

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXIV.—No. 18

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 1914

PRICE TWOPENCE

Every separate act of a religious ceremony becomes a fraud and a criminal satire when performed by a cultivated man of the nineteenth century.—MAX NORDAU.

The Wicked Atheist.

THE wicked Atheist is almost an extinct being. I do not mean the Atheist who may do something wicked, but the one who is wicked because he is an Atheist, or, more accurately, an Atheist because he is wicked. That was the original type as pictured in religious literature, and he had a very long, a flourishing, and —to the religionist—a useful career. He was the "horrible example" held up at religious meetings for the edification of the devout, and as a lesson to those with a tendency to stray. He became an Atheist because he was naturally bad, he gloated in performing deeds of villainy after he became an Atheist, and, useful to the last, he died shrieking for forgiveness to the God whose commands he had laughed at and whose forbearance he had outraged. He had a long career in the religious world. Peace to his ashes! One is rather surprised that the Churches did not combine to erect a monument to one who had served so well the sermoneer and the tract-writer.

Then gradually the world experienced "piping times of peace." Atheists became more numerous, and better known. Those who knew them observed that if they were not better than other people, they were certainly no worse. When they died they failed to raise the neighborhood with their terrified shrieks, and they never—no, never—sent in hot haste for the local parson or district visitor to explain to them the kind of hell to which they were going. So the wicked Atheist gradually disappeared. Instead of blackguarding, religionists began to sympathise with him, or to slobber over him. It was *such* a pity that so intelligent or so good a man should be an Atheist! His Atheism must be due to some accident in his career, or to want of development of some part of his nature. Perhaps he had been over-devoted to science, as in the case of Darwin; or he had met with poor types of believers who had disgusted him with religion; or it may have been that his spiritual nature was undeveloped. In any case, the Atheist came to be treated as an erring friend rather than as a social outcast. Atheists were not to be cursed; they were simply to be pitied.

Now, all at once, I have come across the wicked Atheist again. It is like meeting a long-lost friend, and I rejoice accordingly. He has been discovered away in the highlands of Scotland, and his discoverer is Mr. W. D. M. Sutherland. I haven't the ghost of a notion who Mr. Sutherland is; but every man must begin to be famous—if he is to be famous at all—and I hasten to give this gentleman all the possible publicity in my power. Mr. Sutherland is writing a series of articles in the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* on "Dangerous Types," and he gives the place of honor to the Atheist. As an Atheist, I appreciate the compliment, and thank him. There is nothing like being at the top of your profession, whatever it is, and Mr. Sutherland does not belittle the Atheist by lumping him in with a lot of miscel-

laneous and mediocre villains. He is the chief of his tribe, and Mr. Sutherland shows his courage in tackling the chief first of all. The others he will, presumably, wipe out at his leisure.

But, if I may venture a word of criticism, Mr. Sutherland is ill-advised in the opening of his article. He goes back to the time of Micah, and he points out that in his time things were pretty bad in the land of Judah. Things were then so bad, he says, that they could not be much worse. Now, if this doughty Christian went on to show that these people were Atheists, one could understand the opening of the article. But they were not, and Mr. Sutherland does not say they were. They were all pious; they belonged to God's chosen people; they were on intimate terms, so to speak, with Deity. And if under such conditions things became as bad as they could well be, it does not look as if an absence of Atheism is any guarantee of righteousness in a nation. I don't like this opening much, because it makes the Atheist's pre-eminence in wickedness sort of questionable.

Things are "vastly better with us," says Mr. Sutherland, but there are still men with us who "do evil with both hands earnestly." More, "they are many." Worse, "they are not getting fewer." And "one of the worst and most dangerous types of these men is the type we call Atheists. The type who believe, or say they believe, there is no God." Mr. Sutherland will have no half measures. "The Atheist believes there is no God." This is very bad indeed; but if the Atheist were allowed to put in a word, he might only say that he is imitating—on a more thoroughgoing scale—the example of believers. For all of them say of somebody's God that he does not exist. I do not know how many gods there are in the world; they are very plentiful, anyhow. But I do know that any Christian brushes the whole lot out of existence—save one. And nearly all the other believers follow his example. The Atheist need not trouble himself to deny the existence of God. All he need do is to go amongst believers and agree with all of them when they dismiss each other's God as a myth. And that is all the Atheist does, as a matter of fact. He agrees with the Brahman that the Christian God is a myth. He agrees with the Christian that the Brahman God is a myth. He agrees with them all—and he is black-guarded by them all for his amiability and catholicity.

Mr. Sutherland divides Atheists into classes. Some are passive, others are active. The former may be excused, it is the latter that rouses his antipathy. He says, "I call every active Atheist—and with few exceptions, every Atheist I have known has been active—has been missionary, I call every active Atheist a bad man." Mr. Sutherland could forgive the Atheist who keeps his opinions to himself, but the one who seeks to make Atheists of other people is past forgiveness; he is wholly, irredeemably bad. And the reason for this is not so much religious as it is ethical. If, he says,—

"you get men to believe there is no God—you will get them to believe there is no sin, for there is no God for them to sin against—and that there is no future state. Now what follows? What follows is this. It is a matter of simple logic. Get men possessed with the idea that there is no God, and no sin, and no future state, and they will do what seems right in their own

eyes.....Work it out in your mind. I imagine—try to imagine—the majority of men and women in this country Atheists. What will happen is this. Immorality will stalk about in broad daylight, with brazen face and cruel hands, anarchy will be rampant, and Ichabod will be written across the face of the nation's history."

There it is. The logic, as Mr. Sutherland says, is simple. If men only do right because they believe in God and in a future state, then if they cease to believe in these things, the justification for doing right will be gone. If Mr. Sutherland only refrains from stealing because he believes there is a God watching him, then it is as plain as a pikestaff that he will steal if God does not keep an eye on him. The logic of the situation is clear—much clearer, indeed, than the facts. For these are somewhat puzzling. When we look at the people who actually do wrong, who commit sin, as Mr. Sutherland would say, we find that these are not—save in a very small percentage of cases—Atheists. Certainly they are not those active Atheists whom Mr. Sutherland specially detests. Taking the inmates of our prisons, they are nearly all pious. Most of them would be genuinely shocked if they were called Atheists. In fact, I have long been conscious that as an Atheist I am not receiving value for that proportion of my rates and taxes that go in the upkeep of prisons. This is not being spent for the detention and reformation of Atheists, but almost entirely for the benefit of Theists. And this is hardly fair. Why should Atheists have to pay rates that are spent almost exclusively on Theists? There are several million non-Theists in Great Britain, in all probability, and no one can pretend that they furnish their fair proportion to the prison population. Christians are getting more than their fair share here as elsewhere.

And, again, I feel that Mr. Sutherland's warning is ill-advised. On the authority of Christians we know what a trouble it is to lead a decent life. They are always talking about "moral restraints," of the many temptations there are to do wrong, of the stern discipline needful to do right. They emphasise the attractiveness of vice and deadly dullness of virtue. Now, it is plain that, at present, Atheists have not awakened to this view of the subject. If they are really "doing evil with both hands earnestly," they are evidently not aware of it. They are under the impression that virtue is really more attractive than vice, that the latter imposes more "restraints" than the former, and that people can be good without God and the future state. They may be laboring under a delusion, but they think so. They think that friends, and family, and society remain just what they are whether there is a God or not. They foolishly, perhaps, think that duty and loyalty in these directions bring their own rewards, and that nothing further is necessary.

In all of this they may be wrong, but at least they think so, and they apparently act up to it. And is it wise of Mr. Sutherland to go about disabusing their minds, pointing out that there is reason why they should behave themselves, and inviting them to a career of villainy, so long as they retain their present opinions? Why should Mr. Sutherland go round disturbing the faith of these poor, simple-minded Atheists, and encourage them to start out on a career of vice? Mr. Sutherland gives his reason. It is because the Atheist "is doing his best to ruin the immortal souls of his neighbors, and because he is threatening his country with the greatest and worst peril—the substituting of immorality and anarchy for religion and law." But, surely, the power of religion over the minds of those who believe should be proof against the attacks of the Atheist? Surely, the high character evoked, the discipline enforced by religion, should be proof against both immorality and anarchy? The value of all training lies in its power to evoke the quality of resistance that is necessary, and the discipline of religion should by now have made its followers secure. It almost looks as though Mr. Sutherland is afraid of Atheism; as though he feels that when

the Atheist sets out on his missionary labors religion can hardly withstand his attack.

Mr. Sutherland's warning would be incomplete without historic examples. "If Atheism," he says, "ever becomes dominant, this fair land of ours—this great land—will be doomed and go down in darkness and disaster as surely as every other land in which it became dominant was doomed." Rather vague, but still impressive. It does not say where Atheism was dominant, or in what lands it has been dominant. That would have been to distract its readers' attention with queries as to whether the lands mentioned really were atheistic or not. So one is left with the general impression that all "doomed" lands were somehow or other atheistic. This is a wise policy, and shows that Mr. Sutherland, if he has the innocence of the dove, is not without the cunning of the serpent. Francis Bacon was of opinion that Atheism did never perturb states, and that it left a man to sense, to philosophy, and to natural piety. But Bacon lived a long while ago. And he was not an essay-writer for the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*.

C. COHEN.

The Reign of Cant.

LIKE many other words, "cant" comes to us from the Greek. Originally, *kanthos* denotes the corner of the eye, or the iron which bounds a wheel. In its Latin form, *canthus*, it bears practically the same meaning. Primarily, then, "cant" signifies a corner, angle, niche, and from this all its other meanings are derived. So, likewise, to cant is primarily to incline, set an angle, tilt over, tip upon the edge. The passage from the primary to some of the secondary significations is exceedingly difficult to trace; but it is to be borne in mind that in all its varieties of meaning, "cant" represents something on the slant, something that lies obliquely to something else, a departure from the natural and simple. Thus a canting rogue is a vile person who employs the language of honesty and honor, and a canting hypocrite one who resorts to all sorts of expedients to prevent his hypocrisy from becoming known. Some there are who maintain that we owe the word "cant" in its secondary connotations to two Scottish preachers and leaders of the Covenanters, who flourished at the commencement of the seventeenth century, and whose surname happened to be Cant. It was a characteristic of those men of God that they cursed all who made use of the Prayer Book, and advocated the excommunication of those who refused the Covenant, while in their grace before meal they invariably "prayed for all those who suffered persecution for their religious opinions." In reality the Cants did but furnish an apt illustration of this modern meaning of the term. Ben Jonson, a little earlier than the Cants, uses the word in the sense of professional slang in the following lines:—

"The doctor here,
When he discourses of dissection,
Of *vena cava* and of *vena porta*.....
What does he do but cant? Or if he run
To his judicial astrology,
And trowl out the *trine*, the *quartile*, and the *sextile*.
Does he not cant?"

Now, ethically speaking, in all forms of cant there is an element of insincerity, of conscious or unconscious deceit. It is said of Zachary Macaulay that he "never canted" (*Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, p. 68), by which saying is meant that he did not speak theoretically, sentimentally, or as the mouthpiece of a party, but from direct observation and knowledge of the facts in any given case. The majority of people, however, indulge continually in mind-corrupting cant. They belong to a faction, or represent a system, loyalty to which, at whatever cost to individual conviction, is their all-controlling principle. This is profoundly true of politicians at the present time. You know exactly what they will say on every conceivable subject, if you are aware of the views of the party to which they may happen to

belong. Each political party has its Shibboleths upon the correct pronunciation of which it rigorously insists, with the result that if any member, on any occasion, says Sibboleth, he is cast out as a cumberer of political ground. This naturally leads to political dishonesty and dishonor, to the sinking of individual personality in that of the party as expressed by its leaders. Party government is, consequently, bound to be more or less corrupt and corrupting. And yet it is in religion that cant is seen at its lowest and worst. Religious factions are more numerous and more bitterly exclusive than all other factions combined. To know a person's religious opinions you only require to ascertain to which denomination he or she is attached. There is always a pope, a creed, or some common law or other, by whom or which people's religious views are determined and controlled. The Anglican Church is peculiar in that it embraces within its pale three great and distinct schools, the High, the Broad, and the Low; and, as a rule, you have only to look at a clergyman to discover in which school to locate him. "I can smell a Presbyterian forty miles," brutally exclaimed cruel Judge Jeffreys at the Bloody Assizes on Sedgemoor; but brutal as the exclamation was on that infamous occasion, it was merely an exaggeration of a fact patent to all. Enter any church or chapel you please, and you need not wait long to learn what set of beliefs it stands for. Why, it is plainly written on the very countenance of almost every professing Christian what brand of Shibboleths he or she is in the habit of pronouncing. Well, the inevitable consequence is, that cant is on the throne in every Christian community, and that there can be no such thing as absolute religious sincerity. Woe to anyone who has the audacity to say *Sibboleth* when all around him are shouting *Sibboleth*. The best Christian is nothing but a faithful parrot repeating phrases carefully stored up in the memory.

Webster defines cant as "the use of religious phraseology without understanding or sincerity; empty, solemn speech, implying what is not felt; hypocrisy." That definition is inaccurate only in so far as it regards cant as implying the absence of feeling. We know from experience that the holiest cant ever uttered is often most profoundly felt; but we also know by the same means that feeling is the most unreliable thing under the sun. Let any born orator play in his own inimitable style upon the keys of the heart, and there is instantly a whole flood of emotional response. George Whitefield had only to intone the word "Mesopotamia" with his wonderful voice, which was like silver bells in tune, to make his hearers cry out in the intensity of their feeling. Yes, the worst cant ever conceived is often most tremendously felt even by the canter himself. What is a canter? "A person given to hypocritical ranting, specifically, in the seventeenth century, a Puritan"; but then it is possible for a man to play the hypocrite quite successfully to himself, a feat which countless myriads are perpetually performing. We must not forget that there is unconscious as well as conscious hypocrisy. The difference between the two is that there is hope for the victims of the former, while those of the latter are quite hopeless.

Our contention is that all technically religious utterances are unadulterated cant. Take the popular pulpit talk about God and Christ. In public prayers and discourses God is invariably referred to as being absolutely supreme. He sits upon the throne of the Universe as Lord of lords and King of kings. He is also described as the greatest of all workers; and while his servant is on his knees or standing as his spokesman in the pulpit, he is everything and the servant nothing. But the moment the preacher ceases to pray to and speak about God, he acts and calls upon his people to act as if they did everything and the Divine Being nothing at all. Billy Sunday, the eccentric American evangelist, talks endlessly about the all-saving power of the Cross, the all-conquering Christ; but as he was entering his motor-car after one of his sensational meetings, a drunken

man accosted him, to whom the man of God spoke thus:—

"Hello, old chap. Just cut away from the dirty whisky gang, and come around to-night and I will fix you up. Straighten up now and be a man. Here's two apples for you."

Outside the tabernacle Billy was an entirely different man, quite equal to doing the job himself. What infinite twaddle flows unceasingly from the pulpits of Christendom week after week, and yet how quickly it is forgotten when work has to be done, which can only be accomplished by exclusively human agencies.

Or take the cant about the indestructible, ineffaceable religious instinct said to be implanted in every human being, whose natural and irresistible cry is the following:—

"As the heart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."

—Psalms xlii. 12.

We are confidently assured that there is not a tribe, however savage, without its idea of and desire for a deity. It is not at all uncommon to define man as a being who cannot help being religious, and who must have an object of worship above the skies. Big books have been published and innumerable sermons preached in confident support of this thesis. Do the authors and preachers really believe what they so earnestly advocate? Apparently they do as long as they play the part of theoretical apologists for their religion; but no sooner are they ever so remotely threatened with the withdrawal of religious instruction from Government supported and controlled schools than they recklessly fling their theological thesis to the four winds, exclaiming, "Once the secular system of education has been introduced the Christian religion shall be doomed to complete extinction." In the same way, as they sorrowfully witness the gradual secularisation of the Sabbath, they angrily say to the spirit of the age: "You wicked thief, why do you rob us of our field-day? If you succeed in entirely stealing this day from us, you will sound the deathknell of Christianity itself."

No one takes religion seriously, not even the preacher himself. In practice every Christian is an Atheist. In reality no living being trusts in God. Even those who pretend to believe in special providence take good care to be their own providence as far as ever they can. On Sunday the man of God authoritatively calls upon his hearers to rely alone upon the Lord, which some of them do sentimentally while the Lord's Day lasts; but for the rest of the week they all rely upon themselves as wholly as if there were no God to rely on. Religious belief does not count in life's daily struggle, thereby proving itself to be the merest cant. But the reign of cant even in the emotional realm is at last seriously menaced; while the reign of reason and common sense, which will be the reign of the people, is looming higher and higher as the sure promise of the future. The passing of the gods has always meant, and always will mean, the COMING OF MAN.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Phenomena of Procreation.

THE father of all life is the sovereign sun, and from that early day in the history of our world when our solar sire came wooing the virginal earth the offspring of their union have ever been endowed with the powers of reproduction.

Organic reproduction is a form of growth which assumes the function of generating new organisms from existing organisms more or less similar in character. All individual organisms, both animals and plants, tend to lose their vigor as they grow older, and death is then a mere matter of time. Their power to produce descendants is therefore essential to the perpetuation of the species. Countless reasons exist for the belief that the first living creatures were one-celled plants and animals, and that from such simple organisms all succeeding forms have

been evolved by the moulding energies of all-creating Nature.

As all are now aware, single-celled animals like the amoeba, paramecium, and others reproduce themselves by mechanical division of their cell-bodies into two equal halves. The two new organisms thus formed act precisely like their parent cell; they feed and grow, and when they reach the limit of growth they themselves divide until in a short time a numerous family is established. The paramecia, for example, when favorably circumstanced, divide about three times in forty-eight hours, which means that the original paramecium splits into two, these into four, and these again into eight in a couple of days.

In a certain sense these lowly creatures are immortal, as the parent cell, although it sacrifices its individuality when it reproduces, never, apart from accident or disease, can it become worn out to the point of death. For as soon as it attains its maximum size it divides into two young animals, and this process is by them repeated generation after generation.

This persistent procreation is, however, subject to an important limitation. In certain circumstances the paramecia arrive at a time when self-division ceases. At this period conjugation becomes necessary, and this is consummated in the following manner: Two of these organisms come together, and through their tender cell-walls part of the nucleus of each one travels across to join the nucleus of the other. Being thus rejuvenated, the two tiny creatures separate, division recommences, and their descendants continue to reproduce themselves for some considerable time before conjugation is again called for. Very many other unicellular organisms have been observed in the act of conjugation.

One-celled plants perpetuate themselves in a similar way: bacteria, yeast, and the green coating on walls and tree-trunks are all examples of this nature. The organisms above mentioned illustrate a type of reproduction in which sex plays no part. The individual cells are sexless, but all possess the power of procreating their kind. With them the generative process merely takes the form of constant growth and multiplication, and is therefore termed asexual reproduction. Sexual generation, which is so general among the higher plants and animals, is to these simple organisms unknown.

But the genesis of sexual generation is soon detected in the ascending order of life, just as reminiscences of an earlier asexual generative process are encountered among the many-celled or multicellular plants and animals. The hydra reproduces itself asexually in conditions of abundant nourishment, and other favoring circumstances. The animal throws out a bud which develops in a few days into a miniature hydra. This soon separates from the parent body, and commences an independent life. In a normally suitable environment the hydra grows apace, and several buds may be developed at the same time, and the young animals thus begotten begin to reproduce themselves soon after their detachment from their parent. But in less propitious conditions, where the water is stagnant and food is scarce, the growth of the hydra is arrested and budding ceases. The animal now evolves sexual structures (ovaries and spermaries), which develop egg-cells and sperm-cells.

"When the spermaries of a hydra are mature, the sperm-cells escape and swim freely in the water. A single ovum or egg-cell develops in an ovary, and is fertilised by the entrance of a single sperm-cell. The fertilised egg-cell forms an embryo, and becomes surrounded by a hard shell or cyst. The protected embryo falls to the bottom of the pond, and it may remain there for some time. Dry dust scraped from the bottoms of ponds during midsummer drought may contain embryos which will develop into hydras soon after being placed in water."

Fundamentally considered, reproduction is what Huxley described as continuous and discontinuous growth, and this underlying principle is made abundantly clear by a further procreative characteristic

which this same interesting and instructive hydra displays. If a hydra be severed into two or more pieces, each fragment will develop into a perfect hydra. This very remarkable aspect of reproductive power comes under the heading of regeneration. Regenerative phenomena are by no means special to the hydra. A divided earthworm will develop into two perfect worms; a starfish may be broken into pieces, and each will refashion itself into a complete animal. Far higher organisms, such as frogs and lizards, will regenerate lost tails or toes. It is not suggested that regeneration is a normal generative process, but its existence proves the close kinship between procreation and body growth.

The colonial hydroids are near relatives of the hydra, and these animals produce buds which do not wander from the parent organism, but remain attached, and grow into branches resembling those of a tree. A single hydroid which itself has arisen from an egg will in this manner develop into a tree-like group which displays a hydroid at the tip of each twig. Some of the hydroids change into medusæ or jelly-fishes, separate from the colony, swim in the water, and generate eggs and sperms. Each fertilised egg grows into a young hydroid, which fixes itself to some solid surface, and then, by repeated budding, a new tree-like colony is formed.

The majority of worms are sexually generated, but some reproduce themselves asexually. Certain marine worms develop new organisms at their anterior segments; occasionally several such segments may be seen, so that the parent worm has become a chain of young worms. In course of time the chain breaks up, and the various individuals which formed it in its unbroken state are now enabled to begin an independent life.

In the vegetable kingdom, especially under cultivation, asexual reproduction is almost universal. Plants frequently propagate themselves without the aid of their generative organs. And some of the most striking examples are to be found among those plants whose sexual apparatus is most perfectly developed. Although these normally reproduce themselves from seeds which are formed by the agencies of floral structures, they may be as well, or better, produced from roots, cuttings, and even leaves.

The runners of the strawberry plant are prostrate branches which, at some distance from their parent, take root in the soil and send up a vertical stem, while the runner withers away. The plant thus spreads itself over a wide area; as many as fifty new plants may be established in this manner in a single summer. Fruit bushes extend themselves by producing new plants from subterranean branches which assume the functions of roots. The fallen leaves of the bryophyllum will develop into independent growths of this garden plant. A leaf or even a fragment of a begonia leaf will form a perfect plant. Many beautiful flowering growths flourish better when bulbs are set in preference to seeds. The hyacinth, narcissus, daffodil, the tulip and crocus, and various lilies are always most successfully cultivated from bulbs.

In purely natural conditions, where the presence of the gardener is unknown, numerous blossoming plants will propagate asexually from roots, leaves, stems, and bulbs. Under cultivation, slips from almost any botanical growth may be made to take root in conditions natural to the plant. Among favorite flowering plants, the geranium supplies an instance of this. Cuttings from the vine and the willow almost invariably take root and flourish in a suitable soil.

Our standard choice fruits cannot be secured from seed-sown trees; grafting and budding are the only known methods for the certain propagation of the finest varieties of apples, pears, peaches, plums, and cherries. The cultivated tubers of the potato plant, which are in reality the thickened branches of the underground stem, will, when planted, reproduce the excellent qualities of that useful vegetable; but no potatoes worth eating can be produced from seed.

Seedless apples are necessarily propagated from cuttings:—

"The millions of seedless orange trees in California have descended from a single tree which grew from seed but could not itself produce seed. Without man's help, such a variety could not have multiplied."

Phanerogams are those vegetable forms that normally propagate by seeds which are produced in the floral organs or sexual structures of these flower-bearing plants. A glance at the reproductive structures and functions of a bean plant will illustrate the general laws which govern the fertilising processes of blossom-bearing vegetation as a whole. The bean will grow almost anywhere, and anyone sufficiently interested can therefore easily acquire first-hand knowledge by watching the plant as it passes through its successive stages of development.

The bean flower is more or less familiar to all; its color and beauty attract the most careless observer. Nor is its striking appearance merely accidental, for its arresting loveliness serves to secure the visits of those insects that are essential to the production of its seeds. When, in search of honey, the bee alights on the petals of the flower,—

"the stigma and the upper part of the style are exposed and pollen is brushed on the bee's body by the hairs of the style. Then the bee goes to another flower, and when its style touches the bee's body, the stigma will touch some pollen from the first flower; and at the same time the hairs of the style will brush on to the bee some pollen from the second flower. And so, as the bee goes from flower to flower, it will brush pollen-dust on stigmas and get pollen-dust brushed out from the anthers by the hairs on the styles below the stigmas. There is very little chance that the stigma of a flower will get pollen-dust from anthers in the same flower. This may sometimes happen when a bee leaves a flower and at once goes back to it, carrying pollen-dust received on its first visit."

The preceding quotation will probably become clearer to the non-botanical reader if a brief description of the sex organs of flowering plants is appended. The male organ is the stamen, which is made up by the stalk or filament, and the anther which bears tiny grains of pollen. In the middle of the flower is the female organ, the pistil, which consists of the ovary and the style which extends upwards and has the stigma at its termination.

As we have shown, self-pollination is usually prevented and cross-pollination most frequently secured. Darwin, in the course of lengthy and elaborate experiments, kept beans protected with netting which prevented all access of insects to the flowers, with the result that seeds seldom formed. There is now little doubt that the agency of insects is indispensable to the production of healthy seeds. When the pollen particles have once been placed on the stigma they soon swell, and each pollen grain sends forth a delicate tube which grows down into the tissues of the style and enters into an ovule in the ovary. There the pollen tube embraces an egg cell, and the passage of the protoplasm from the end of the pollen tube into the egg-cell consummates the act of fertilisation. In a very short time the fertilised egg-cell splits up into many cells, and these form an embryo within the ovule which develops into a seed.

Among non-flowering plants is the fern, whose generative processes are, consequently, of a less evolved order. The stems of our native ferns are usually semi-prostrate on the soil or buried from view beneath the earth, although the noble tree ferns of the tropics have splendid upright stems. Fern fronds bear on their under surfaces elevations and ridges entirely foreign to anything seen on the leaves of flowering plants. These structures contain spore-cases (sporangia) which develop spores. When the sporangia are ripe, they burst and scatter their contained spores over the surrounding soil, from which they suck up water and begin to germinate. The first stage of the developing fern is that of the prothallium, which, when full grown, evolves male and female organs on its under side. Each ovary develops an ovum, and each spermium produces numerous

spiral sperm-cells provided with cilia. These cilia act as swimming-organs, and the sperm-cells are urged through the water previously absorbed from the soil, and move towards the opening of the ovary, and once inside, they come into contact with the egg-cell. One sperm-cell suffices to ensure this act of fertilisation.

The egg-cell now divides itself again and again; an embryo is evolved, and this develops into a small fern plant. We thus see that the ordinary fern first reproduces asexually by means of spores which grow into prothallia, and then these, in their turn, reproduce with the aid of sexual organs, and generate new fern plants. These phenomena furnish an excellent example of the law of the alternation of generations.

Spore development represents an earlier evolutionary process of procreation, which was once universal among the ancestors of the blossom-bearing plants. Traces of this more primitive mode of reproduction are still to be detected in the floral structures of the highest order of plants. Detailed study of plant morphology has revealed the fact "that inside the pistil of flowers are microscopic groups of cells which represent the prothallium that lives independently as a stage in the life-history of ferns and other lower plants."*

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

The Idea of God not Universal.—III.

(Concluded from p. 267.)

"The assertion generally passes current that the idea of an Omnipotent Being is familiar to all people, even the most barbarous. My limited experience argues the contrary. Savages begin with fetishism and demon-worship,....the deity is the last and highest pinnacle of the spiritual temple, not placed there except by a comparatively civilised race of high development, which leads them to study and speculate upon cosmical and psychical themes."—SIR RICHARD BURTON, *First Footsteps in Africa*, p. 50.

"If we may believe the testimony of travellers,—who are generally prejudiced in the opposite direction, and who frequently implant their own belief, which is found there by subsequent voyagers,—there are not only isolated tribes, but whole nations who are so degraded as to live with no knowledge of their Creator."—REV. F. W. FARRAR, "On the Universality of Belief in God, and in a Future State," *Anthropological Journal* (August, 1864), ccxvii.

"And in what condition are these, or the other Indians who are still scattered up and down in the vast continent of South or North America? Religion they have none; no public worship of any kind! God is not in all their thoughts."—REV. JOHN WESLEY, "The Imperfections of Human Knowledge," *Wesley's Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 181.

"It is impossible to take religion in its strict sense as the faculty of believing in a God; if so, half of the population of the globe would be destitute of it. Taking Buddhism alone there are three or four hundred million votaries of this 'religion without God, founded on charity amounting to madness' (Laboulaye)."—DR. PAUL TOPINARD, *Anthropology*, p. 152.

MR. LAUDER LINDSAY cites the statement of Dr. Mouat, who says of the Andaman Islanders:—

"They have no conception of a Supreme Being. They have never risen from the effects they see around them to the most imperfect notion of a Cause. They have never ascended in thought from the works to a Creator, or even to many creators—that is to say Polytheism" (Mouat, *Adventures and Researches among the Andaman Islanders* (1863), p. 303).

He also quotes the testimony of Lieutenant Low, of H.M. Indian Navy, who similarly remarks of them: "They do not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, and perform no religious ceremony of any sort" (Low, *The Land of the Sun* (1870), p. 168).†

"Of the inhabitants of Pleasant Island, Mr. T. Beckford Simpson tells us, 'They have no religion of any kind, neither do they believe in a future state, but they appear to have some slight idea of an evil spirit.'‡

* Bigelow, *Reproduction of Organisms*, p. 389.

† Lauder Lindsay, *Mind in Animals*, p. 206.

‡ Pickering, *Races of Man*, p. 62.

Mr. Bonwick, in his work on the Tasmanians, has compiled a long list of tribes and races without belief in a God, from which we extract the following:—

"Mr. Bates says that the Mandurens of South America have 'no idea of a Supreme Being.' Sir Samuel Baker declares that the Nile 'flows through a land of barbarians without a belief in God.' There is not a trace of it among the Papuans of New Guinea or the Negritos of the Phillipine Isles. Mr. B. H. Hodgson found no word in the Tamil language of India for God or Soul. Dr. Mouat calls the Andamanders 'mere undeveloped children,' and records, 'They have no conception of a Supreme Being. Mr. Mouhot refers to the wild Bannavs of the forests of Annam as having 'no idea of a Supreme Being, Sovereign, and Creator of all things.'"

The Rev. F. W. Farrar tells us that when Wallace, the naturalist, was among the wild tribes of the Moluccas and New Guinea,—

"he endeavored to ascertain what were their ideas respecting the Creator of the universe, but he could only get from them a confession of total ignorance of the subject. It was difficult to distinguish the real opinions of those savages from the opinions they had heard. If they were told by any traveller that there was an invisible Creator of the Universe, so far as they were capable of receiving such an idea, they would receive it, and repeat it afterwards when questioned on the subject; but so far as he was able to ascertain, they had no such idea whatever. They had no desire for knowledge, but were contented to go on in their own ways. They have, indeed, some vague ideas of the existence of unknown powers; diseases, for instance, were supposed to be unnatural, and to be caused by some supernatural agency, but that was very different from the belief in a God. The intellectual capacities of those tribes were so feeble that he doubted whether they could be made to appreciate or understand what was meant by a God."†

The Rev. F. W. Farrar cites many other travellers to the same effect, and in his paper on the subject, given to the Anthropological Society, he said—

"his object in bringing the subject before the Society was to obtain testimony on one side or the other. He should have been delighted if the opinions he had stated, on the authority of various travellers, had been refuted by other travellers; and that was his main object in bringing the question forward" (ccxxi).

Surely, one would think if testimony to the contrary existed, it would scarcely have escaped the search and inquiry of such a widely read critic.

But if all the savage tribes existing to-day believed in a God, yet there must have been a time when they had no such belief. For if man has evolved, by slow degrees, through countless ages, from lower animal forms, as science proves, then the belief in a God must have arisen at some time since he evolved from animal to man. There is no race at present existing without a language, yet there must have been a time, during the early evolution of man, when he was like the lower animals—speechless.

But the evidence which the Rev. F. W. Farrar failed to find, the late Mr. Andrew Lang attempted to provide in his book, *The Making of Religion* (1898), in which he attacks Sir John Lubbock, who, in his works *Prehistoric Times* and *The Origin of Civilisation*, deals with the evolution of religion. He also states that these works have been "confuted" by M. Roskoff, of Vienna, who has devoted one entire section of his work on the religion of savages to a criticism of the same works.

Shortly before his death, Sir John Lubbock (Lord Avebury) published a reply to his critics in his last work, *Marriage, Totemism, and Religion* (1911), in which he observes:—

"Mr. Lang's view of the whole subject is not only very different from, but the very opposite of mine. He believes that the lowest savages had a simple, pure, and beautiful religion which gradually deteriorated; while I believe that our primitive ancestors started without religion, and that, speaking generally, as they rose in civilisation their religious conceptions rose with them.

So far as religion is concerned, Mr. Lang believes in a golden age long past and succeeded by one of iron" (p. 156).

To use Mr. Lang's own words, among "the lowest savages there exists, not a doctrinal and abstract Monotheism, but a belief in a moral, powerful, kindly, creative Being."* "Turning to races yet higher in material culture, we find a crowd of hungry and cruel gods" (p. 280). And "The Supreme Being is succeeded in advancing civilisation, and under the influence of animism, by ruthless and insatiable ghost-gods, full of the worst human qualities. Thus there is what we may really call degeneration, moral and religious, inevitably accompanying early progress" (p. 276).

In reply to this curious attempt to read evolution backward, Lord Avebury replies:—

"Why should men proffer costly sacrifices and bribes to the inferior deities, rather than prayer to the Supreme? What evidence is there that savages ever had any living faith in their 'High Gods' or ever did pray to them? Mr. Lang's theory seems most improbable, and only to be accepted if supported by the strongest evidence. He looks to a golden age in the past; I hope for one in the future. He devotes a considerable portion of his important work on *The Making of Religion* to cases of clairvoyance and second-sight, crystal-gazing, and demoniacal possession, and dwells on the stories of Mr. Home floating out at one window and in at another; of Mrs. Piper, Miss X., etc., etc. Speaking of such superstitions, he says: 'I regard them, though they seem shadowy, as grounds of hope, or at least as tokens that men need not yet despair.

"For my part, I look forward with hope; but if I were to despair, it would be to see some of our ablest intellects still clinging to the most childish superstitions of the darkest ages and the lowest savages."†

Lord Avebury then deals in detail with the evidence brought forward by Mr. Lang in support of his theory, and shows that it will not stand examination.

M. Roskoff's attack is somewhat different to Mr. Lang's. He attacks Lord Avebury for holding that the lowest savages have no religion whatever—an interesting question about which many big books have been written. But, before dealing with this question, it would be well to understand something of the modes and capabilities of thought among primitive races.

W. MANN.

Keats and Colvin.

".....that special strain of underbreeding which Keats shared with Leigh Hunt."—SIR SIDNEY COLVIN, *Times*.

Sir Sidney Snob prates of Keats' "unbreeding,"

After a hundred years have swelled his fame;

Dead but five days, e'en snobs will be unheeding

Alike Sir Sidney's breeding, birth, and name.

V. B. N.

WHAT ABOUT ADAM?

Assuredly we must believe

That man has been eclipsed by madam;

We hear so much of Christmas Eve,

And never a word of Christmas Adam.

KIKUYU "HOWLERS."

A class of London Schoolboys has just been asked to write essays on "Kikuyu." Here are some extracts:—

"The three bishops were overworked and were in need of a long holiday."

"They objected to the services being given in Scotch."

"The extreme heat experienced in these districts upset the bishops and made them quarrel."—*Public Opinion*.

There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbors good. One person I have to make good; myself. But my duty to my neighbor is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy—if I can.—*Robert Louis Stevenson*.

* Bonwick, *Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians*, p. 170.

† Rev. F. W. Farrar, *Anthropological Journal* (August, 1864), ccxx.

* Lang, *The Making of Religion*, p. 278.

† Lord Avebury, *Marriage, Totemism, and Religion*, pp. 160-1.

Acid Drops.

We have received the following letter from a Staffordshire clergyman, and this seems as good a place as any in which to deal with it. It runs:—

"A week or two ago, when in Birmingham, a man politely offered me a new copy (April 5) of the *Freethinker*, and asked me to read it. My being in holy orders accounted probably for his offer. Well, Mr. Editor, I have read nearly all of it and I am writing to ask why it is published? I could say a good deal more and ask a lot more questions, but I will only ask that and one other. What grounds have we for believing that so-called 'Freethought' (such as contained in the issue of April 5) can possibly appeal to men's intellect, or, rather, to intellectual men? The man in Birmingham, I am sure, means well, and he could not have been more polite; but I cannot conceive why he and others should want to busy themselves in such a way."

We are not surprised that the *Freethinker* does not appeal very powerfully to a gentleman in "holy orders," although it has hit the mark now and then even in that direction. Still, we should have thought that even a clergyman would have realised why this paper is published. Its object is to say what cannot be said in other papers; and, moreover, express what a large number of people feel to be the truth but cannot themselves say—partly because they may lack the power of putting their thoughts into words, partly because they dare not. The primary purpose of the *Freethinker* is to tell the truth about religion. And the clergy need to be told this as well as other people. This may have been the reason why the Birmingham *Freethinker* handed the rev. gentleman a copy of this paper.

We could not forbear a smile at the question, Whether we thought the *Freethinker* would appeal to intellectual men? In all seriousness, whom else should it appeal to? It does not pander to people's love of sensationalism, or to their taste for pruriency. It does not trade on their passions, play on their emotions, or make profit out of their fears. To some intellects the *Freethinker* would not, of course, appeal. To people, for example, who have been used to soaking themselves in sermons, and who have seriously come to take them for great intellectual efforts. For sheer brainwork we have no hesitation in placing the *Freethinker* beside any paper in England; and this reverend gentleman would be considerably surprised did he know the class of people who read its pages and more or less agree with its teachings. It is one of the carefully nurtured slanders of the religious world that the *Freethinker* is a journal written by illiterate men for illiterate readers. We would seriously advise our questioner to place the *Freethinker* beside any religious journal in the kingdom and compare the quality of both.

Finally, why should we and others busy ourselves in this way? One can only reply, Why not? Our questioner cannot conceive why we should. So much the worse for him, and so much the worse for the credit of the training which has landed him in "holy orders." The promulgation of what one believes to be the truth is one of the greatest of social duties, for the discharge of which the discovery of truth is only a preparation. The *Freethinker* believes he has got hold of the truth about religion; if not the whole of the truth, at least more of it than the Christian possesses. And, believing this, he sets out to enlighten the Christian and rid him of his error. Imagine a Christian minister, who should be always on the look out to convert people to his way of thinking, wondering why other people should be engaged at the same work. Or perhaps it is that, as the *Freethinker* has no future rewards to offer, and no future punishments to threaten, our clerical questioner is puzzled to understand why anyone should bother himself in the matter. And if that is so, we can only reply again, so much the worse for him and his creed. A more human creed would have developed a keener sense of social responsibility. It would certainly have caused him to better appreciate the efforts of men, inspired by no hopes of material gain or public applause, going out of their way to confer upon others some of the truth they have themselves discerned.

"Dante's conception of God was one of hideous malignity, Milton's merely puerile." Thus writes a penman in the *Times*. Maybe the journalist prefers the deity of Bramwell Booth or Gipsy Smith.

The *Daily Chronicle* has been complaining of degenerate journalism on the part of the Tory press, which is accused of using such terms as "liar," "rogue," "bully," "traitor," in referring to Liberal ministers. Such quotations could be paralleled easily from the utterances of the Christian

Evidence lecturers, but, as they are only aimed at Free-thought leaders, the "Liberal" press never notices them.

Temperance propaganda is very vigorous in America, and water is used instead of wine in the communion services at the churches. Certainly water would be preferable to the red ink and vinegar used in some places of worship.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton suggests the new name of "The Limits" as a suitable one for the modern democrats. As G. K. C. adds that "the devils also believe and tremble" at democracy, we agree that the title is suitable in some cases.

American speakers have a fondness for Biblical illustrations in their speech, and frequently the references are somewhat apocryphal. Mr. Thornton, the new manager of the Great Eastern Railway, in his first speech in England, said, "I have always had a great respect for Daniel, the original lion-tamer. When he was in the den of lions they roared, and Daniel smiled because he knew there would be no after-dinner speaking."

According to an insurance expert, the clergy are negligent concerning the risk of fire in the churches under their care, and do not insure them. This is strange, for the parsons are always shouting "fire" in their pulpits.

There is nothing like a good mouth-filling phrase for satisfying the ordinary religionist. Here, for instance, is one from the *Christian Commonwealth*. It is given as a definition of religion: "Religion is the activity of a highly evolved intuition which pierces to and responds to a supersensible reality that attracts it." We take a deep breath, and with a slight rearrangement read it backwards. "A supersensible reality attracts a highly evolved intuition and constitutes religion." It does just as well. That is the beauty of a deeply religious formula. However you take it, it answers the purpose in an equally satisfactory manner. We wonder what Mr. J. Bruce Wallace—the writer of the sentence—imagines it to mean? Try and imagine a religious savage—and all savages are religious—exercising the "activity of a highly evolved intuition"—which men like Spencer and Darwin and Wagner did not possess—and so getting into touch "with a supersensible reality." Intuition, like instinct, is a word with a meaning, but religious writers rarely seem to be aware of what it means. As it is, they use it as a cover for the first piece of nonsense that comes into their minds. And their readers accept it as profound philosophy because they are in the same condition of ignorance.

Mr. Wallace also discovers that the "main function of science in the service of religion is to destroy effete thought-moulds that have become limitations to the religious consciousness." Really, we were not aware that there was such a thing as a "religious consciousness" any more than there is a heat consciousness. There is a consciousness of religion and there is a consciousness of heat. But this is quite another matter. The functions of every human brain are absolutely identical, the difference arises solely in the degree of development. And as to science liberating the "religious consciousness," we were under the impression that the great work of science had been to show that the things which were accepted as evidence of the truth of religion were really nothing of the kind. That is what science did when it killed spiritual agency in astronomy, in geology, in biology, in chemistry, in the causation of plagues, diseases, insanity, and in other directions. Science has been all along proving that phenomena believed to be religious were really nothing of the kind. Mr. Wallace may call this the liberation of the religious consciousness; other people, not in the habit of drugging themselves with words, will see in it the destruction of one religious belief after another.

The Vicar of St. Luke's, Nottingham, has been complaining of the behavior of the people who come to his church to be married. Some of them, he says, come there in a state of intoxication. The vicar says he would much prefer that they went to a registry office to get married. This is very kind and thoughtful of the Rev. F. J. Taylor, but we can assure him that we have never heard of people going to a registry office in a state of intoxication to get married. Evidently that kind of thing is confined to religious circles.

The Archdeacon of Bath has been warning the clergy under his control of the need for adequately insuring their churches against fire. What on earth is the matter with prayer?

According to a London evening paper, a blind reporter is to report football matches and record his impressions. We fancy deaf, dumb, and blind representatives of the ordinary press attend Freethought meetings, for their reports never get published.

An American missionary named Tridick has been killed by a lion near Khartoum. Perhaps he upset the animal by singing "Dare to be a Daniel."

Writing in *Lloyd's Weekly News*, the Rev. Charles Brookes, vicar of Ravensthorpe, Northampton, says: "After all, death is nothing more than the end of our lives here, and that we shall go on living a fuller, freer, happier life than any we can hope for here on earth." Is this a free advertisement of the Kingdom-Come business.

A female patient in the Physico-Medical Institution at Kieff, who died, had a temperature of 122 degrees Fahrenheit for some days during her illness, and twice it rose to 140 degrees. The lady should suffer little discomfort even if she went to the wrong place.

The *Catholic Times* is very angry with Sir T. S. Clouston, the eminent surgeon. "With the unashamed and hardened ignorance so characteristic of the exponents of modern science," Sir Thomas Clouston has written of "the implied opinion of the mediæval Christian Church.....that the reproductive instincts were innately evil, and should be repressed and trodden under foot by all religious and moral men and women." This really does not strike us as a very serious exaggeration of the facts of the case. What else did the celibacy of the mediæval Church imply if not this? Of course, celibacy was not the only element in the mediæval religious ideal, but it was certainly a very powerful and a very prominent one. It was by abstention from sexual relationship that most of the "saints" showed their superior degree of holiness, and their marriage would certainly have been regarded as a lapse from a superior to an inferior state. Of course, the Church never went so far as to brand the reproductive instincts as evil, and Sir Thomas Clouston does not say that it did so. But it certainly implied that their exercise was a bar to the saintly life. For generations the truly "saintly" character was a celibate, and if that does not imply the relative evil of the reproductive instincts, one would like to know what meaning one is to attach to it.

In these days of dwindling church congregations, it is interesting to learn, from a recent article in the *Times*, that there is a village "within excursion distance from London" which can boast of a good church attendance. The secret lies in the fact that some long time ago a misguided person bequeathed a sum of money to be given annually to the person who most regularly attended church. Women generally bear off the prize, and the writer of the article says that the one to whom it was awarded last Christmas was "obviously a woman of determination and will." He says, "her face reminded me a little of others seen waiting outside the pit doors of London theatres; it had an expression upon it that seemed to say, 'I am here to get through this business, and here I stay until it's done. When will the doors open?'" Something of the same kind really exists in a large number of churches. Presents of groceries and clothing given to poor people at many churches are dependent upon attendance at Mothers' Meetings and the like. It would not be at all a bad thing for the railways to advertise excursions to the village where church attendance is not dwindling. It would be enough of a curiosity to attract visitors.

At Llanelly, according to the *Daily Mail*, six traders pay thirteen shillings each, weekly, in fines for trading on Sunday. They have been doing this for about six years, and the game still goes on. Some of the Justices who inflict the fines employ workmen every Sunday. Perhaps some of the Welsh Members of Parliament who are so frantically anxious for religious freedom in Wales will call attention to this sample of Sabbatarianism in action.

"How is it," asks the Rev. Dr. Forsyth, "that so much literature connected with religion tends to be poor and thin and sentimental?" Perhaps the answer may be found on the lines of the old maxim that one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Religious literature was not always poor and thin and sentimental. Some of the strongest pieces of writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were connected with religion. But the world was different then. Men of ability and information could still be religious. Nowadays these are becoming a rarity. It is mostly

men who are themselves poor and thin and sentimental who give themselves to religion, and the men are reflected in their writings. When *The Rosary* and *When It Was Dark*, and Mr. Harold Begbie's productions, are boomed because of their religious value, what else could we expect but poor stuff to be the vogue in the religious world?

Dr. Forsyth says that "we have religious novels whose mawkish sentiment is a real danger. They are more mischievous than *Tom Jones*." More mischievous than *Tom Jones*—one of the strongest, manliest, and sanest novels in the language! God help the poor devil who can't read *Tom Jones* without its doing him a mischief. Books of that kind never did, and never will, do anyone harm. When Fielding is coarse, he is coarse as nature is coarse; but he is also tender, and tolerant, and sympathetic, and, above all, wise in a degree that divests his coarseness of all harmful tendencies. It is not such books as *Tom Jones* that are bad books. The really bad books, the books that have the most demoralising influence, are just those that Dr. Forsyth would in all probability commend. Books that are filled with false and misleading views of life, of people, of systems, and of nations. Dr. Forsyth should purify his taste before he again ventures to criticise the first great novel, and still one of the greatest novels, in the English language.

Here is a curious illustration of the value of prayer. It is taken from an official report by Major Hirst, who has been engaged on survey work in the Sundarbaus, India. The Major reports that four men were killed by tigers. "The first man taken was a religious person, imported to pray while a surveyor and his squad were at work. His prayers were supposed to keep off tigers, but either he did not pray sufficiently or was unlucky." Another man was seized by a tiger, but the surveyor got a brass rule and beat it about the head until the man was dropped. There it is. Brass versus prayer. Surveyor versus God. The odds are all in favor of the man and the metal.

The late Cardinal Kopp, the Prince Bishop of Breslau, left a fortune of £350,000. Unless Peter's sight is failing, the former bishop should have some difficulty in getting through the pearly gates.

A little time ago the Methodist papers were full of talk about the great revival that had been taking place in the Church. Now the membership for the year are published, the great revival has resulted in a decrease of 1,282 members. And significant enough is the fact that there is a decrease in Cornwall—one of the hotbeds of Methodism in the country. The *Methodist Times* says that "these figures are frankly unsatisfactory and dispiriting." More so because "competent observers" have declared that "the spiritual atmosphere of the Church has perceptibly been rising." We fancy Dr. Scott Lidgett mistakes a consequence for a cause. What is meant by greater "spiritual fervor" is, we take it, outbursts of revivalistic and evangelical enthusiasm such as the *Methodist Times* has been chronicling for many weeks. But this does not indicate progress; it means decadence. The better balanced, the more normal, types of mind forsake the Churches, and as these go other and lower elements are left to express themselves with greater freedom. Religious movements experience the same thing in their beginnings. And for the same reason: they are outside the main current of social life. When they are brought within its influence this "spiritual fervor" dies out, and religion becomes more or less of a pretence.

Recently a twelve-year-old girl stole half-a-sovereign from her mother. She spent it in buying cheap jewellery, articles of finery, and a Bible. Had she purchased a copy of *Bible Romances* there would have been a moral.

"It is a fact that physicists are, as a rule, more religious or more superstitious than ordinary men," says the *Times* "Literary Supplement." We should like to see the names of the scientists and the places of worship they attend.

Father Robinson, an Australian Catholic priest, wanted a new chalice for his church, and he asked his congregation to give articles of jewellery, which formerly belonged to dead friends, "to God in the name of the dear dead." Imagine an orphan Catholic subscribing for candles for the repose of his parents, and also giving up father's watch and chain and mother's trinkets.

Prayer is said to be able to move mountains, but when it comes to raising cash the bazaar is far more effective. At Bradford the Baptist ladies have raised £2,500 in two years.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £185 18s. 11d. Received since:—T. Griffiths, 10s.; A. H. Smith, 10s.; A. W. Coleman, £1 1s.; J. H., 5s.; Atheist, Edmonton (second subscription), 2s. 6d.; Wm. Jas. Conroy, 10s.

W. J. CONROY.—Thanks for your sympathetic and encouraging letter.

H. A. T.—We don't remember how much money Spurgeon left. In any case, it was all he couldn't carry. You may be sure of that.

A. W. COLEMAN.—Enclosure and instructions received, and the latter handed over to the shop manager.

J. G. F. (Glasgow).—Subscription received and handed to proper quarter.

A. WELLS.—Sorry we do not know anyone to whom the articles you mention would be useful.

A. BRANDES.—*The Shadow Show*, recently reviewed by Mr. Bryce, is published by Methuen & Co. at the price of 6s. net.

J. KING.—John Stuart Mill's praise of the Jesus of the Gospels was, as both John Morley and Alexander Bain, beside many others, pointed out, an extremely ill-advised piece of writing. The character of the Gospel Jesus is a composite one, and the materials for its construction were to hand for anyone who cared to utilise them. Mill's intellectual equipment was not such as entitled him to an authoritative opinion on the matter. We are not attempting to belittle John Stuart Mill in saying this, but only emphasising what should be an obvious truth, namely, that the greatest man will trip when he deals with subjects on which his information is imperfect.

A. J. MARRIOT AND J. G. FINLAY.—Received.

A. H. SMITH.—Sorry to hear of your own indisposition. The splendid weather we are having should enable you to get rid of your cold with dispatch.

P. DAVIS.—No apology needed, but pressure of work really does not permit the time to enter into extensive private correspondence except where absolutely necessary. We think you would find many of the pamphlets issued by the Pioneer Press of use to you. Our shop manager will send you a catalogue on request. There are also propagandist leaflets, which can be had on writing to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. Secretary.

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.

For various reasons it has been found desirable to again hold the Annual Conference in London this year. The Queen's Hall has been engaged for the evening (public) meeting, and there will be the usual arrangements made for the comfort of delegates and visitors, including a Conference luncheon. Those who intend visiting the Conference on Whit-Sunday will expedite the arrangements if they will communicate with the Secretary as speedily as possible, saying what accommodation they will require during their stay, and whether they intend to be present at the Conference luncheon. The last item is of importance, as the number must be notified beforehand.

Mr. Cohen lectures at Failsworth to-day (May 3) at 2 45 and 6.30. Admission to both meetings are free. There should be a good attendance of Freethinkers from Manchester and district.

The London open-air propaganda is now in full swing. Some branches commenced operations a week or two ago. To-day (May 3) lecturing under the auspices of the N. S. S. commences at Finsbury Park (11.30), Regent's Park (3.30), Parliament Hill (3.30). The Kingsland Branch this year holds its meetings both in the morning and evening, commencing May. In Victoria Park Miss Kough commences

the evening meeting with a lecture at 6.15. We hope that London Freethinkers will give the lecturers at all these stations the support that they and the cause they represent deserve.

The splendid lead given to Liberals by Mr. Asquith to the deputation that waited on him in connection with the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws is not without avail. At the annual meeting of the South-East Cornwall Liberal Association, Mr. J. A. Elliott moved a resolution to the effect that the Association regretted the revival of prosecutions for blasphemy and the attitude of the Home Secretary in relation thereto, heartily approves of Mr. Asquith's promise to support a Bill for their abolition, and urged the Government to give special facilities to Mr. Holt's Bill for removing the last remnants of religious prosecution. The resolution was supported by Mr. H. Perry Coste, and, among others, a Mr. Foot, who announced himself as a Christian and a Non-conformist. The resolution was carried, and we hope other Liberal Associations will follow suit.

Sir Arthur Quiller Couch sent the following letter to the meeting, which was read by the Chairman:—

"I am very glad to see that Mr. Asquith has received a deputation, and given it—as I understand—assurance of his personal desire to repeal the absurd 'Blasphemy Laws.' I do not know how far this promise will affect the wording of the resolution you propose to submit to the South-East Cornwall Liberal Association, but—if I am allowed to express a hope—I hope very earnestly that some resolution will be passed strengthening the Prime Minister's hands in repealing these odious Acts. My religious opinions are not yours. It is as a Liberal Churchman that I detest those rusty weapons of persecution. Certainly it seems to me that all Nonconformists, whose religious freedom was won against just such statutes, should have an hereditary interest in destroying them. 'Blasphemy' is the word used by officials of religion, from Caiaphas downward, to silence any speech of which they disapproved. It is not creditable that these laws have been so often invoked of late under a Liberal Government, and I hope the Government will redeem its credit in this matter by sweeping the statutes off the book."

"'Blasphemy' is the word used by officials of religion, from Caiaphas downward, to silence any speech of which they disapproved." That is well said, and it says in a sentence all that can be said.

According to the Bishop of Willesden it is "the duty of the Church to see that justice is done to the workers." We congratulate the workers on this discovery. It will rank with Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation.

Scripture contains many truths. One of them is that godliness hath the promise of the life that now is as well as that of the life to come. Proofs of this appear almost daily in the newspapers. Here are some recent ones. Rev. Robert Townson, Worthing, Sussex, left £9,165; Rev. Walter Francis Lanfear, of Bath, left £6,531; Rev. Joseph Boord Ansted, of Highbury Hill, London, left £11,865. We like to see the Bible corroborated.

Mr. Dean C. Worcester, who has written an authoritative volume on *The Philippines, Past and Present*, tells an amusing story of popular ignorance of the archipelago. Once a lady said to him, "Deanie, are those Philippians you have been visiting the creatures that Paul wrote his epistle to?"

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., is a fluent writer, but sometimes his pen runs away with him. Writing of John Bright recently, he said, "the most Radical in religion, like Gibbons, have often been the most Conservative in politics." Presumably, "Tay Pay" meant Edward Gibbon, the greatest of all historians; but all his readers may not know this.

Reviewing Sabatini's book on *Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition*, the *Daily Chronicle* used the headline, "The Inexplicable Crime Book." This tender consideration for the feelings of Catholics suggests that there are some faithful sons of the Church in the neighborhood of Fleet-street.

The name of the Trinity Brethren is unfamiliar to most people. When John Bright, who was a hard-shell Nonconformist, was President of the Board of Trade, he was asked to dine with "The Trinity." He nearly had a fit, until the matter was explained.

More Notes.

How easily nations slide into war! I have been thinking of this very sadly to-day, out of doors, seeking fresh life and strength, which is all I have to do now to complete my recovery from a shaking illness. The air is cool and refreshing in the shade, the sunshine is balmy and tonic, the sky is a dream of tender blue and shimmering opalescence, the sea sparkles under the rays of the one real glorious light which "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Peace and quiet brood over the scene. Everything seems idyllic. The birds thrill the air with music and now and then a note of rapture. One feels that if optimism is false pessimism is not true. Browning sang, or made a happy girl sing, "God's in his heaven, All's right with the world." And heaps of religionists regard this as a justification of God. But is it? Early this lovely morning I heard the boom of guns at sea. Men were learning skill in the art of destruction. The screaming gulls overhead need little further training. They dart with such rapid certainty upon their prey. The sweeter songsters of the wood are all more or less engaged in nature's great work of rapine and murder. Life is fed by death. Eat or be eaten is the general law of animal existence. Behind the beautiful palace lies the gloomy slaughter-house. Good and evil are relative. They are the systole and diastole of the heart of the world. So one must not be surprised that the newspapers bring news, even on this delightful morning, of arms landed on the coast of Ireland for one set of religionists to fight another with,—or, worse still, of a dispute, growing into a quarrel, and now fast developing into a regular war between the United States and Mexico. The former country was basking in the sunshine of peace. It was preparing to celebrate a hundred years of peace with Great Britain. It was making treaties of peace right and left with all sorts of other nations. But suddenly the sky darkened; the lightning flashed the signals of passion, the thunder spoke the voice of anger and hatred; and presently there began to fall the "red rain" which Byron saw with his mind's eye over the field of Waterloo. Yes, I repeat, how easily nations slide into war! I am not taking sides. I eschew politics in the *Freethinker*. I do not read moral or diplomatic lessons to President Wilson. He has plenty of advice (it is a very cheap article) without asking for mine. All I want to say is what I have said twice already—How easily nations slide into war!

* * *

Did you think the millennium was coming? Many voices have been crying "Peace! Peace!" in my time, and Andrew Carnegie has spent millions upon it in all the ways of self-advertisement—to say nothing of diffusing an interest in American Steel Trust Bonds. But how much real good has been wrought by all the shouting and agitation? Some, no doubt, amongst the better class of minds. The "glory" of war is less praised than it used to be in educated and thoughtful circles. The "intellectuals" recognise the military spirit as one of the greatest obstacles to moral and social progress. The "intellectuals," however, are a small number in comparison with the multitude. Their voices are drowned in the roar of the crowd. The mob of to-day is little, if anything, better than the mob of yesterday. It is just as easily practised upon in the name of "patriotism" to serve the ends of the priests of the worship of Mammon, the selfish ambitions of pretended statesmen, and the sinister bigotries of race and creed. I say in the name of patriotism; for patriotism itself is necessarily personal; it is the subordination of the individual citizen to the welfare of the nation,—not the subordination of the nation to the greed, pride, vanity, or other bad passions of the individual citizen. To keep calling your own country the greatest nation on earth is not patriotism; it is vulgar, foolish boasting, and

usually means that your own country is the greatest nation on earth because it has the inestimable honor of counting you among its native inhabitants.

* * *

No, the millennium of peace, fraternity, and happiness is not coming yet. But blessed is he who works for it knowing he will never see it. Let him smile at being called a fool or a fanatic. Man's head, after all, is not placed upon his neck merely to serve his belly. Evolution is a forward-looking process; the self-preservation, which is its basis of development, is that of the species rather than the individual. The friends of progress, I repeat, may smile at being called fools or fanatics by people without sense or enthusiasm. Let them think of Shakespeare's "prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come"—and rejoice in the electric touch of the Master's hand.

* * *

My readers may tell me that I am not exactly saying what they want to hear. They can read about the American and other troubles in the newspapers. They expect to hear something about myself in the *Freethinker*. Yes, but I also have this particular thing to impress upon them before the opportunity grows cold. Freethinkers must not despair of the triumph of peace because mankind are such combative animals. The teaching of evolution shows us that peace *must* win in the end. Progress in the past is the certain guarantee of progress in the future. That the process is slow only proves that it is natural. Man is a risen animal not a fallen angel. That one sentence explains everything. Understanding it, one has patience as well as ardor in the battle of humanity.

* * *

And now for the news about myself. My insomnia is the worst complication of any illness I may suffer. Influenza, for instance, gives asthma a chance of attacking me, and the insomnia renders them such aid that I have to depend on medical help for sleep. When I am free of the influenza, and have fought down the asthma, I have another battle to fight for the restoration of natural sleep. It is no joke, but I hate the idea of becoming a slave to morphia or any other drug, so I fight with the determination of winning. Well, that fight is all over again. I feel under no sort of temptation to indulge in drugs. What sleep I get is natural. It is now as good as usual. I am gaining strength daily, I am able to walk about almost as well as ever, and I hope to be soon in tolerable fighting form. I am looking forward to seeing my friends again at Queen's Hall on Whit-Sunday.

G. W. FOOTE.

The instant you assign a motive of any sort whatever for doing right, whether it be the love of God, the love of man, the approval of one's own conscience, or even the pleasure of doing right itself, you admit the principle that the question relates to the weight of motives.—*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, Sir J. Fitzjames Stephen.

If you teach a man to keep his eyes upon what others think of him, unthinkingly to lead the life and hold the principles of the majority of his contemporaries, you must discredit in his eyes the authoritative voice of his own soul. He may be a docile citizen; he will never be a man.—*Robert Louis Stevenson*.

Reconstruct, it is said, before you destroy. But you must destroy in order to reconstruct. The old husk of dead faith is pushed off by the growth of living beliefs below. But how can they grow unless they find distinct utterance; and how can they be distinctly uttered without condemning the doctrines which they are to replace? The truth cannot be asserted without denouncing the falsehood. Pleasant as the process might be of announcing the truth and leaving the falsehood to decay of itself, it cannot be carried into practice.—*Leslie Stephen*, "Essays in Freethinking and Plain Speaking."

Christian Apologetics.

III.—IGNATIUS AND POLYCARP.

THE last two "apostolic fathers" are Ignatius and Polycarp. These I will notice in the order given.

On December 13, A.D. 115, the city of Antioch suffered from the shocks of an earthquake, and many of the houses were thrown down. The emperor Trajan, who was then in the city, very narrowly escaped injury. These shocks were believed by the Pagan population to be a visitation from heaven, and soon the cry "The Christians to the lions!" resounded through the city. Trajan was not a persecutor of the Christians; but in this instance he gave way to the popular desire. Ignatius, the bishop of the Christian church there was arrested, and on December 20 was thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, to appease the anger of the gods. His bones were afterwards collected by some of his church, and buried in the city. The ablest and most learned critics, who have investigated the circumstances connected with this martyrdom, are agreed upon the foregoing points, among whom are Volkmar, Hilgenfeld, Baur, Davidson, and Scholten.

Now, many years later, some pious Christians placed in circulation the story that Ignatius, after being sentenced to "the lions," was sent to Rome in the custody of ten Roman soldiers, to be cast to the wild beasts there. During this journey, though a prisoner and closely guarded, he is said to have found time to write seven long epistles to different churches, and also to receive visits from friends. Though chained to his guards, he had apparently perfect freedom, and was supplied with writing materials and granted time to compose and write the ninety chapters contained in the seven epistles. To the church at Rome, for instance, he writes, among a heap of other nonsense:—

"I write to the churches, and impress on them all that I shall willingly die for God, unless ye hinder me.I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ.....May I enjoy the wild beasts that are prepared for me; and I pray they may be found eager to rush upon me, which also I will entice to devour me speedily," etc.

In these epistles, too, are found dogmatic teaching and views of church government of a more advanced character than were held in his days. He says, for instance, to the Christians of Smyrna: "He who honors the bishop has been honored by God: he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop serves the Devil." In another epistle he says: "Let all reverence deacons as Jesus Christ, of whose place they are the keepers." It was also said that Ignatius became bishop of Antioch in A.D. 98, and suffered martyrdom in A.D. 107.

Coming now to the so-called Ignatian Epistles, there are no less than fifteen extant which profess to have been written by this martyr: but only seven are now considered genuine by any critic. It is thus admitted by all that eight Ignatian letters which have come down to our day were the work of pious forgers. Next, of the seven epistles which are held by Christian advocates to be genuine, there are two versions—a long one, and a very much shorter one—and both versions are in Greek and Latin. Of these, rational critics are of opinion that the longer epistles are simply interpolated versions of the shorter ones. Moreover, in the year 1845 Dr. Cureton published three still shorter Epistles, written in Syriac, which had been discovered not long before. Upon examination it has been found that all the quotations of the "fathers" up to the fourth century are contained in these three shorter Syriac epistles—thus pointing to the fact that the seven long epistles and four of the short ones in Greek and Latin are likewise forgeries. But when we consider the circumstances under which the Epistles profess to have been written, we are compelled to put them all down as forgeries, written many years after the martyrdom.

The idea of a long journey to Rome, after being condemned by Trajan at Antioch—for that the sentence was passed during a visit of the emperor to that city is not denied by anyone—is in every way perfectly ridiculous. There were both amphitheatre and wild beasts at Antioch. Trajan would himself be a witness of the races, combats, and the martyrdom. No purpose could be served by sending Ignatius to Rome; while the Antiochians would not, without protest, allow themselves to be deprived of a spectacle that was relished by all in that gladiatorial age. Only a crack-brained Christian forger could have originated the Christian story and have concocted the Ignatian Epistles. The story was fabricated to give countenance to the Letters. Hence, since Ignatius is said to have been a bishop for nine years, his episcopate would date from A.D. 106 to 115.

Polycarp is said to have been bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor for some unknown period preceding the year A.D. 165, at which date he is stated to have suffered martyrdom at the stake. This event is recorded in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius (A.D. 325), and in the Paschal Chronicle (A.D. 630): both compiled from pre-existing documents not now extant. An account of the martyrdom is given in an encyclical letter purporting to be from the church of Smyrna to the catholic churches generally. At the end of the letter it is stated that the martyrdom took place on the second day of the month Xanthicus, the seventh before the kalends of May (April 25), Philip of Tralles being Asiarch, and Statius Quadratus proconsul. Eusebius says in his "Chronicle" that Statius filled the office of proconsul—which was an annual one—in the sixth year of Marcus Aurelius (*i.e.*, A.D. 165—166). The latter statement is thus in agreement with the History of Eusebius and the Paschal Chronicle.

Notwithstanding the latter fact, the great Christian apologist, Dr. Lightfoot, has made strenuous efforts to place this event at an earlier date, and, with the assistance of a wiseacre named Waddington and several unwarranted assumptions and baseless conjectures, he has fixed it at A.D. 155. But, I need scarcely say, that until some real historical evidence is forthcoming, I shall adhere to the date given by Eusebius and the Paschal Chronicle. The reason why Christian advocates endeavor to push back the dates of the earliest known Christian writers is obvious. These writings usually contain passages from a primitive Gospel, which our apologists assert were the present canonical evangels. Hence, by placing the writings as far back as possible, and by asserting that the writers quoted "freely from memory" from the canonical Gospels, the latter are apparently proved to be in existence in much earlier times than was actually the case.

Speaking of Polycarp, the early apologist Irenæus (A.D. 185) says in his work on Heresies:—

"But Polycarp was not only instructed by apostles and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the church in Smyrna; whom I also saw in my early youth.....He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus, caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God" (Her. iii., iii., 4).

From the foregoing it will be seen that Polycarp was in Rome some time during the episcopate of Anicetus (A.D. 156—168). How does Dr. Lightfoot, who places his martyrdom in 155, get over that fact? Oh, very easily. That distinguished apologist was light of hand as well as light of foot, and so took the liberty of altering A.D. 156 into A.D. 154, thus giving Polycarp time to go to Rome in 154 and return to Smyrna to suffer martyrdom in 155.

What Irenæus says about Polycarp being "instructed by apostles" and made bishop "by apostles" is, of course, untrue. We have to look at the following dates: A.D. 28 and A.D. 165. In A.D. 28 the apostles were men, and probably as old as their teacher—thirty years. None of them would be likely to be living (or teaching) after the age of ninety—*i.e.*, after A.D. 88. In A.D. 165 Polycarp's life was out

short by martyrdom, though he is said to have then been an old man. Placing his age at martyrdom at eighty-five, then he would have been born in A.D. 80—that is to say, he would have been eight years old when the last apostle died. Now, teachers of religion in those days did not give instruction to children, but to men: neither did the early Christian teachers appoint little boys of eight to be bishops of Christian churches; they chose mature or elderly men who had long been in the church, and possessed the confidence of their fellow-churchmen.

The Letter narrating the martyrdom of Polycarp contains twenty-two paragraphs, from which I make three short extracts, merely to show the character of second century Christian "history."

"Now as Polycarp was entering into the stadium, there came to him a voice from heaven, saying, 'Be strong, and show thyself a man, O Polycarp.'" —

"When he had pronounced his 'Amen,' and so finished his prayer, those who were appointed for the purpose kindled the fire. And as the flames blazed forth in great fury, we to whom it was given to witness it, beheld a great miracle, and have been preserved that we might report to others what then took place. For the fire shaping itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle the body of the martyr. And he appeared within, not like flesh which is burnt, but as bread that is baked, or as gold or silver glowing in a furnace." —

"At length when those wicked men perceived that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded an executioner to go near, and pierce him through with a dagger. And in doing this, there came forth a dove and a great quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished. And all the people wondered that there should be such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic teacher, and bishop of the catholic church which is in Smyrna" (par. ix., xv., xvi.).

A portion of this Letter is given by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History (iv. 15). The Letter is chiefly of value as showing the kind of legends that were in circulation among the Christians of the second century, as well as the excessive credulity of that age. Polycarp was an orthodox and devout Christian, as may be seen by the following passage in his extant Epistle:—

"For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is Antichrist; and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the cross is of the Devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first-born of Satan" (par. vii.).

There is the true Christian ring about this, which is not easily mistaken. Those who do not recognise it should go and listen to some of the Christian Evidence fraternity anathematising more moral, rational, and better informed men than themselves in some of the London parks.

From this brief examination of the "apostolic fathers" we find that not one of the five individuals, so called, lived in apostolic times, and that all their writings were composed in the second century. We also find that the production of those writings was in every case, save one, connected with lying, misrepresentation, and fraud—which primitive Christian characteristics plainly indicate how the Gospel stories originated.

ABRACADABRA.

Puff and Bluff.

A FRIEND of mine recently sent me a copy of the Lancaster *Observer* of March 27, with a marked leading article the title of which puzzled me not a little. The article was headed "Two Philosopher Heroes." The combination seemed to upset all my previous notions of classification. I was acquainted, of course, with the names of a few philosophers, such as Kant, and Schopenhauer, and Mill, and Spencer. And I had read of the heroes of a thousand battles in days of yore, and also of the modern

hero of Mafeking, and that other hero whose immortality will ever be linked with that soul-stirring song, "The Cock o' the North." But two heroic philosophers, or philosophic heroes, who on earth could they be?

There is a firm of hosiers in our northern town who trade under the style of "The Two W.'s." And as I glanced at the first paragraph of the article, I found that these philosophic heroes (or purveyors of philosophic second-hands and misfits, as I afterwards discovered) were Two B.'s. It was a curious coincidence. I ransacked my memory to try and recall two heroes whose names began with a B, but the only ones I could discover were General Blucher and General Buller; but as I had never heard their names associated with philosophy, I concluded it could not be these worthy warriors. If there were any two men to whom the title in question might be applied with any kind of fitness, they were surely the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and Julius Cæsar. Did not Longfellow say of the latter:—

"Here was a man who could both write and fight,
And in both was he equally skilful"?

But then the names of these two noble Romans did not begin with a B.

As I sat musing thus (my mind the while wrestling with the seeming incongruity of the heading), it occurred to me that a perusal of the article might afford some enlightenment. Then I learned that these two philosophic heroes were an Englishman and a Frenchman, who are at the present time "the centres of the world's attention." And these two brilliant luminaries, who were dazzling the eyes of the world by their philosophic exploits; this firm of "Two B.'s," who had made bankrupt the whole of modern science, whose theological and metaphysical speculations had superseded all knowledge and all research, were—Mr. Arthur Balfour and Professor Bergson.

This writer on the *Observer* evidently makes a third hero (although his modesty prevents him from mentioning the fact), and, curiously enough, his name also begins with a B, the title of the trio being—Balfour, Bergson, and Bankum.

But let us sample this newspaper scribe's puff of his two philosopher heroes:—

"Both of them are defending the ideal, as against the crude realism of the age. Both say to science, —'Your verdicts on the cosmos cannot be final, for you only deal with the relative. The absolute lies not in your province. Your discoveries are for the moment; further discoveries will make them obsolete, perhaps absurd guesses at the fundamental verities. Your work is in time and space; ours goes beyond these forms of thought to the timeless and to immortality.'"

How thankful, I thought, we all ought to be to our fellow-countryman, Arthur James Balfour. After all the wranglings of philosophers for centuries, after all the spiritual and mystical speculations of the divines, and the futile efforts of scientists to solve the riddle of the universe, it remained for our Arthur James to pronounce the final verdict on the cosmos!

It appears that Mr. Balfour has been giving the Gifford Lectures at Glasgow. Mr. Balfour's theme was Theism.

"Not the narrow thesis of the sects, not even the common ideas of Christianity. Mr. Balfour expounds the God of Gods, the Infinite, the eternal, the ever-inscrutable. All that man has evolved of the God-idea Mr. Balfour dissects and explains. Then he synthesises these into a general concept."

If these be not the common ideas of Christianity, at least they are the common phrases that one meets in theological literature everywhere. The God of Gods, the Infinite, the eternal, the ever-inscrutable, are the stock-in-trade of every theologian. For ages they have been expounding the Divine, each according to his own fancy or the desire of his particular flock, and it may be safely predicted that Mr. Balfour's efforts will only make confusion worse confounded. Strange that the writer should think him to be better qualified to deal with the subject

of Theism than all the professional representatives of Christianity. He says:—

"Mr. Balfour is the fittest Englishman alive for this gigantic undertaking. He is a born philosopher. Politics has only been an interlude in his life. As a young man he wrote that subtle book on *Philosophic Doubt*. Afterwards he devoted years to psychical research. He was president of the society of that name, and he is still an officer of it, and an active researcher."

He is a born philosopher! Before ever he left the care of his wet nurse, or had cut his wisdom teeth, he began to have philosophic doubts concerning the verdicts of science. When other children were playing with their toys, he was toying quite familiarly with the Berkeleyan philosophy. Long before he reached the age of twelve he could discuss with the most learned doctors of the law, and baffle them. And in his mature age he is "the centre of the world's attention." The writer continues:—

"Mr. Balfour is a student of man, as a spiritual, mental, and corporal being. He knows how much the body affects the mind, and how the mind reacts on the body. And he is quite Spencerian in recognising the immense influence of environment on both. Thus he is fully equipped for his great task of expounding the Divine."

How Spencer's Unknowable could aid Mr. Balfour to expound the Ever-Inscrutable is one of those mysteries known only to newspaper writers like the scribe of the *Observer*. His eulogy of this politico-philosopher really becomes a little nauseating:—

"Equipped with all science, steeped in all philosophies, an expert in psychology and physiology, Mr. Balfour has a further advantage—he is a religious man."

What was it Goldsmith said of the village rustics and the schoolmaster?—

"And still their wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew."

You will notice, dear reader, the reason of all the foregoing extraordinary puff of Mr. Balfour—he is a religious man. He might, indeed, be equipped in all the sciences, and steeped in all the philosophies, and be an acknowledged expert in all departments of knowledge, but unless he possessed the further advantage of "being a religious man" he might be non-existent so far as the columns of this provincial *Observer* are concerned. In what way religion proves to be an advantage to a student of science or philosophy we are not informed; but to speak of it giving a man like Mr. Balfour an advantage over intellectual giants such as Mill, or Darwin, or Huxley is not only sheer bluff, it is ignorant impertinence. Religion must have fallen very low indeed when it has to rely on the wilful misrepresentations of such a newspaper leaderette writer.

It appears that all the pre-Balfourian religions required miracles and marvels to make them acceptable to the multitude.

"The superstitious are unable to comprehend the god of inflexible law. They need miracles and marvels, and they are fully entitled to have them."

This was the most unkindest cut of all. To teach the people for ages to put their trust in a flexible God, one who works miracles and marvels for the benefit of his people, who turns live women into pillars of salt, who makes the sun to stand still, and divides the waters of the sea so that multitudes can pass through on dry land, who causes the clouds to shower down bread from heaven or withholds the rain at his pleasure—to teach the people these things as eternal truths, and then, when science has shattered such beliefs, to turn round and taunt them with being superstitious for their faith, is something more than unkind—it is heartless and cruel. If the people of Christendom are superstitious, and need miracles and marvels; if they put their faith in the tomfooleries of Lourdes or the mysterious operations of a Holy Ghost, it is because their religious pastors have taught them that these superstitions were part and parcel of revealed religion. Inflexible law is a fundamental tenet of Buddhism, but it is not and never has been part of

Christianity. And neither Mr. Balfour nor any other sophist will ever convert the God of the Bible, with all his whimsicalities, into a god of inflexible law.

The superstitious need miracles, and "they are fully entitled to have them." Thus, when they want to see water turned into wine, or five thousand hungry mouths fed with only twelve barley loaves and a few small fishes; when they want to see a man walking upon the water without sinking, or ascending bodily up into the clouds; when they want to hear a talking donkey, or see a grass-eating king walking upon all-fours, the superstitious are fully entitled to witness these wonders, or have their money returned. But, look you! Mr. Balfour is not in the common religious show business. He is not competing with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is probably the fittest Englishman alive to conduct the miracle and marvel business. Nor is he to be confounded with the swarms of religious fakirs who, under all sorts of fanciful titles, trade upon the misguided emotions of the ignorant and credulous. Mr. Balfour has an "elite following," whom he dazzles with aerial flights that require a philosophic telescope to discern the whereabouts of his movements.

Mr. Balfour's God does not reveal unto babes and sucklings what is hidden from the wise and prudent, nor does he use the foolish things of this world to confound the mighty.

"Mr. Balfour admits that we can only know God through our personal intelligence. The fool's god cannot be that of the wise man, and *per contra*."

Every man's "God" is thus a reflection of his individual personal intelligence. Quite so. Mr. Balfour's god is an old gentleman of the aristocracy with philosophic doubts as to the validity of the verdicts of science, and a conviction that some kind of religion is necessary for the masses. The savage, not having any use for "a synthesis into a general concept of all that man has evolved of the God-idea," proceeds to make a god corresponding to his crude notions, out of wood or stone. John Smith, the cheesemonger, worships a god exactly corresponding to the thoughts and aspirations of—John Smith, the cheesemonger. The god of the fool (although some fools, according to the Scriptures, have repudiated this theistic insinuation as a reflection on their personal intelligence) has all the weaknesses of his devotee. Which is to say that all gods are man-made, and reflect the mental and moral characteristics of their makers. Mr. Balfour's God is, confessedly, no exception to the rule, and they are all alike useless and unprofitable.

Although this writer has so much to say concerning Mr. Balfour's God (the expression is his), when he comes to deal with M. Bergson, he never once mentions Theism in relation to the Professor's metaphysics. He is evidently conscious that between the "self-creating universe" of Bergson and the Theism of Balfour there is a great gulf fixed, and he very wisely does not attempt to bridge it. M. Bergson's verdict on the cosmos is quite at variance with that of Mr. Balfour's. And if both these philosophers say to science,—"Your verdicts on the cosmos cannot be final," we can reply to these gentlemen,—"Neither can your verdicts on the cosmos be final, since they hopelessly disagree. They are evidently only guesses, more or less absurd, at the eternal verities."

JOSEPH BRYCE.

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

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NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Finsbury Park): 11.30, Miss Kough, a Lecture. Parliament Hill: 3.30, Mr. Hope, a Lecture. Regent's Park (near the Fountain): 3.30, Mr. Hecht, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, J. Rowney, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): C. Cohen, 2.45, "Some Curiosities of Christian Evidence"; 6.30, "Christianity and Freedom of Speech."

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