself which I admire, you may perhaps let it appear; if not, please accept it as something in the nature of thanks for the joy of having read your paper for twenty years." We felt puzzled what to do, but good nature at last said "Print it." The writer's praise is not fulsome, but rational, even if exaggerated; and why should he not enjoy the innocent pleasure of expressing it? We have never suffered from a surfeit of eulogy, and at our age we are not likely to get the staggers.

There are special reasons for postponing the conclusion of Mr. Foote's article on the Blasphemy Laws. It must include considerations depending on things that may happen during the present week (Feb. 17 to Feb. 24). The explanation will appear in our next issue.

Goethe.—V.

(Concluded from p. 107.)

IN the tragedy of *Faust*, the godlike genius of Goethe transformed an old puppet-play into one of the eternal glories of literature and art. The first part of the poem was not published until 1806. It was the outcome of thirty years' study and reflection. The folk-story was familiar to Goethe's childhood, and it was in 1770 that he began to think of embalming his life experiences in a modernised legend; and a few years later he sketched various scenes of the tragedy. During his tour in Italy he added the Witches' Kitchen, the Cathedral episode, and the opening monologue. In 1797 the entire work was reconstructed, and the two Prologues, the Walpurgis Night, and the Dedication were added.

Despite the fact that *Faust* is Goethe's supreme masterpiece, it is, and has long been, his most widely appreciated work. Its exuberant variety is to some extent responsible for this, but its overpowering fascination more largely resides in the circumstance that it is concerned with problems which compel and command universal interest and attention.

The reader is given a broad hint of the coming exuberance in the Prologue to the Theatre, in which he is introduced to a company of strolling actors which has come to delight the motley multitude with a play depicting the joys and sorrows of human life. The Poet, the Manager, and the Merry Andrew then hold high discourse concerning the general bearings of the drama. The Manager dwells on the importance of a good pay-box; the Poet is anxious to produce nothing that posterity will condemn, but the Manager thinks the receipts of greater consequence. The Merryman tells them both that the main thing is to please the public. The Manager agrees; the Poet places his art above all else, so the Merryman shrewdly advises him to prove himself a practical artist by amusing the audience. The Manager decides that something of a nature both dazzling and delightful is what is wanted. The spectators must be conducted "From heaven to earth, and thence thro' earth to hell."

After this Prologue of Earth comes the Prologue in Heaven. This last has been termed a parody of a similar scene in the Book of Job, and dull pietists have censured it as such. It has been reprobated as irrelevant and outrageous, as a blot on an otherwise irreproachable work, and as gratuitously insulting to God. A few translators have omitted it as "unfit for publication." Coleridge (not the living judge of that name, but a defunct relative) asked himself "whether it became his moral character to render into English, and so far certainly lend his countenance to, language much of which he thought vulgar, licentious, and blasphemous."

That dash of devilry in Goethe's nature to which reference has already been made was doubtless to some extent responsible for the impish coloring which characterises the Scene in Heaven, and one can picture the poet's smile as he penned it, just as one can imagine the sardonic appearance on the face of Anatole France when writing that similar scene in his *Penguin Island*. For all that, however, it must be borne in mind that the wager between the Lord and Mephistopheles formed part of the old folk-story, and Goethe's handling of the legend was entirely in accord with the spirit of the mediæval miracle plays. That the play-writers and actors of the Middle Ages were no respectors of divinities the following quotation from a popular miracle play abundantly proves. In this play God the Father dozes on his throne during the Crucifixion. An angel rouses him from his sleep, and the following dialogue ensues:—

"Angel. Eternal Father, you are doing what is not right, and will cover yourself with shame. Your much beloved son is just dead, and you sleep like a drunkard. God the Father. Is he then dead?"

Angel. Ay, that he is.

God the Father. Devil take me if I knew anything about it."*

It is thus seen that the Prologue in Heaven is a faithful rendering of the spirit which permeated mediæval legend, to which has been added the magical touch of genius. It is in perfect keeping with the Witches' Kitchen, the Brocken, and the supernatural characteristics of Mephistopheles.

When the play opens Faust is in his study, surrounded by his books and instruments of mystic lore. To the common mind, the master of those that know, he is to himself a learned ignoramus who is compelled to turn to the magic arts for the solution of the secrets of existence which have so far completely baffled his inquiries. The moon shines through the casement and causes his mind to return to the world of life outside.

"Beautiful moon! Ah! would that now,
For the last time, thy lovely beams
Shone on my troubled brow!
Oft by this desk, at middle night,
I have sat gazing for thy light,
Wearied with search through volumes endless.
I sate 'mong papers—crowded books,
Alone—when thou, friend of the friendless,
Camest smiling in, with soothing looks.
Oh, that upon some headland height
I now were wandering in thy light!†

In despair, Faust opens a volume of magic to summon a spirit to his aid, and, book in hand, he utters with a mysterious air, the sign of the spirit; and then from the red flame which rises, the spirit appears. Faust is appalled at the spirit he has called up, and turns away in affright. The spirit scorns the momentary fear into which Faust has been thrown, and asks him what has become of his soul's proud call now shrunk into a piteous cowardice?

FAUST.

"Creature of flame, shall I grow pale before thee?
'Twas I that called thee—Faustus—I, thine equal!"

SPIRIT.

In the currents of life, in the tempests of motion,
Hither and thither,
Over and under,
Wend I and wander—
Birth and the grave—
A limitless ocean,
Where the restless wave
Undulates ever—
Under and over
Their toiling strife
I mingle and hover,
The spirit of life:

Hear the murmuring wheel of time, unawed,
As I weave the living mantle of God!

FAUST.

Spirit, whose presence fills the wide earth,
How near akin to thine I feel my nature!

SPIRIT.

Man, thou art like those beings which thy mind
Can image, *not like me!* (Vanishes.)

FAUST (overpowered with confusion).

Not like thee!

Formed in the image of the Deity,
And yet unmeet to be compared with thee!"

Faust's pupil Wagner knocks at the door, but brings his master no comfort. Once more in solitude, Faust gives way to despair, and, seizing the poison resolves to die. He is about to drain it when he hears the Easter bells and the distant singing of the choir. These sounds awaken the remembrances of his youth; the natural longing for life returns and vanquishes his despondency.

"And now am I once more a little child,
And old Remembrance, twining round my heart,
Forbids this act, and checks my daring steps—
Then sing ye forth—sweet songs that breathe of heaven!
Tears come, and Earth hath won her child again."

The scene changes for the beauties of an early day in spring. It is Easter Sunday, and the people are abroad to dance and drink and sing. Faust and Wagner come to gaze upon the people as they enjoy their holiday. They are intensely happy in the present; the high problems of origin, existence, and

* Quoted by Lewes from Scherr's *Geschichte der Deutschen Cultur*, p. 71.

† Anster's translation.

destiny which baffle Faust mean nothing to them. The philosopher sees in the people's happiness an asset of life which he has been denied. He mentally enters into their simple pleasures, and yearns to possess the happiness they enjoy. His companion Wagner, however, looks down with the loftiest pedantic contempt on the antics of the vulgar crowd.

The folk gather round Faust, "paying him the reverence always paid by the illiterate to the 'scholar.' Wagner sees it with envy; Faust feels it to be a mockery. Reverence to him, who feels profoundly his own insignificance!" Faust sits on a stone and watches the setting sun; the shadows of evening gather, and master and pupil quit the scene, a black poodle at their heels. Faust, accompanied by the dog, makes his way to the study. His mood is serious and solemn, and the poodle becomes restless and uneasy. Faust opens the Bible, and begins a translation of the sacred Word, at which the poodle is agitated beyond all endurance. Faust suspects that mischief is lurking in the animal, and performs mystical ceremonies, and the Devil himself makes his appearance. Faust's mood of disillusion prepares him for his compact with Mephistopheles, and he consents to barter his soul for the realisation of earthly happiness. Mephistopheles and Faust visit Auerbach's cellar, where they see the sots in the highest heaven they know—a condition of maudlin or quarrelsome drunkenness. This pleasurable sight exhausted, they pass to the Witches' Kitchen. From purgatory they have passed to hell. On the hearth a large cauldron is over the flames, and in the dense smoke are various weird figures. A female ape watches the cauldron, skims it, and sees that it does not boil over. The male ape, with the young ones, warms himself at the fire. A witch's potion is prepared, which, when drunk, Mephistopheles assures Faust, will make him see Helen of Troy in the first woman he meets. The old Faust is rejuvenated into a handsome youth, and all the passions of adolescence appear in full force.

The meeting with Margaret soon follows. A simple and devout girl returning from church is accosted by Faust, and she meets his advances somewhat curtly. But love triumphs over all obstacles; by fair means and foul the innocent girl's ruin is accomplished, and when Faust bitterly reproaches Mephistopheles and himself, he is coldly told that "She is not the first."

Margaret is one of the most beautiful and bewitching creations in the entire realm of poetic art. She stands in strong contrast with the worldly-wise Martha, and the charm of her character is in this way accentuated. As Lewes says, "The poverty and inferior social position of Margaret is never lost sight of; she never becomes an abstraction; it is Love alone which exalts her above her lowly station, and it is only in passion that she is so exalted."

The scene at the Well, where Margaret and Lizzy are filling their pitchers, is supremely touching. Lizzy asks Margaret whether she has heard of Hannah's trouble, and she answers "No."

LIZZY.

"Kate told me so to-day—there's not a doubt of its truth. This comes of airs and impudence: I always said her pride would be her ruin."

MARGARET.

What mean you?

LIZZY.

What I mean all know but you—Why, when she eats and drinks she's feeding two."

Lizzy points the finger of un pitying female scorn at her fallen sister. Margaret pities her from the bottom of her heart, and hopes that Hannah's lover will make amends by marrying her. Lizzy says he's no such fool, but if he should—

"'Twill be almost as bad,

We will so plague her—if she get the lad;—
The wedding garland, should she think to wear it,
From the mock virgin shall the children tear it;
And, at her door, what fun shall we have spreading
Chopped straw, to greet the promise of their wedding.
(Exit.)

MARGARET (returning home).

How I would rail when some poor girl went wrong!
How, when it was another's sin and shame,
Words of reproach would rise up to my tongue!
Oh, this was then a black offence, and I
Made it in thought more black; no words of blame
This virtuous scorn of mine could satisfy—
Others might fall, but I more proud became,
And I—who thus could feel—am I the same?
But could I—who could—have resisted here?
All was so good—all was so very dear!"

In the following scene Margaret is praying brokenheartedly before an image of the Mother of Sorrows. She places fresh flowers in the bowls standing in front of the image. Margaret's unanswered supplication to the Blessed Virgin is chokingly pathetic even in translation. She implores the benign Mother to remember her own grief for the death-agony of her Divine Son. The Virgin alone can pity and forgive a fallen and forsaken girl.

"The flowers upon my window sill,
Wet with my tears since dawn they be;
All else was sleeping, while I was weeping,
Praying and choosing flowers for thee.
Into my chamber brightly
Came the early sun's good-morrow;
On my restless bed unsightly
I sate up in my sorrow.
Oh, in this hour of death, and the near grave,
Succor me, thou, and save!
Look on me with that countenance benign,
Never was grief like thine,—
Look down, look down on mine."

Margaret's brother Valentine returns home; he discovers Faust serenading his sister, and attacks him with his sword. Mephistopheles stabs Valentine, who falls mortally wounded, and he dies bitterly reproaching and reviling Margaret. From this scene of slaughter we pass to the Cathedral, where, in the dim light, Margaret supplicates heaven amid the congregation—the Spirit of Evil by her side. This scene is the most terrible in the tragedy. There is something appalling in the poor grief-stricken sinner seeking comfort in the church only to experience a deeper and a deadlier despair. As the solemn words of the *Dies irae* are sung by the choir, the kneeling worshippers hear what they have so often heard before, but to the distraught Margaret they are pregnant with impending doom. The Spirit of Evil interprets the solemn words in their most dreadful sense, and the wronged girl shudders and faints with fear.

Passing over the Brocken scene, we find Faust remorsefully reviewing the past. Margaret has murdered her babe, and she is condemned to die. Three deaths lie at his door—Valentine's, Margaret's, and her infant's. Faust reproaches Mephistopheles for having kept him in ignorance of Margaret's misery. They ride over a dismal plain to rescue the girl from the executioner's hands, and as they approach they hear the men at work on the gibbet they are preparing for her death. Faust finds his love on a heap of straw, her mind wandering and her voice raised in wild song. All Faust's endeavors prove unavailing; the penalty must be paid, and the poor mad creature passes to her fate.

At intervals during many years Goethe was working at the Second Part of *Faust*, and in 1831 it was at last completed. Leaving behind him his first unhappy passion, Faust passes through all conditions of culture to a final state of noble service to humanity. Goethe's creed is summed up in Faust's reply to Care when she asks him whether he has ever known her:—

"'I have gone through the world,' he answers, 'seized every enjoyment by the hair—that which did not satisfy me I let go, that which ran away from me I would not follow. I have only wished and realised my wish, and wished again, and thus have stormed through life: first great and mighty; but now I take things wisely and soberly. I know enough of this life, and of the world to come we have no clear prospect. A fool is he who directs his blinking eyes that way, and imagines creatures like himself above the clouds! Let him stand firm and look around him here; the world is not dumb to the man of real sense. What need is there for him to sweep eternity? All he can know lies within his grasp.'"

Of Goethe's other works there is no space to speak. The barest mention must suffice for his *Wilhelm Meister*, *Elective Affinities*, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, and his *Hermann und Dorothea*.

The poet's activities were not dimmed or diminished by age. The powerful intellect of the old man glows in his *Conversations with Eckermann*. As the evening darkness came on, sorrows crowded upon him. His older friends dropped one by one. Karl August died in 1828; the Duchess soon followed him to the grave. Goethe's sole surviving child, his much-loved son, died at Rome in 1830. Tended by his son's wife, and revered by all, Goethe lived till the spring of 1832. After a short illness, he passed peacefully to his death while sleeping in his chair. The body of this marvellous, many-sided man lies by that of Schiller in the Royal vault at Weimar.

T. F. PALMER.

The Church and Literature.

MUCH has been written of the services of Christianity to literature. The monks, we are told, were the preservers of ancient learning, and to their devotion must be ascribed our knowledge of the classics of Greece and Rome. How comes it, then, that so large a portion of those classics are lost? What became of the vast libraries collected by the Romans? Is it but a casual coincidence that the decline of learning and the triumph of Christianity went side by side?

In the Augustan era the library was as essential to the completeness of a house in Rome as the eating or sleeping room. Such men as Julius Cæsar, Crassus, Cicero, and Lucullus were renowned for the beauty and value of their collections of books. Authors were treated with the utmost respect, and rich men vied for their patronage. Asinius Pollio is said first to have formed a public library in Rome. The great Freethinker, Julius Cæsar, had in view a large scheme of this kind, which was defeated by his assassination. Trajan, Vespasian, and Domitian founded vast libraries. Books were common in Rome, and sold at comparatively low prices, for slaves were taught to write, and it has been calculated that in a librarian's shop a hundred copies of a work could have been written off by dictation as quickly as a compositor would set one in type. The great bulk of works then famous are now lost. Histories, epics, dramas, orations, books of philosophy and education, verses almost without number, have perished. We have but slight specimens of even the best known Latin authors. Take but the historians. Of Livy's history, once containing one hundred and forty books, all but thirty-five have disappeared. Pliny's history of his own time, in thirty-one books, is entirely missing. Of the thirty books of Tacitus we have but four and a part of the fifth. Of the Greco-Roman histories, the works of Polybius, which originally comprised forty-five books, now contain but five. Dio Cassius, once in eighty books, now shows but twenty-five. Of the history of Ammianus Marcellinus the first thirteen books are missing. Similar instances might be given in other departments of literature. The allegation that all that was of value has been preserved is sufficiently refuted by the instance of Tacitus, coupled with the fact that the five books we have are from one single manuscript, whereas we know that the Emperor Tacitus (275) ordered copies of the works of his illustrious namesake to be placed in all the libraries of the empire, with a special direction that ten copies should be made each year at the public expense. It is usual to ascribe the loss of these works to the invasions of the barbarians, but it must not be forgotten that these barbarians were remarkably amenable to the authority of the Church, and it was not until Christian asceticism had sapped the patriotic virtue of the Roman empire that the irruptions took place.

When Christianity came to power it found no young and vigorous civilisation to combat it, but an

effete and decaying civilisation that had run its course. The polytheistic superstition was universal, yet the tolerance of Rome had done much to destroy the exclusive claims of any particular deities. Culture and freethought were the property of the few. Such a civilisation was the only one which Christianity could have overcome, the only one it could safely assimilate with itself. This it only did after smothering the few pulsations of life and freethought which it contained. Christianity did not triumph by its superior culture. On the contrary, it was despised by philosophers as the pernicious superstition of slaves and fools. It triumphed by its organisation, which could utilise and assimilate the credulity and fanaticism of its followers. Its very intolerance was a means of success. The indifferent polytheist, admitting it might possibly be true, was led by mere prudence to embrace a faith declaring that it alone possessed salvation. From the primitive ages a dislike of Pagan learning was general among Christians. Warned by their spiritual guides to beware of philosophy and the knowledge which puffeth up, they despised the vain learning of a world soon to pass away. It is true those of the early Fathers who were converted from Paganism did not at once quit the philosophic temper of mind. Such men as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, and Synesius brought heathen learning to combat heathenism. But the victory once achieved, the philosophic temper declined. Claiming exclusive possession of truth, the Church was its enemy in all external learning. Physical science especially was held in avowed contempt as inconsistent with revealed truth. The Fathers exhorted the faithful to avoid all contact with Pagan culture. St. Antony, called the founder of Monachism, refused, when a boy, to learn letters, because it would bring him into too great intercourse with other boys. Under Theophilus, primate of Alexandria, the magnificent library of the Serapion was destroyed by the monks, and at a Synod held under this bishop all the works of Origen, the greatest glory of the early Christian Church, were interdicted. The fourth General Council of Carthage went so far as to forbid the reading of all Pagan books; and, says Jortin, "the bishops soon began to relish this good advice, and not to trouble their heads with literature." Mosheim also records that in the fourth century, although the emperors tried to cherish learning, their intentions were defeated by a numerous and powerful party in the Church, who "considered all learning, and especially philosophical learning, as injurious, and even destructive to true piety and godliness." The efforts of men like Julian were in vain. As Christianity extended, the number of works produced became fewer, and their merit less, so that from the sixth to the twelfth century there is scarcely an author of even the fourth or fifth rank.

Theodosius made a law (448) that the works of Porphyry should be burnt, and that all other works the doctrine of which did not conform to that of the Nicene Council, and of the Council of Ephesus, and to the decisions of St. Cyril, should be destroyed, and the concealers of them put to death. The original works of all the early opponents of Christianity, as well as of the heretics, are lost, and we have to trust to such representations of them as are found in the works of their opponents. Jortin remarks that many bishops in the General Council of Ephesus and Chalcedon could not write their own names. The learned Jerome condemned the study of profane authors, except for pious uses. He relates how, for having been too much addicted to such study, he fell into a fever, and was taken up in the night to the tribunal of Jesus, who severely reprimanded him for being rather a Ciceronian than a Christian, and for this offence he was flagellated by an angel.

Hallam, in his *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, says: "A prepossession against secular learning had taken hold of these ecclesiastics, who gave tone to the rest; it was inculcated in the most extravagant degree by Gregory I., the founder, in a great measure, of the papal supremacy, and the chief

authority in the Dark Ages." Saint Gregory is said by Brucker to have given orders that the collection of books formed by the Roman emperors, and kept in the temple of Apollo, adjoining the palace, should be burnt. In a letter to a teacher of grammar he severely censures him for polluting with hymns to Jupiter a tongue that ought to be employed in celebrating the praises of Christ. Gibbon is disposed to acquit Saint Gregory of the charge of burning the library, but certainly he was unfavorable to classical learning. Leo the Iconoclast is also accused of burning the library of the Basilica at Constantinople. One chronicler relates that he, not being able to gain the professors over to his views, imprisoned them in their college, and reduced them and their books to ashes. This improbable story has been doubted, if not disproved, by historians. Gibbon, however, believes that the library, which contained over thirty-six thousand volumes, was burned during the religious wars. Gregory VII. is also said to have burned a great number of ancient manuscripts. Even if these are only stories, their invention serves to throw some light on the spirit of the times.

Towards the close of the seventh century the manuscripts in the Papal library at Rome were so few that Pope Martin requested the Bishop of Maestricht to supply this defect from the remotest parts of Germany. Lupus Abbot, of Ferrieres, in a letter to the Pope (855), beseeches him to lend him copies of Cicero's *De Oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutions*, "for, although we have parts of these books, there is no complete copy of them in all France." The monks, too, became careless as to preserving their collection of books intact. They allowed their libraries to dwindle away under their eyes. They sold their books, gave them away, or allowed them to be stolen. It was asserted, at a council held in Rome in 992, that scarcely a single person was to be found in Rome itself who knew the first elements of letters. Not one priest of a thousand in Spain about the age of Charlemagne could address a common letter of salutation to another. In England, King Alfred declared that he knew no single priest south of the Thames (the most civilised part of England) who, at the time of his accession, understood the ordinary prayers, or could translate Latin into his mother tongue.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

"TESS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."
SIR,—If your contributor, Mr. T. H. Elstob, had, before writing, reread the intensely pathetic episode of the midnight baptism in Mr. Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, his article, "Poor Old Father," which appears in your issue for February 15, would doubtless have taken another form. It really is Tess's father who prevents her from sending for the parson to christen her child. These are Mr. Hardy's exact words: "No parson should come inside his doors, he [Tess's father] declared.....He locked the door and put the key in his pocket." Mr. Hardy, with his intimate knowledge of the clergy, many delicate hints of which are found in this very chapter, could not possibly have made the mistake of introducing a clergyman who refused to baptise the child because it was illegitimate. On the contrary, he says later on, "Hearing of the baby's illness, he [the vicar] had conscientiously come to the house after nightfall to perform the rite." Tess's interview with the vicar, and the latter's refusal to give the child a Christian burial, are doubtless introduced to lead up to and explain the intensely affecting conclusion of the chapter. Even in discussing the vicar's refusal, Mr. Hardy exhibits his full knowledge of the niceties of the theological distinctions made by the clerical mind when he says, "Unaware that the refusal to admit him had come from Tess's father and not from Tess, he could not, or would not, allow the plea of necessity for its [the baptism's] irregular administration." Of course, the moral which Mr. Hardy wishes to draw is found in the vicar's concluding words: "It will be just the same."

I am afraid that all films must be inadequate to represent the subtle beauties of Mr. Hardy's writings, but Mr. T. H. Elstob may take heart. The very episode of the midnight baptism was omitted from the *Graphic* as unsuited for its columns when *Tess* was first published, and had to find a place in the more liberal *Fortnightly Review*. A. J. LYLE.

Rosemary and Rue.

DEDICATED TO G. W. FOOTE.

For years now close upon a fleeting score
Gone but remembered with deep gratitude,
I have, with eager eyes and mind attuned,
Turned to the light that ever glowed from thee;
And here do I essay to pay my debt,
And would, with words touched by the Muses' fire,
Sing out thy praise, and scorn the epitaph,
'The Christian sop, that moulders on the tomb.

Yet I must tread the winding path of praise
With wary feet; with careful footsteps light
Must I, this road of prickly, stinging thorns
Now travel to my goal of victory.
Gibbon hath said that praise from certain men
Would be an insult to his very soul;
Yet I shall hope that my sincerity
Will haply here escape such rough, rude words.
Nigh twenty years ago my mind did lie
In priestly bondage; I did hear thy name
And from that time the jaded Christian God
Receded, crumbled, vanished like a dream;
And thou did'st lead me on to walk with those
Whose names are visioned splendor in the sky
Of Truth's fair world, where all her fragrant flowers
Are nourished by the blood and tears of men.

And who are they? The hungry wolves of hate
Have set their prey in Nature's brightest sphere.
Shelley and Byron will now shine serene
In that one Heaven, the one we know and feel;
And Swinburne, too, shall join them with his song
That scorched the robes of priests and burnt all Gods.
The realms of Truth are not so limited
That one more star could not find space to shine.
I'll mention not his name, but only say
I hate an epitaph, I hate smooth speech
When ears are closed for ever and a day;
I hate; yet stay, there are some things I love,—
The open sea, the smiling yellow fields,
Music of Brahms, the Poet's fiery song
That girds at wrong; all these things do I love,
And linked with golden chain is thy own self.

WILLIAM REPTON.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

Our love and hate have aims, but Thine
Are idle bolts at random hurled;
Impotent, hidden, yet divine,
Brood o'er Thy broken-hearted world.

Cold to the prayer of human sorrow,
Deaf to the sob of human strife,
Thou workest grandly, night and morrow,
On Thy great masterpiece of life!

For Thine own pleasure is it done,
Since art's delight is in the doing;
Thine own enjoyment, slowly won,
Is the sole end Thou art pursuing.

—Robert Buchanan.

Obituary.

At Nutley, Sussex, on February 8, in his eighty-eighth year, passed away William Barralet, an early friend of Charles Bradlaugh. He was one of the brothers Barralet, mentioned by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner in the Life of her father, of whom one still survives, who, jointly with other Freethinkers, established the Warner Place Society, to which Mr. Bradlaugh was attracted in 1848. A disciple of Robert Owen in his earlier years, though he never weakened in his Freethought opinions. He was for many years a member of the South Place Society. Cremation took place at Golder's Green on Thursday, February 12.—E. S.

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, W. Heaford, "Why Christianity Has Failed."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.45, W. Davidson, "Twice-Told Tales."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, Debate, J. G. Briggs and F. E. Willis, "Can We Follow Jesus?"

FALLSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Our Heavenly Origin."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (North Saloon, City Hall): Mrs. T. Billington-Greig, 12 noon, "Foreign Mission Frauds"; 6.30, "Faith Founded on Fear."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): Miss K. B. Kough, 3, "Christianity—A Relic"; 6.30, "Humanity Greater Than Christianity." Tea at 5.

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