

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXIV.—No. 20

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 1914

PRICE TWOPENCE

No one appears to perceive that intellectual cowardice is as disreputable as physical cowardice.

—WILLIAM ROMAINE PATTERSON.

More Notes.

Several years ago (I cannot fix the date without laborious reference) I spent a week at Brighton with my wife and one of our children. Their object was to keep me company. My object was to pick up strength after recovering from an attack of influenza. I never bought clothes in my life until I was obliged to, and on this occasion I had to purchase a new overcoat, partly to keep me warm on the windy Brighton front, and partly because my old overcoat—as I was informed, and could not honestly deny—had got to look quite disreputable for a man in my position, walking out with a lady. The new garment was not an expensive one, but it did credit (at the price, as they say) to my tailor, and I rather fancied it. Yes, and I fancied myself in it, too; for I defy any man in the world, or any woman either, to remain indifferent to the elevating effect of new raiment. Emerson was perhaps cynical, though probably quite accurate, when he reported a pious lady as saying that the consciousness of being well-dressed gave her a support which religion was powerless to afford. * * *

But how we are paid out, after all, for giving way to these little flatteries! When I went back to my lodgings one day for dinner I found a Christian Evidence paper amidst a packet of things sent down to me from London. It was of no importance then, and its name is of no importance now. It was one of the many insignificant journals I have known during the past forty years, that have done their poor little best to prove Christianity divine by constant displays of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness—and absolutely nothing else. "Freethinker" in their vocabulary meant "blackguard," "Secularist" meant "rascal," and "Atheist" meant "scoundrel." Other "infidel" terms were used with similar "Christian charity." Had the writers in these journals possessed any brightness or wit they might have done considerable mischief. The laughter they raised, however, was usually in the wrong place. The moment these "organs" were born they started on the way to oblivion. They lacked the first virtue of a periodical. They were not interesting. People soon get tired of hearing Bradlaugh called a liar, a blackguard, a thief, and other epithets from the venerable collection of what Arnold called "the amenities of theological controversy." Even the "proofs" were not very thrilling when read for the first time. On the second reading they had all the dullness of their stupidity. It was obvious to any person of common sagacity that Bradlaugh (or any other name you like) was only not accused of murder because such a charge involved the production of a corpse. Rank fanaticism provided the only readers of these "defenders of the faith" after a brief career; and the usual appeals for cash to sustain the only real barrier to the wave of infidelity which was surging

against the cause of Christ, were followed by death-bed groans, and then—silence. The thing was dead, and forgotten before there could be a funeral, with half-a-dozen mourners. Time, the collector, picked it up and threw it into the bag he carries with alms for oblivion. (I beg Shakespeare's pardon for bringing him, even for a moment, into such company).

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Well, one of the contributors to that particular number of that particular sample of Christian Evidence journalism, reported what must have tickled my friends amazingly if they had come across it. I had been seen at Brighton, where I was "living on the fat of the land" (as if I ought to have shown a Christian preference for the lean) and walking about "gorgeously attired." The joke nearly did for me on the spot. My wife collapsed dangerously. Fortunately, the dinner was brought in just then; it was sweet-smelling, we were very hungry, and it appealed to us with all the power that Esau's venison exercised on poor old father Isaac; so we "fell to" as they say at beanfeast dinners, and the devastating effect of that Christian Evidence joke (unconscious, and therefore all the more effective) was arrested.

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How did the Christian Evidence reporter learn that I was living on the fat of the land? Perhaps it was a general conclusion. I don't think I ever looked averse to a good dinner. Certainly not in those days. Christians, who are so indifferent to the meat which perisheth, might call a chop and potatoes (with or without tomato sauce, *à la* Pickwick) the fat of the land. In a certain way it is—and in a certain way it isn't. It is a palatable and nourishing dish—if the Vegetarians will let the statement pass, as a relative one, for the sake of argument; but a more luxurious repast is easily conceivable. If I may make a personal confession, I agree with the late George Gissing, and some American friends too, that English cooking is not the worst, but much nearer the best, in the world. I like good food, well cooked, and I like to know what I am eating. I doubt if the very best English public-house dinners (with an appetite, of course; the appetite is indispensable—and preferably after an agreeable walk with a "pal") can be beaten anywhere on this planet. Everything plain, everything nicely done, the meat and the vegetables well-matched, and the sauces in bottles on the table rather than too much in evidence on the plates, and one "sweet" if you want it, and a "pinch" of Stilton, Cheddar, or Cheshire (no longer list)—this, on ordinary days, if not on days of celebration, is a dinner for a man. I do not speak for the ladies. I leave them to speak for themselves. There may well be organic differences of taste in the two sexes.

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But the question with which the last paragraph opened has not yet been answered. How did the Paul Pry reporter penetrate the arcana of our daily menu? Was he a friend of the landlady's? Was he acquainted with the servant? Did he "tip" the errand boys at the butcher's, the greengrocer's, and the provision dealer's, where my wife bought our meat, vegetables, fruit, bacon and eggs, and cheese—for information as to our purchases? Or did he extract it from them at Sunday-school on the blessed

Sabbath afternoon? Possibly, as I have already hinted, the "fat of the land" was a guess, not exactly in the dark. But what was the explanation of "gorgeously attired"? That new overcoat must have given me away. No doubt its value had been immensely exaggerated. But what an imagination the Christian reporter must have had to represent me, and what an imagination the Christian reader must have had to accept the description of me, as "gorgeously attired." Me! Gorgeous! And all on the strength of what was a very common-priced overcoat! Some of my lady friends laugh at that "gorgeously attired" still.

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I have just been informed of another characteristic Christian Evidence story. I have frequently referred to my insomnia. Readers ask me questions about it, and get their answers. Some send me advice on the subject. They all mean well, and they all have my thanks; although I should never edit another number of the *Freethinker* if I followed them all together, nor would life be long enough to follow them all separately. Now insomnia is a curse. I am not proud of it—like the old lady in the hospital who, when the late King Edward was operated on for appendicitis, told a visitor that her complaint was the same as the King's, only she had it in the feet. I am not proud of insomnia, although I share it with Lord Rosebery and other distinguished people. I could wish it farewell to-night and "dote upon its very absence" ever afterwards. Insomnia is a curse, and the Christian Evidence people say that "God" has sent it to me as a punishment for my "infidelity." It is gravely stated that I may be seen walking by the water at Southend every night, tormented with remorse, and bending under the Almighty's chastisement of the deprivation of sleep.

* * *

Let me pause to tell an old story. Cuvier, the great naturalist, was asked what he thought of the definition of a Crab in a new dictionary. It was defined as a red fish that walked backwards. "Well," said Cuvier, "the crab is not a fish, it is not red, and does not walk backwards. With those three exceptions the definition is a very good one."

* * *

Now I am not "bending"—at least physically; but am as upright as ever, the result of almost daily exercise; I rarely walk about at night, especially in the winter; and I don't look in the least like a man tormented with remorse—or anything else. My life has been singularly free from *pain*; a fact which may somehow be connected with another fact—that the temperature of my blood never rises. As for "remorse" itself, I laugh at the very idea. Any earthly or heavenly Being who punished me for exercising my own intelligence would only prove that he was devoid of intelligence himself. On the other hand, I never wilfully injured a fellow-mortal; I am capable of mistakes, but not of crimes; my temperament is, if anything, *too* sympathetic; I can hardly see a strange child cry in the street without joining in; and there are things in literature—Lear, for instance, over the dead body of Cordelia—which, with all my experience on the platform, I have never been able to read aloud. Not even alone in my study, preparing for a Shakespearean lecture, and practising the recitation of illustrative passages. I have tried, and tried, and summoned up the stern forces of self-control, and reminded myself of the claims of art, but I have broken down every time, with a feeling that all one could do was to grope about, as it were, in the darkness of grief for a consoling touch of the Master's hand.

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Anybody who visits Southend for the sake of seeing me bowed down with remorse by the seashore at night—a sort of Byron of the beach—will make a poor investment of his time and money. I strongly advise him not to trust so much in Christian advertisement.

G. W. FOOTE.

Why We Exist.

A FORTNIGHT ago I wrote three "Acid Drops" in reply to a letter received from a clergyman who had been given a copy of the *Freethinker*. I did not mention the name of the writer of the letter, and do not intend doing so now, as, although there is nothing private about the communication, I am not sure that he would care for his name being made public. He has, however, in another letter, replied to the paragraphs, although he says he would have preferred a written communication. I hardly know why. It is not likely that he would convert me or that I should convert him. Those who have studied the subjects at issue with any thoroughness may be taken to have their opinions fairly well settled, and in such cases the expression that one is ready to be converted really means little more than that each one is willing to receive the other's arguments and reply to them. The chief value of such discussions lies in their giving to the general public an opportunity of seeing both sides of the question stated. And if this reverend gentleman really desires to put his case against Freethought, the columns of this journal are open.

In reply to the writer's wonder why the *Freethinker* should be published, I said that one reason for its publication was that it said what could not be said in other papers. In reply to this my critic says, "I think that to be a mistake. Our press seems open to every shade of thought and opinion." Now, without being either impolite or conceited, I think I may say on that point that I—or any other Freethought advocate—am a much better authority than my critic. We know what it is to try and get our opinions before the public through the channels of the ordinary press. Mildly heretical communications from men whose position makes it dangerous for editors to refuse may appear; but uncompromising expressions of Freethought opinion are boycotted in every paper in Great Britain. Sometimes editors refuse them gladly, at other times they are refused because they dare not print them. This is not only true of papers; it is true of publishers. Quite recently, a manuscript of my own was returned from one of our oldest publishing firms with a confession that, despite a flattering report from the firm's reader, they dare not publish for fear of offending their clients. On the whole, the British Press is, perhaps, as cowardly as any on the face of the earth.

Here is a sporting offer to this reverend gentleman—one that I feel sure the editor of this journal will agree with. If he really feels convinced that "our press is open to every shade of thought and opinion," let him try and arrange for, say, four articles of mine, stating the Freethought position, in either a newspaper of standing or in one of the religious weeklys. In return, let him, or some other clergyman, put their case in an equal number of articles in the *Freethinker*. In that case we shall each achieve our end. He is desirous of converting Freethinkers; we are desirous of converting Christians. And this is clearly the best plan of reaching both classes. If this can be brought about, we shall have had a demonstration that the press of Great Britain is less bigoted than Freethinkers believe it to be.

I am next told it is irrelevant to say that the *Freethinker* expresses what a large number of people either cannot say or dare not say, and in any case there is no proof that we are expressing these thoughts. I confess I see neither the irrelevancy nor the absence of proof. Want of power to verbally express feelings or nascent convictions, and want of courage to say outright what one believes to be true, are among the plainest facts of everyday experience. The first is a natural incapacity, pure and simple; the latter due more to social pressure. When a man finds the welfare of himself and those dependent upon him likely to be seriously injured by the expression of heretical opinions, there is small wonder that he hesitates before speaking out. I do not

applaud the reticence; neither do I, without qualification, condemn it. The fault lies far more with those who penalise honesty of speech than with those who, for one reason or another, feel bound to bend to the storm.

The guarantee that the Freethought writer or speaker is putting into words what a large number feel to be true, it seems to me, lies in the reception given to his message. No one can elicit response to an idea unless it encounters a mind fitted to receive it. We see this admitted in the expression that public opinion is "ripe" or is not "ripe" for a certain teaching. Even with the teacher himself the idea is with him in a nebulous form long before he is able to express it in words. And when it is expressed its power will depend very largely, if not entirely, upon the extent to which it interprets what other people are feeling upon that topic. The only guarantee really needed that the *Freethinker* is expressing what a large number of people cannot so well put into words is that it is alive. No other proof is required.

In reply to my statement that our object is to tell the truth about religion, we are told:—

"That statement implies an active, positive setting forth of what is believed to be the truth. But if I may judge from the one issue (April 5) your chief motive is to show that what other people believe is not true—rather than to put forward positive truth."

Now, it might be replied that to prove to a believer that his beliefs are false is a very "positive" piece of work. For this can only be done by showing that the belief is contrary to some known truth or conflicts with some accepted principle of reason. And, as a matter of fact—although one issue is rather a narrow ground on which to judge a paper of thirty-three years' standing—every article in the issue of April 5 contains positive truth of a very important character. They at least indicate to believers a point of view from which to examine religious beliefs that may cause them to appear in quite a new light. And this point of view can only be obtained in specifically Freethought publications. Believers will not hear it from the pulpit, they will not read it in the religious press. Both do their best week after week to ignore the fact that modern thought has completely revolutionised our knowledge concerning religious beliefs. How much will a church congregation learn from the pulpit of the demonstrated truth that all existing notions of Deity and of a future life are derived from the fear-stricken brain of the primitive savage? And this is only one question out of many. For all that the pulpit does to the contrary, the mass of worshippers might still be living in the eighteenth century instead of in the twentieth. And how much of the truth would appear in other directions, but for the existence of an active Freethought propaganda, which, in spite of many serious obstacles, still manages to force some recognition of the truth. And the positive truth is there, and is emphasised, all the time. It is the natural that is used to disprove the supernatural. The strength of man is used to abolish the providence of God; the principle of causation to negative the idea of the miraculous. It is mere petulance to cry out that one is negative because one's belief is threatened.

My critic is surprised that I should say he would be surprised did he know the class of readers to whom the *Freethinker* appeals. Well, what was meant by the doubt expressed in his first letter, whether the paper could possibly appeal to intellectual men? I wrote what I did because I am aware of the carefully nurtured superstition that the *Freethinker* is conducted by illiterate men for illiterate readers. Of course, those who know the *Freethinker* know to the contrary. They know that for sheer hard brain work the *Freethinker* is the equal of any paper published in Great Britain. Those who write in its columns express their views plainly, and without dishonouring compromise. There is no attempt to placate the "respectables," and their revenge is to

keep alive the delusion that the paper is "gross," "offensive," "ignorant," etc., etc. All quite false, but all evidently useful, since the charges alone are enough to keep the timid and cowardly "respectable" public from giving it the support that it might otherwise receive. Strong and brave men have always recognised the value of the paper; but strong and brave men are, unfortunately, in the minority.

Finally, we have the question of propaganda. I am told that if we had any hope of making men happier, or if we had a better religion, my critic could understand our wishing to convince people. He could "understand the man who believed in nothing, but I cannot see why he should want to destroy such belief, which, he could see, was at least some comfort to his friend who held it."

One feels inclined to reply, "Thou sayest it." This reverend gentleman has supplied one of the reasons for Freethought propaganda in the act of wondering what possible reason there is for its existence. His own attitude shows the need for Freethought work, and I sincerely hope that in future he will read the *Freethinker* with something like regularity. How can a man believe in nothing? All this reverend gentleman means is that the Freethinker does not believe in some of the things he believes in. And it is equally true that he does not believe some of the things we believe. He is as negative to us as we are to him. He would destroy some of our beliefs as we would destroy some of his. What a hard thing it is for some people to realise that the distance between A and B is not a bit greater or lesser than the distance between B and A.

Of course, we see that the religious man's beliefs give him comfort. But why stop there? The statement is true of nearly everybody and nearly everything. Do not the Hindoos find "comfort" in their beliefs? And yet we have missions for their conversion. Does not the belief in the Jewish religion yield comfort? But we have a society for the conversion of the Jews. Does not drinking whisky or eating beefsteak give comfort? But we have ravenous vegetarians and fiery teetotalers pursuing an energetic propaganda. And may it not be that the Atheist finds comfort in his beliefs? Why, then, trouble about correcting anybody? If the rule is good in one direction, it is good in all directions. Are we, then, to let everybody alone? Or are we to conclude that the cry, "Let me alone; I am comfortable where I am!" is the cry of a coward unwilling to play his part in the battle of life? Strange that a Freethinker should have to point out to a clergyman that the duty of determining what is true should rank higher than the desire to feel comfortable!

It may be startling to my critic, but we really have hopes of men becoming better. Nay, we believe we have made men better. We have taught men to see in co-operation and intelligence the conditions of human betterment. We have taught them that true rewards and penalties in the sphere of conduct lie in the effects of conduct on our own natures. We have taught that to care for each other for the sake of man is better than hating each other in the name of God. We have taught men that it is saner to judge the value of life from the point of view of this world than from that of some fanciful hereafter. We have taught men to be serious in thought, brave in speech, and straightforward in action. And if these things will not make men better and happier, then the lot of mankind is indeed hopeless.

C. COHEN.

Discredited Apologetics.

BY "apologetics" is meant the so-called science which attempts to vindicate, by defence or defensive assault, the absolute truth of the Christian religion. There are three kinds of apologetics, the fundamental, the historical, and the philosophical, but the present article is concerned only with the historical,

which deals with the Divine nature and origin of Christianity. The apologists declare that the evidences of the Divinity of Christianity are irrefutable, that all attempts to break their force are utterly futile, and that consequently anti-Christians are without a rag of rationality wherewith to hide the nakedness of their position. Indeed, some of them go so far as to assert that unbelievers build their negative theory on two assumptions, namely, that the Christian faith is not true, and that its teachers do not believe it to be true. In that assertion there is not a single atom of truth. No Freethinker ever takes it for granted, without argument, that Christianity is false, or that its teachers are destitute of belief in its truth. There are those among its official champions who are convinced of its essential falsity, but it is incontrovertible that the majority of them firmly believe it to be true. It would indeed be indescribably absurd for anyone to *assume* that all divines are conscious hypocrites, or that Christianity itself is false. Of course, nothing is easier than to characterise Freethinkers as the victims of prejudice, but nothing can be more difficult than to prove such a charge. On the part of a Freethinker prejudice would signify an unreasonable predilection for the tenets of Freethought, a bias, preconception, or presumption against the Christian faith; but it must be borne in mind that the bulk of Freethinkers are converts from the Christian religion, all whose worldly interests were powerful arguments against their conversion. They renounced their belief alone in obedience to the dictates of reason. Had they listened to the voice of prejudice, they would have remained believers. How utterly unfair it is, therefore, to say that their judgment is now warped because they conscientiously argue against the faith, the truth being that they argue against the faith because they honestly must, not because they have any selfish motive to serve in so doing.

Advocates of Christianity almost invariably describe their opponents as ignorant and narrow-minded, shutting themselves up in a narrow sphere, refusing to examine Christian thought and teaching, and never getting on intimate terms with intelligent Christians. How absolutely false that description is appears from the fact that Christianity is presented to us as an object, not of knowledge, but of belief. An intelligent Christian believer is a natural impossibility, because God, Christ, and immortality are subjects that lie outside the scope of intelligence altogether. A believer in them may be zealous, fervent, pious, and prayerful, but never intelligent. Both a Christian and an Atheist are equally ignorant of spiritual realities, the only difference between them being that the former believes on the authority of a Book or a Church, or of both, and the latter disbelieves because the realities known to him indicate the non-existence of the spiritual realities believed in. In other words, the objects of knowledge testify to the unreality of the objects of belief. He who knows the natural cannot possibly believe in the supernatural. We are told that "spiritual truths and historic statements of Christian teaching stand or fall by the tests of experience, observation, and reason," but a moment's calm thought shows the infinite absurdity of such a claim. Is the Virgin Birth an object of experience? Has anybody ever observed the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth? Can the reality of the life everlasting be subjected to the critical test of reason? Merely to ask such questions is to wholly discredit the statement that "spiritual truths stand or fall" by such tests. Of spiritual or supernatural truths experience, observation, and reason are totally ignorant. They are merely objects of belief, and to charge unbelievers in them with ignorance is to be guilty of obvious irrationality.

Now, it is contended by the apologists that "spiritual truths" ought to be taught to children at the earliest possible age. If "spiritual truths" were objects of knowledge, and not simply of belief, the contention would be justifiable, and there could be no valid objection to the religious education of children.

But to make supernatural believers of unthinking children is to be guilty of injustice and unfairness towards them. One over-zealous apologist argues thus:—

"To say that the future of Christianity is dependent upon its being crammed down the throats of little children before they acquire the art of thinking is as nonsensical as it would be to say that the future of arithmetic, or the future of geographic science, or the future of elementary sanitation is dependent upon its being crammed down the throats of children before they acquire the art of thinking. We teach the children these things because we believe them to be true and part of their useful and necessary equipment for life. I imagine that the most convinced Freethinker would teach a child points of conduct and observance which would conduce to his bodily welfare and surround him with an atmosphere of health and cleanliness from his earliest youth."

The marvel is that our critic fails to perceive that the cases cited are in no sense parallel. Arithmetic, geographic science, elementary sanitation, and the laws of ethics are subjects the truth of which can easily be demonstrated, and it is as such that they are placed in the curriculums of our schools; but "spiritual truths" belong to an entirely different category. We teach our children natural truths because we know that they are verifiable, and that the knowledge of them will be useful to them in their later life; but "spiritual truths" are not susceptible of verification, and to force the little ones to swallow them on the authority of teachers as ignorant of them as themselves is the acme of imprudence and injustice. And yet we are assured by the clergy that, in the absence of the religious instruction of the young, Christianity would be doomed soon to disappear. So far is this from being nonsensical that the opponents of Secular Education are unanimous in its affirmation. Nobody knows that Christianity is true; but even on the assumption that it may be, it would be fairer to the children to allow them to judge for themselves when they arrive at years of discretion.

Let it never be forgotten that the overwhelming majority of Freethinkers started by assuming that Christianity is true. Not one of them arrived at his present position by assuming that there is nothing in it, all its professors being either selfish rogues or patient dupes. Atheism is the outcome of long, anxious, and painful thought. In this department the thinker assumes nothing but endeavors to prove everything. The critic already quoted regards the phrase that "to think is to doubt" as a demonstrable falsehood, because in his opinion "there is no strong positive belief on any subject whatever which is not the result of thought." With a considerably longer and wider experience than he is as yet able to claim, we beg to differ from him. As a matter of fact, all supernatural beliefs can be traced back to an Age of Ignorance, "a stage to which our anthropologists and explorers have found parallels in every part of the world." As Professor Gilbert Murray so aptly says:—

"It [the Age of Ignorance or Primal Stupidity] is so typical of stages of thought elsewhere [than in Greece] that one is tempted to regard it as the normal beginning of all religion, or almost as the normal raw material out of which religion is made. There is certainly some repulsiveness, but I confess that to me there is also an element of fascination in the study of these 'beastly devices of the heathen'" (*Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 16).

We infer that our critic has never studied the origin and evolution of religious beliefs, and is likewise ignorant of the difference between beliefs and dogmas. Christianity has come down to us as pre-eminently a dogmatic religion, and everybody knows that dogmas are the result of speculative and philosophical thought. Theologians have never acted as critics of Christianity itself, but always and only of other systems than their own. Every supernatural belief is the result, not of thought, but of ignorance of the laws of Nature; and we maintain that to think critically about Christianity is to doubt its truth. We well remember that in our own case

doubt invariably dogged the steps of thought, and that continual thinking ended in total unbelief.

The fact is that the so-called science of apologetics has completely broken down. No defence of Christianity serves the intended purpose. That is why such a flood of defences is being poured out upon Christendom from day to day, and why unbelievers are at last more numerous than whole-hearted believers. That also explains why Free-thinkers are so violently hated and abused, and so frequently prosecuted. It has at length come to pass that the most damaging attacks on the faith are made, not by avowed Atheists, but by professing Christians within the orthodox Church. At the recent meeting of the convocation of Canterbury numerous petitions were presented, some respectfully beseeching the Archbishop "to vindicate the authority of Holy Scripture, and to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word," and others pleading for freedom of thought and speech. The Council of the Churchmen's Union desired to lay before their Lordships of the Upper House, amongst others, the following solemn warning:—

"We dutifully and respectfully pray your Lordships to remember how often in the past, when the Episcopate or the Convocations have attempted to pronounce authoritatively upon scientific, critical, or historical questions, they have committed themselves to positions which are now by practically universal consent admitted to be untenable."

The Church of England is now a house divided against itself and, as such, destined to be overthrown. The Bishops of London and Oxford figured as stout defenders of orthodoxy, while Bishops Percival and Boyd-Carpenter were in favor of a larger latitude of opinions. Others, men equally in Holy Orders, were condemned as spreading views of Christianity which denied its miraculous character, and which depicted Jesus as "a certain Palestinian Jew," who was by no means infallible, and who never contemplated, and assuredly never instituted, the Church that bears his name. Well, Jesus is reported to have said that a house divided against itself cannot stand; and Christianity, defended by conflicting and necessarily false apologies, is bound sooner or later to vanish, utterly discredited.

J. T. LLOYD.

"Where No Fear Was."

The Early Poems of Walter Savage Landor, A Study of His Development, by W. Bradley. (Bradbury, Agnew: 1914).

In spite of the constant growth of new reputations, Landor's fame continues undimmed. Nor is this to be wondered at, for, when alive, he cast the spell of genius upon all who came near him. Southey, who had so many opportunities of judging, has left a magnificent tribute to his memory. Shelley was no less enthusiastic. De Quincey, Carlyle, Dickens, Emerson, and Lamb have all combined in their various ways to render affectionate tribute to that "deep-mouthed Boetian," as Byron called him. Browning dedicated his "Luria" to him, and Swinburne, the most golden-voiced of recent poets, sat at his feet and found inspiration in his wisdom. How lovingly he refers to him:—

"I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend."

It is given to few to inspire such love among friends, or such fear among enemies. A link between two literary ages, Landor stands a herculean figure in complete steel, towering above his contemporaries, ever ready to do battle for liberty.

Landor's literary activity extended over seventy years. He was a poet embodying revolutionary aspirations in classic language. He was a literary dramatist of great power, and, above all, he was a critic in the widest sense of that much-abused word.

The "Imaginary Conversations," on which competent judges have bestowed unbounded praise, is his masterpiece. There is nothing like it in the range of literature. It is a great panorama of historic persons, and includes Plato, in far-off Greece, to our own Porson; Hannibal, of old-world Carthage, to David Hume; Seneca to his own friend Southey. He has painted them all, kings, and greater than kings, statesmen and fair ladies, philosophers and prelates, writers and scientists, of all ages and of all types. Epicurus discusses philosophy in his garden; Montaigne laughs at the worthy Scaliger; Melancthon reproves Calvin.

How, perfectly, too, has Landor caught the relations of the French Court and the great lying Church in the ironic conversation between Louis XIV. and Pere La Chaise, when the king confesses the most damnable crimes and the obsequious confessor imposes the most trifling penances. Scene succeeds scene, each richer and fuller than its predecessor, supplementing one another, and go to make a magnificent picture of "life, like a dome of many-colored glass."

When Landor is at his best, not many are so perfect as he. There are few things more pathetic than his portrait of the unhappy Anne Boleyn. He represents the pious and hypocritical Henry coming disguised to see Anne in the condemned cell. Very touchingly does he express her womanly desire to see her child: "Could I kiss her but once again, it would comfort my heart or break it."

For long Landor's work was "caviare to the general." His masterpiece was venomously and ignorantly described as "the adventures of seven volumes, which are seven valleys of dry bones." This lack of appreciation is the more remarkable because Landor was a real and remarkable genius. In nearly every page of his writing one finds high thinking and rare eloquence. Indeed, a well-edited selection of his works would be one of the most beautiful books in the language. Although he addressed a small audience while he lived, he looked confidently to the future: "I shall dine late; but the drawing-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select."

The chief of Landor's other books is undoubtedly *Pericles and Aspasia*. Another of his works, *The Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare for Deer-Stealing*, provoked Lamb's happy epigram that it could only have been written by "the man who did write it, or he of whom it was written." Landor's poetry is not large in quantity, but few poets have won such recognition with such a small nosegay of verse. The exquisite lines on "Rose Aylmer" have found their way into many anthologies and many hearts, whilst the sympathetic lines on the death of Charles Lamb are an exquisite tribute to a splendid genius. The single stanza, in his own original manner, prefixed to one of his last books, epitomises Landor's life and aims in four lines:—

"I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved; and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

For those who care for concentration and restraint in literature, Landor's writings are full of delight. As a man he was dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love. Withal he was a typical Englishman, with an appetite for the heroic. He showed this when, on Napoleon's invasion of Spain, he went over, and, with his own energy and money, raised a regiment with whom he marched to the seat of war. A man of letters, he was also a man of action.

Landor has been called "a grand old Pagan," and his sympathies were certainly secular rather than religious. The eternal arrogance of priests always roused his opposition, and on this subject he writes with vigor. Speaking of the Bible, he makes Melancthon say to Calvin:—

"The book of good news, under your interpretation, tells people not only that they may go and be damned, but, unless they are lucky, they must inevitably."

And again, referring to religious persecution :—

"The unsoundness of doctrine is not cut off nor cauterised; the professor is. The head falls on the scaffold, or fire surrounds the stake, because a doctrine is bloodless and incombustible. Fierce, outrageous animals, for want of the man who has escaped them, lacerate and trample his cloak or bonnet. This, although the work of brutes, is not half so brutal as the practice of theologians, seizing the man himself, instead of bonnet or cloak."

In another page he returns to the attack :—

"There is scarcely a text in the Holy Scriptures to which there is not an opposite text, written in characters equally large and legible; and there has usually been a sword laid upon each."

He has a sly hit at spiritual intoxication :—

"At last the zealot is so infatuated by the serious mockeries he imitates and repeats that he really takes his own voice for God's. Is it not wonderful that the words of eternal life should have hitherto produced only eternal litigation?"

He closes the conversation with the magnificent words, "There is nothing on earth divine besides humanity."

Carlyle finely said of one of Landor's best literary efforts, published when the "old lion" was over eighty years of age: "The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians! The unshunnable old Roman!"

The last few years of Landor's life were spent in peace. On reading of Swinburne's visit to the old man shortly before his death, one is reminded of Turner's superb picture, "The Fighting Temeraire," where the old battleship is being towed to her last berth and transfused by the last glance of day's expiring glory. The symbolism of that great painting is exalted in the harmony between the memories of brave, old Landor and his abiding quiet, for whom for ever—

"All winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore."

MIMNERMUS.

National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL, LANGHAM PLACE,

London, W.

WHIT-SUNDAY, MAY 31, 1914.

Agenda.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report. By PRESIDENT.
3. Reception of Report.
4. Financial Report.
5. Election of President.
Motion by Bethnal Green, North London, and Kingsland Branches:—
"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."

6. Election of Vice-Presidents.
(a) The following are nominated by the Executive for re-election: J. Barry, W. H. Baker, J. G. Bartram, E. Bowman, R. Chapman, Victor Charbonnel, E. A. Charlton, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, H. Cowell, W. Davey, F. A. Davies, J. G. Dobson, W. Dodd, T. H. Elstob, R. G. Fathers, Léon Furnémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, J. Hammond, W. Heaford, Eugene Hins, S. L. Hurd, R. Johnson, Miss Kathleen B. Kough, W. Leat, J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, James McGlashen, G. B. H. McCluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, W. T. Pitt, C. G. Quinton, J. T. Ross, Miss Mary Ross, G. Roleffs, Mrs. Roleffs, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, S. Samuels, T. Shore, H. Silverstein, W. H. Spivey, Miss Alma Stanley, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, Miss E. M. Vance, F. E. Willis, C. J. Whitwell, Frederick Wood, G. White.

(b) Proposed by Executive :—

"That Mr. W. Bailey be elected Vice-President."

7. Election of Auditors.

8. Statement by Mr. G. W. Foote *re* the question of the Reorganisation of Secularism.

9. Motion by Mr. A. B. Moss :—

"That in view of the repeated failures of the Government to settle the Education Question on sectarian lines; in view also of the marked growth of public opinion in favor of a non-sectarian solution of a problem that owes its existence to the rivalries of Church and Chapel, this Conference calls upon the Government to put an end to a dispute that has for more than a generation obstructed the progress of education by restricting all instruction in State-supported schools to purely secular subjects."

10. Motion by Executive :—

"This Executive congratulates the Prime Minister on his manly reply to the deputation of memorialists on the subject of the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and is glad that, although he cannot promise Government support for the new Bill introduced for the total repeal of those persecuting laws, he can yet promise a friendly personal assistance."

11. Motion by Mr. Cowell :—

"That two Auditors be appointed to audit London Branch Accounts, and that after audit a copy be forwarded to the Secretary to include in Central Balance Sheet for production at Conference."

12. Motion by Half-Yearly Meeting of London Members :—

"That the Executive be asked to appoint a committee of two to work in conjunction with the General Secretary in organising demonstrations and extra meetings on new ground within the London district, with a view to extending the work of the Society."

13. Motion by Kingsland Branch :—

"That the present inadequate state of Freethought organisation militates against its effectiveness as a national force in England, and that Freethinkers should, if possible, be united in one National Federation, and that the N. S. S. Executive appoint a committee to inquire and report what steps appear to be feasible in this direction."

14. Motion by Mr. J. T. Lloyd :—

"This Conference congratulates the Government on the practically assured success of its Welsh Disestablishment Bill, and hopes it will carry the same principle forward in a Bill for the Disestablishment of the Church and other forms of religious privilege in England."

15. Motion by Mr. C. Cohen :—

"This Conference deeply deplores the continued growth of the spirit of Militarism, both at home and abroad, and regards the growing expenditure of the European nations on war and preparations for war as unimpeachable evidence of the failure of the Christian Church as a civilising force; it therefore looks to the growth of Freethought principles and humanitarian ideas as the only agencies that promise a release from the moral and financial burden of Militarism."

This Conference will sit in the Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, W.; the morning session lasting from 10.30 to 12.30, and the afternoon session from 2.30 to 4.30. Both are purely business meetings. Only members of the N. S. S. can speak and vote. A public meeting will be held in the evening at 7 o'clock. The President will occupy the chair on all three occasions. A luncheon for delegates and visitors has been arranged at the Café Marguerite, 171 Oxford-street, W., at 1 o'clock.

By order of the Executive,

G. W. FOOTE, *President.*

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

SUPERSTITION.

It has sacrificed countless lives, wasted untold treasures, embroiled nations, severed friends, parted husbands and wives, parents and children, putting swords, and worse than swords, between them; it has filled gaols and madhouses with its innocent or deluded victims; it has broken many hearts, embittered the whole of many a life, and not content with persecuting the living, it has pursued the dead into the grave and beyond it, gloating over the horrors which its foul imagination has conjured up to appal and torture the survivors.—*J. G. Frazer, "Psyche's Task."*

Men who desire to learn must first learn to doubt, for science is only the solution of doubts.—*Aristotle.*

Acid Drops.

The funniest "thanksgiving" service we ever heard of took place on Sunday. It was organised by the Churches. There has been a great deal of talk about the blind lately. The lot of these unfortunate people has been bewailed, and special efforts are being made to provide them with better means of earning their living and brightening their leisure hours. A bright idea occurred to the clergy. Of course it was something illogical. While so many people were blind many more people could see, and these should thank God for "the gift of sight." It would have been less selfish on their part if they had sunk the thought of themselves and besought God to extend the gift of sight to those who had never had it or had been deprived of it by some accident or some disease. All their "thanks"—and they know it—will never make the "Father of All" display an impartial benevolence to his children.

We have no doubt that those people who have sight will feel deeply appreciative of their own good fortune. But if they are really justified in thanking God for sight—that is, if it comes from God, for otherwise it were absurd to thank him for it—what of the many thousands of people in this country who are blind? Clearly they have a legitimate complaint against God; for if people see because God has given them sight, others do not see because he has withheld the "blessing." To make the thing complete the blind people ought to hold an indignation meeting protesting against the action of Deity in causing their blindness. This is not blasphemy, it is only common sense. The right to praise implies the right to blame. If piety did not invariably dull intelligence everyone attending those services would have asked themselves the question, "Why has not God given to all people the 'blessing of sight' that I have myself?"

This "thanksgiving" idea might be developed. Religious services might be held to thank God for the gift of a good liver or a good pair of kidneys; though it is to be feared that a multitude of religious people, including a large percentage of the clergy themselves, especially in crowded centres of population, would have to be left out of such assemblies. They could join the Holy Willies' meeting, however, and thank God for making them "sae gifted." Two-legged Christians might thank God for giving them the full number of lower limbs, and the one-legged might thank him for not depriving them of both. There is no end to the developments of this idea, and the clergy should really work it for all it is worth.

The May meetings have brought the usual crop of missionary visitors and missionary sermons. The Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, preaching at Bow Church, Cheapside, says that China is now ready for Christianity. We have heard that before, and we fancy all that it means is that Christians are ready to supply it. The only evidence offered is that of a Christian Englishman in China, who said, "China's one hope is in Christ." That, too, we have heard before. More pertinent is the remark which the Secretary says was made to him by a "distinguished statesman in China" some eighteen months ago. He said, "If, as we develop our resources, we spend them on education, on hospitals, and put first the welfare of the people, instead of spending large sums on armaments, will the Christian nations keep their hands off us?"

Now, that sentence has an authentic ring about it. It is the kind of thing a shrewd Chinaman would ask a Christian who was bothering him with all the cant talk about the civilising influences of Christianity. And it must have been a poser. Would the Christian Powers keep their hands off China? Have they done so? Why the only safeguard for China for many years has been the fact that the gang of European brigands could not agree upon the share of the plunder. Piratical expeditions in all directions have been the rule of the Christian powers, and always under the sickening guise of religion and morality. The question of the Chinese statesman was exactly the complaint of the leader of the Turkish Parliament a few years back. He, too, said that they had hoped to devote their energies and their resources to a betterment of the people. But Christian Europe would not have it. It compelled Turkey to embark on a great military development if it was to retain its freedom. It is compelling China to take the same course. From the greed and brutality of Christian nations the non-Christian nations have only one sure protection—that is to be strong enough to make spoliation a dangerous enterprise.

Finally, the Secretary of the C.M.S. asked, "Have missions any part in helping to arrest war?" And, of course, he said Yes. It is a safe thing to say before a religious audience, but it was utterly false. A very large part of the trouble with China in the past has been directly traceable to missionary activity. More than one outbreak there was the result of missionary interference with native justice and native customs. In New Zealand the war with the natives had as a powerfully contributory cause the greed and aggrandisement of missionary societies. In India missionary zeal was one of the causes of the Mutiny. All over the world the missionary has been the advance guard of armed intervention. How can missionaries prevent war? They obviously do not make their own people less warlike; and none but a lunatic would argue that missionary interference with native customs make a people more kindly disposed towards those whom the missionary represents.

In a religious contemporary the advertisements include notices to the ruptured, toothless, paralytic, bald-headed, half blind, flat-footed, and the cancerous and dyspeptic. We always thought Christians were on the down grade; we are sure of it now.

A portrait of the late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, unveiled at the Central Hall, Westminster, is described as "startling." Why so? Is the figure holding a copy of *The Atheist Shoemaker*?

The Rev. A. J. Waldron says there are "in reality three Bibles: The Book of Nature; The Old and New Testaments; The sum of human experience." He appears to know as little of religion as of irreligion, for the veriest tyro might have reminded him of the existence of the sacred books of the East.

After officiating for thirty-seven years, the Rector of Stock, Essex, has resigned the living. The rector says, in announcing his resignation: "The number of able-bodied men who never, or only rarely, attend public worship shows me that my ministry is to a great extent wanting in due influence on the spiritual life of this parish." We congratulate the rector on his candor. Thousands of other clergymen would say the same were they equally straightforward. And yet the reverend gentleman has no obvious cause to attribute his failure to personal demerit. No man ought to expect to overcome the spirit of his time. In theory the clergy still remain the spiritual guides of the nation; in practice they are becoming of ever-lessening consequence. No one seriously troubles about their spiritual thunderbolts, or is gravely concerned with their supernaturalistic pretensions. They are mere survivals, and the world bears with them because they have always been here. Here and there one man feels the position, but the majority of the clergy will hang on so long as the world is stupid enough to tolerate them.

It is strange, however, how the cant about the authority of the clergy is kept up. Speaking on the second reading of the Sunday Closing Bill, Mr. Ellis Griffith said in the House of Commons that "leaders of religious thought of all denominations were in favor of some such restrictions as were proposed." One would like to know from Mr. Ellis Griffith what he considers to be the precise value of the authority of the clergy on the subject, and on what facts that authority is based? The clergy as a body are not expert statisticians, sociologists, or scientists. In either of these directions no one counts them as of any weight whatever. Their views on all social questions are obviously directed by sectarian considerations. Imagine anyone in their senses taking as a guide on a social question of any importance the opinion of a person like the present Bishop of London! Viewed from any rational point of view, the opinion of the clergy carries no weight whatever. We do not say this as a Freethinker, but as an expression of opinion that few thoughtful people would challenge. The power of the medicine-man belongs to the savage, not to the civilised State.

When the Balkan War was brought to a close, Albania was created an independent State, and Prince George of Wied elected as its king. Both the Mohammedan and Orthodox Catholic inhabitants were agreeable, and Dr. Dillon, the eminent authority on Eastern affairs, is of opinion that left alone the Albanians might have worked out their own political and social salvation. But this was to reckon without the opposition of Greek Christians in Albania and beyond its borders. These have made trouble from the outset, and recent reports, now well confirmed, contain sickening accounts of the barbarities exercised by these modern "Crusaders." In one village, Hormova, over

200 villagers have been hanged or killed. At Kodra nearly 200 Mohammedan Albanians were crucified, the nails being driven through the chests, hands, and feet of the victims; many others have been massacred or burned alive in their houses. A later report adds that at Hormova the children were cruelly tortured, many of them having their fingers cut off. One thing seems certain, that is, that assuming as true Christian stories of previous Mohammedan cruelties, they were mild compared with the barbarities of these Crusading Christians. For refinement of cruelty the Medieval Inquisition was an easy first in the world's history. Modern Eastern Christians seem bent on showing that Christianity, in modern times, has not quite lost its power of supremacy in this direction.

Rev. W. H. Thorpe, a missionary home from India, says if there were no Christian missionaries in India there would be "profound unrest," because "as modern knowledge spreads and grows, the disintegration of creeds is bound to follow." Just so; but that is a consequence that no more affects the religions of India than it affects those of Great Britain. What Mr. Thorpe assumes is that, if Christianity is on the spot in India, it will take the place of the native religions. And this is a dream of sheer fanaticism. The educated Hindoo—the one, that is, who is chiefly affected by the spread of modern knowledge—does not become a Christian. He is willing, in the absence of other means, to get his education in Western ideas through missionary agencies, but that is all. And some of the greatest native opponents of Christianity in India are those that have been educated in missionary colleges.

Christianity is the worst religion in the world. Especially for lies and hypocrisy. Some of our readers will remember how the American clergy chortled over the grief of Mrs. Ingersoll at the death of her husband. They did not even allow for the fact that she had more than most widows to weep over. They laughed at the "consolations" of Agnosticism. Why don't they laugh now at the consolations of Christianity? The American newspapers report that "Mrs. Horne is prostrated with grief." Ingersoll died suddenly in his wife's company; the Rev. Silvester Horne died suddenly in his wife's company. The two cases are essentially similar. Yet the Christian wife's grief is treated as perfectly natural, while the Agnostic wife's grief is treated as a warning against "infidelity." The orthodox head is as soft as the orthodox heart is hard.

We are inclined to think that when *John Bull* speaks of the Rev. A. J. Waldron as representing "a surplice with a man under it," and as one who will speak the truth and "damn the consequences," the editor is writing with his tongue in his cheek. The remarks quoted are *appropos* of Mr. Waldron's recent confession that he does not believe in the resurrection of the body. But does that really require much courage and demand a superior sort of a man nowadays? Why, there are probably hundreds of thousands of Christians who have already said the same thing; and in that fact lies, in all probability, Mr. Waldron's rare "courage" in following suit. Imagine, too, the quality of a man who has only just realised that the resurrection of the body is unthinkable! It requires no ability to come to that conclusion, and nowadays it requires precious little courage to say it. Any man calling himself civilised and educated ought to be *ashamed* to confess that he believes so stupid a teaching.

John Bull is on safer ground when it points out that Mr. Waldron is an ordained priest of the Church of England, and is *paid* to teach the doctrine he says is unthinkable (it is not a bit more unthinkable than other doctrines he still preaches), and "to men of honest instinct it is equally unthinkable that the Vicar of Brixton should long remain bondsman to a Church whose tenets he has obviously outgrown. It is inconceivable that he should continue to eat the bread of the Establishment while claiming the freedom of dissent. For is not he an honorable man?" It is to be observed that *John Bull* puts the last sentence in the form of an interrogation.

There is no fear whatever that Mr. Waldron will abandon his post as vicar of Brixton merely because he does not believe in the teachings he is paid to preach. He is only in the position that many others occupy. There are thousands of clergymen, both Conformist and Nonconformist, who do not believe, in any straightforward sense, in the teachings of the Church to which they belong. They remain, they draw their salaries, and they invent numerous devices by which they may interpret doctrines to suit themselves, or delude themselves with vague talk about the advance of

thought. As though the advance of thought had anything to do with it. The advance of thought may explain a change of opinion, it will explain a man *leaving* the Church, but it cannot explain, nor excuse, a man continuing in a Church after he has rejected its teaching. To vary the expression cited above, "No straightforward man could continue to eat the bread of a Church while claiming freedom to reject its doctrines." In no other profession would such conduct be considered permissible for a moment. And the curious thing is that, apart from the question of religion, these same men will act quite honorably. It is religion that appears to demoralise them.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner does well to contradict the old "watch" story about her father as often as she can. We are glad to see her recent letter to the *Times* correcting a new version of it from the pen of Mr. Stephen Graham. But why talk about "the feelings of Mr. Bradlaugh's relatives and friends" at this time of day in relation to such a matter as this? Mr. Bradlaugh was a public man—he belonged to the world, and he belongs to history. Besides, it is not the wickedness of the "watch" story that anybody cares about now, but its shocking silliness. Whatever he was or was not, everybody is agreed that Bradlaugh was not a fool. It would be perfectly obvious to a man of his intelligence that "God" was not bound to accept a challenge from anybody, at any moment, and at any place; and that the challenge had no logical relation to the question at issue.

A Suffragette tried to burn down Spurgeon's Tabernacle by means of a bomb last week-end. It was very wrong, of course; but she did not succeed in doing much damage. "God's" week-end effort was on a grander scale and far more successful. With one of his earthquakes he destroyed one of the most beautiful parts of Sicily, killing hundreds and injuring thousands of his own creatures. The Suffragette is rightly denounced; not a word is said against "God."

A lady complained to the Rev. Forbes Phillips, of Gorleston, that she was poisoned by the incense at his church. The vicar's characteristic reply was that he would await the finding of the coroner's inquest before dealing with the matter. A palpable hit!

The May meetings are sounding their "annual bray," as Macaulay phrases it. Two of the meetings were presided over by princes and two by dukes. The Archbishop of Canterbury takes six, and the Lord Mayor of London five. Peers preside over twenty two. What a change since the fishing-nets of the apostles were sold to the rag and bone dealers!

Half of the Baptist ministers have salaries of £100 a year and less, and a quarter of a million of money has been raised to supplement the incomes of the poorer pastors. Who would think that the founder of Christianity was sold for thirty shillings?

Christian preachers, realising that their religion is a stage nearer the melting-pot, are now taking a great interest in social reform. At the Presbyterian Synod, the Rev. J. A. Wilson, in supporting a resolution in favor of the living wage, said there were 50,000 women in London earning only 1¹/₂d. an hour. It was only a penny a day in the New Testament.

A new Biblical play, entitled *The Holy City*, was produced appropriately at the Comedy Theatre recently. The scenes include the roof of Mary Magdalene's house, and Christ is supposed to be just off the stage on several occasions during the drama. Perhaps this is less laughable than the attempt to portray the Second Person of the Trinity by means of the limelight and some spangles, as was done in a melodrama some years ago.

"There is nothing in politics, rightly understood, that cannot be a service to God," is a saying attributed to the late Rev. Silvester Horne. It should comfort the hearts of the carpet-baggers and "mugwumps."

The Rev. Father Rance, of Southend-on-Sea, says that people who spend five shillings on a Saturday outing often put twopenny in the plate at church on Sunday. How much does he expect them to have left for the collection?

The Rev. A. Newman, of Whittlesea, has made the amazing discovery that Sunday games are unobjectionable. He might conduct a mission among his ministerial brethren.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £146 5s.

W. HYPWORTH (Johannesburg).—We note your correction that the alleged Zulu word "tungi" in our issue for March 15 should have been "tunzi." The error, we feel, is pardonable in a proof-reader in this paper. Our shop manager received your subscription quite safely, and we hope the paper has reached you regularly.

E. RUSSELL.—Your question was answered in last week's issue. The publisher is Methuen; price 6s.

W. BYNION.—We are not surprised that straightforward speaking on religion is not relished at the gatherings you attend. The reverend gentleman to whom we replied in "Acid Drops" of a fortnight ago is not the one you have in mind. You will find a further reply to another letter from the same gentleman in this issue.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—Your letter, beyond expressing your endorsement of Miss Kidd's article and disapproval of Mr. Palmer's opinion, does not add anything material to the discussion. Miss Kidd and Mr. Palmer have both had their say, and so far as we are concerned the matter must now be left. We have only a limited space at our disposal; so far as is possible this must be reserved for those specific objects for which this journal exists.

T. LECOMTE (Paris).—Subscription for paper received. We are glad to learn that you find so much pleasure and profit in what you call our "interesting and courageous paper."

ATHEIST (Birmingham).—We do not see how one can very well separate the "ethical system" of the New Testament from the New Testament theology. It is quite evident that it was the theology about which the first Christians were most interested, if not the only thing in which they were interested. And it was certainly that upon which the Christian Church was built. The notion that it was the ethical teaching of Jesus that was all-important is quite a modern idea. It is just one of the means by which modern apologists have tried to commend an outworn superstition to a civilised community.

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.

Special.

THE COMING CONFERENCE.

I SAID the other week that there must be some fine weather in May. Fortunately I never pretended to be infallible. It looks as though the fine weather in this May would have to hurry up. Personally I find the lack of warmth and sunshine a bit trying, but I am getting stronger every day, and also every night, for I am sleeping rather better. I have no doubt of being reasonably fit at the N. S. S. Conference on Whit-Sunday at Queen's (Minor) Hall. I hope to meet a good rally of "saints" then, and a larger rally, of course, at the evening public meeting. I have some things to say there which I consider to be of the highest importance to our movement. They occupied my mind a great deal during my recent illness. I believe they will occupy the attention of the Freethought party a great deal in the future. My friends well know that I mean all I say.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Arrangements for the N. S. S. Conference are now well in hand, and some of the items on the Agenda, which appears in another part of this issue, may have developments that will be of importance to the Secular movement. We hope that London Freethinkers will be doing their best to make the Conference, and particularly the evening meeting a complete success. As it is in London, the advertisement most of necessity be of a personal nature. One cannot "bill" London as one could a small town. Some slips advertising the evening meeting are being prepared, and those who can oblige by their distribution should send their names to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. General Secretary. As will be seen from the Agenda, a Conference luncheon has been arranged, and notice should be given as early as possible by those who intend to be present at that function.

We are sorry to learn that Christian rowdies continue to do their best, and their worst, at Edmonton. Miss Kough was the lecturer on Sunday last, and was subjected to a running fire of interruptions, not in the best of taste or expressed in the choicest language. After her lecture was concluded, and she had left the meeting, the rowdism became more marked, and the police were compelled to interfere. Under the circumstances Mr. Cohen has promised to deliver a lecture there this evening, and we hope the platform will receive proper support. The meeting will be held on Edmonton Green, and is timed to commence at 7.30. Edmonton Green is near the Town Hall, and can be reached either by tram or 'bus, or by the Great Eastern Railway service.

The *English Review* has always the merit of not being platitudinous and "respectable." This should be an appeal in itself to Freethinkers. The May number contains one of Henri Fabre's interesting articles on Insects—this time on Red Ants. Mr. Frank Harris's symbolic story, "The Veils of Isis," will repay a close perusal. We cannot say we are any more in love with Mr. H. G. Wells's "The World Set Free," which ends in this number. A clever political skit by the editor, called "King Carson," deserves special mention amongst the remaining contents.

Sir Herbert Tree has been speaking very freely to a *Referee* interviewer on Sunday performances in theatres. He is all for legalising them as soon as possible. He denounces the methods by which the clergy of all denominations still fight the Sunday opening of theatres, even where they are obliged to wink at the Sunday opening of performances and concert-halls. It is pretended that the performances at these places are devoted to charity. "Yes," Sir Herbert says, "yes; I know that 'charity.' It comes from — well! I will say no more, lest I should drop into, say, Shavian prose."

We sometimes wish we had the power ascribed to Jesus in the Apocryphal Gospels—that of stretching a plank of wood to a desired size. In that case we might be able to do the same with the columns of this paper, and so find room for much that often has to be left out. Unfortunately, our qualities are of a less picturesque character, and so we regret that we have been compelled to hold over a further instalment of "Abracadabra's" *Christian Apologetics*. We apologise both to our contributor and to our readers, but cannot get thirteen inches into a foot, try how we may.

According to the *Christian Age*, Dr. A. C. Dixon, of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, has been asked to allow his sermons to be translated into Chinese, Russian, Spanish, and other languages. Let us hope that the reverend doctor will expunge his references to Ingersoll before the translations are made. Otherwise, we shall be compelled to have a Chinese edition of the *Freethinker*.

Religion—Protestant as well as Catholic—is ceasing everywhere to control the life of the State. Government in all countries is becoming sternly secular. The preambles of old Acts of Parliament contained usually in formal words a reference to the will of the Almighty. Legislators looked for instruction, not to political economy, but to the Bible. "The will of the Almighty" is now banished to the conscience or the closet. The statesman keeps rigidly to the experienced facts of the world, and will have neither priest nor minister to interpret them for him. Political economy may contradict the Sermon on the Mount, but it is none the less the manual of our political leaders.—*J. A. Froude*.

Primitive Man.—II.

(Continued from p. 293.)

"Humanity in its misery has put question after question to science, and has lost patience at the slowness of the advance of knowledge. It has declared that the answers already formed by science are futile and of little interest. From time to time it has preferred to turn back, and to delude itself with the beautiful mirage offered by religions and systems of philosophy.

"But science, confident of its methods, has quietly continued to work. Little by little, the answers to some of the questions that have been set have begun to appear. Whence do we come? science has been asked unceasingly. Is not man a being unlike other beings, made in the image of God animated with the divine breath, and immortal? No, science answers. Man is a kind of miscarriage of an ape, endowed with profound intelligence and capable of great progress. His brain is the seat of processes that are very complex and much higher than those of other animals, but these functions are incompatible with the existence of an immortal soul."—PROFESSOR ELIE METCHNIKOFF, *The Future of Man*, p. 286.

"Instead of having fallen from a perfect religion, man has but slowly emerged from the grossest superstitions. No one now supposes that some God invented architecture or music. We can trace how these arts have grown. Religion, as much as the arts, has developed from rude beginnings. It is a growth of earth, not a gift of heaven, and its manifestations have usually very clear traces of their clayey origin sticking to them."—J. M. WHEELER, *Footsteps of the Past*, pp. 1-2.

DRYDEN, in his play, *The Conquest of Granada*, speaks of a time "When wild in woods the noble savage ran." Jean Jacques Rousseau declared that primitive man, as he first appeared upon the earth, was perfect, both physically and morally. "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains"* are the arresting words with which his *Social Contract* opens. While men like the Atheist Condorcet were nerved to action by the dream of human perfectibility in the future—which was, indeed, the dominant belief of the best minds of the eighteenth century—Rousseau turned from this splendid vision, regarding it as fantastic mockery. For him, the golden age lay, not in front, but behind. From his glowing imagination he conjures up an idyllic picture of a primitive arcadian state, where pity takes the place of laws and manners, and where the savage enjoys rude health through avoiding the overheated dwellings and over-abundant diet of the rich. So long, says Rousseau, as men lived in hovels, used bows and arrows, and were content with garments of skins, "they lived free, healthy, good, and happy."† Rousseau traces all the calamities, woes, and ills that beset mankind entirely to man's presumptuous efforts to emerge from that happy ignorance in which, he declared, eternal wisdom first placed us. As man has progressed in science and art, so he has lost in health, freedom, and morality.‡ Our best plan, therefore, would be to retrace our steps along the path we have travelled, discarding civilisation by the way, until we again arrived at the primitive state of innocence and ignorance from which we started.

Such were the ideas with which Rousseau captivated Europe, and were destined, later on, to bear fruit in the great French Revolution, the leaders of which were all impregnated with these ideas of Rousseau, whose works constituted their Bible.

But we know a great deal more about savage life, and primitive man, than at the time when Rousseau wrote his *Discourses* (1750-4) and his *Social Contract* (1762). Three sciences have sprung into existence since then—Anthropology, Ethnology, and Sociology—and these have given the death-blow to the idea of the "noble savage" and the beautiful arcadian existence led by primitive man. As that gifted Frenchman, M. Saloman Reinach, well observes: "The idea evolved in the eighteenth century of the free savage, emancipated from all constraints, is irreconcilable with the most elementary facts of ethnography. Rousseau's free savage is no real

savage, but a philosopher who has stripped himself naked.*

The savage is not noble, he is not free, he is no healthier than we are. Lionel Declé, the traveller, tells us that in Africa, in spite of the practice of polygamy and the large number of children born, "More than seventy per cent. die before they reach the age of five months; and for this reason, if polygamy ceases to exist, the native races will disappear from Africa."† Mr. E. D. Morel, another good authority, says that among the Nigerians "Infant mortality is terrible."‡

The average duration of life among adults is also far below the civilised standard. It is well known that missionaries rely a great deal more upon the medicine-chest than upon the Bible for making converts, and every missionary now sent out has to have a knowledge of medicine.

Here is a pen-picture of other aspects of the noble savage. Of the Matabele tribe of South Africa, Mr. Lionel Declé observes:—

"Honesty, kindness, gratitude, do not exist for them. The thief is not despised because he has stolen, but because he has allowed himself to be caught, and if his crime remains undetected, he is admired by all. The higher powers, whether chiefs or spirits, are respected in direct proportion to what we should call their cruelty and tendency to evil. At the great dance, as we have seen, the great warriors came forward and enumerated the number of people they had killed, not only in war, but also in their own country—for instance, if they had put a man to death by order of the King. Whenever Lo Ben wanted someone killed, every man was anxious to be entrusted with the mission, whether the intended victim were his bitterest enemy or his dearest friend. Kindness is considered by them the result of fear."§

Their women are only worth slightly more than cattle, and are only appreciated for the work they are able to perform; "our conception of love is unintelligible to them" (p. 166). The same author says: "I could tell many stories of unnatural and barbarous abominations among them." But the negro, meaning thereby the Bantu, is not the lowest type met with in Africa. "That distinction," says Mr. Declé,—

"belongs to the bushman. The bushman is, perhaps, a little more developed than the anthropoid ape, but he remains his first cousin. He makes himself a fire, and we understand his language. The ape cannot make a fire, and at present we do not understand his language. That is all the difference between the two."

He is by instinct "intensely malicious and destructive." And further:—

"The African black in the primitive state is hardly further removed from the beast. His existence centres itself almost wholly upon one aim—for it can hardly be called an ideal—eating. Thought for the morrow is absolutely unknown to him. Give him his food for a week, he will devour it until he cannot gorge another mouthful, and then he will spoil the rest. He is as little conscious of the past as of the future. Things are wiped from his mind the moment after they have happened; he is absolutely incapable of measuring time, even from the most recent and important events. Only in one way does he bring himself into relation with the past—through the sentiment of fear and revenge. Gratitude is unknown to him. The animal affection of parents for their young rarely extends with the primitive African beyond the years of infancy; after that the relation is forgotten, as it is among the beasts. Love is unknown to him. There is no word in any Central African language meaning 'kiss.'"||

Added to all this,—

"the native sees nothing beautiful, wonderful, or attractive in Nature. Flowers and trees, and the most enchanting scenery, are entirely lost upon him. A tree only begins to interest him when it is fit to burn. And yet, though he finds nothing to be enjoyed in Nature, he is quite satisfied with his position. All he wants is plenty to eat and little to do, and these wants are generally perfectly easy to satisfy" (517).

* Reinach, *Orpheus*, p. 20.

† Lionel Declé, *Three Years in Savage Africa* (1900), p. 160.

‡ Morel, *Nigeria: Its Peoples and Its Problems*, p. 214.

§ Lionel Declé, *Three Years in Savage Africa*, p. 165.

|| Declé, *Three Years in Savage Africa*, pp. 510-511.

* J. Morley, *Rousseau* (1873), vol. ii., p. 122.

† J. Morley, *Rousseau*, vol. i., p. 170.

‡ J. Morley, *Rousseau*, vol. i., pp. 138-141.

Miss Kingsley, in her *Travels in West Africa* (p. 356), says "You rarely, indeed I believe never, find an African with a gift for picturesque scenery." And Crawford, the missionary, speaking of a gorgeous African sunset, a "dissolving scene which memory makes its own," says of the Negro, "To him this painted poetry is the plainest of plain prose."*

Of course, there are many other tribes in Africa who have made more progress than these, and Mr. Decle is careful to point out, more than once, that he is referring to the most primitive. That he was a competent observer is testified by the famous explorer, H. M. Stanley, who, in writing an introduction to the work, says that Mr. Decle was entrusted by the French Government with a scientific mission "to proceed to South and East Africa, to study their ethnology and anthropology, for which purpose he was peculiarly well qualified by his training and observation" (p. 8).

Gluttony and waste seem to be characteristic of primitive man in all quarters of the globe. J. P. Thomson, in his book on *British New Guinea*, speaking of the feasts at which the natives "gorge themselves," observes:—

"Native festivity is not infrequently accompanied by great privation brought about through scarcity of food. This degenerative social institution of feast and famine does not confine itself to New Guinea, but extends itself over the whole equatorial zone of the Pacific" (pp. 70, 71).

—Resulting in "thousands of hungry children and weak, lean mothers."

Catlin, who lived for many years among the North American Indians, tells us that a party of Indians returned to camp "with fourteen hundred fresh buffalo tongues," not a pound of the flesh or a skin being used, the camp being well stocked with dried meat. "This profligate waste of the lives of these noble and useful animals," says Catlin, "is a fair exhibition of the improvident character of the savage."†

Again, in far-away Patagonia, Carl Skottsberg tells us:—

"What delight when they come across a stranded whale! Feasts are held as long as anything eatable is left; from all directions the savages hasten up, eat till they are fit to burst, and pull away with loaded canoes. Several of the Indians we met had big quantities of whale-biubber. This does not contradict the fact that the Indian only lives for the day and never thinks of saving anything; he leads a wild life, with meat and biubber one day and nothing to eat the next."‡

Messrs. Spencer and Gillen say of the Aborigine of Australia:—

"He has not reached the agricultural stage of civilization, and has no idea of cultivating cereals or of laying in a stock of food to maintain himself during the time when food is scarce. He lives from hand to mouth without any thought of the morrow. When food is abundant he eats in plenty and is quite happy; when it is scarce he accepts the condition philosophically, and, if hungry, merely tightens his waist-belt and patiently waits until such time as he can find something to eat."§

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

Design and Natural Selection.—II.

THE second illustration—that of the human eye—is rather an unfortunate one to put forward as affording design in nature. Nothing is more common than to see persons or animals with defective eyesight; and any imperfection in vision resulting from an inherent quality of the organ is an evidence either of bad design or an absence of design altogether. To allege that an imperfect organ can be the work of an all-wise and all-powerful Deity supposes that a perfect being can produce a failure.

Nor could a perfect organ, designed by an Almighty God, get out of order; for it is a positive evidence of imperfect workmanship that an organ or instrument becomes impaired or rendered valueless by use. Thousands of people born into the world are born with eyes out of which they cannot see. As Tom Hood, in one of his satirical poems, says of Tim Turpin, who was gravel blind:—

"And ne'er had seen the skies;
For Nature, when his head was made,
Forgot to dot his eyes."

But in this case the deficiency would be chargeable against Deity; for Nature, being neither intelligent nor good, cannot be considered as answerable for her imperfect productions.

There are thousands of persons born blind, and hundreds of thousands whose sight is so defective that they keep the doctors at our ophthalmic hospitals in constant employment. As an optical instrument, the human eye is very imperfect. To enable him to see small objects, or objects at a great distance, man has to call in the aid of the optician, who can manufacture microscopes by which very minute particles of matter can be seen, or telescopes by which heavenly bodies altogether out of view to the naked eye are brought within the range of human vision. "Optically," says Professor H. D. Garrison, of America,

"the eye is not perfectly planned to guard against spherical and chromatic aberrations, while in mechanical construction it is inferior to the cheapest optical instrument in the market. Astigmatism, or want of sphericity of the cornea, is present in a greater or less degree in every human eye, while the crystalline lens are not truly centred, as Helmholtz has shown, on the optical axis of the eye. The refracting media of the eye, as the aqueous humor, the crystalline lens, the vitreous humor, are not uniformly transparent, and hence rays of light during transmission undergo absorption and refraction, giving rise to various shadows, halos, and fringes, which fall upon the retina, to the great impairment of vision. Even in the best of eyes there are numerous opaque granules, or floating patches, in the humors, giving rise to moving spots or spectres, so well observed, and yet so annoying, while using the microscope, especially if the field is well illuminated. Long-sightedness and short-sightedness are common difficulties, arising from want of proper relation between the refracting power of the eye and its depth, or the antero-posterior diameter. All these difficulties are practically overcome or avoided in even the cheapest photographic cameras in the market, and yet no one has ever claimed that the camera had a miraculous origin, or that the wonderful design manifest in its mechanism proves its designer to have been a God."

Every organ that man possesses is in some respect imperfect—indeed, absolute perfection is altogether inconceivable, there being degrees of perfection only, by reason of comparison with other objects. Thus, as organs, one pair of eyes may be more perfect than another, though each may be defective; and so on.

When, instead of individual objects being taken separately, we take the working of nature as a whole, we find that all animated nature is in constant warfare—the insect against the vegetable, the birds against the insects, the lower animals against the birds, and man against them all. And so terrible is this struggle that, if the Design Argument were really true, many of the designs are of so destructive and horrible a character as to reflect anything but credit upon the wisdom or goodness of the Deity who is the alleged author. Thus we find the claws and teeth of some carnivorous animals are so arranged as to be just suited for the purpose of laying hold of and tearing the flesh of their prey. In fact, in nature the strong oppress the weak, the brutal ride roughshod over the gentle, the lion tears the peaceful deer or the inoffensive lamb; idleness and hypocrisy revel in luxury whilst modest honesty walks about in rags. And how oft indeed the earth has been deluged in blood through the wickedness, the superstition, or the caprice of the powerful! With truth crushed to earth, virtue outraged, misery and suffering perpetually abounding in the various nations of the earth, is it not folly to talk of the

* D. Crawford, *Thinking Black*.

† G. Catlin, *Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, vol. i., p. 257.

‡ Carl Skottsberg, *The Wilds of Patagonia*, p. 95.

§ Gillen and Spencer, *Across Australia*, p. 197.

beautiful designs of Omnipotence? Man, assuming in his vanity that everything was made especially for him, has arrogantly declared that everything in the universe was arranged to subserve to his benefit.

Curé Meslier, in his *Bon Sens*, relates an Eastern story which fittingly describes this arrogance. A priest, on a pilgrimage, wanders through some gardens; he is surrounded by trees, whose foliage enchants the eye and the perfume of whose leaves is delicious. Some of the trees contain luscious fruit, of which he partakes, and, as he does so, he shouts up in his ecstasy, "Allah, Allah, how good thou art to the children of men! Thou hast made these trees to charm our sight and the fruit to minister to our wants; how good thou art to the children of men." Proceeding on his journey, he goes through still more beautiful gardens. He hears the birds singing in the trees; while the sun in all his glory and refulgence shines upon the face of the earth, and everything seems to breathe an air of joy and peace, and in his ecstasy the priest again exclaims: "Allah, Allah, how good thou art to the children of men." The sun had sunk below the horizon when the priest, still on his journey, proceeded to climb an exceedingly high mountain, on the summit of which, at nightfall, he lay himself down to rest. When, in the morning, he arose from his sleep, he looked on the other side of the mountain, and lo, he saw the corpses of men who had been slain in battle strewn about the earth, and wolves were devouring the carcasses, and as they did so they seemed to exclaim in their ecstasy, "Allah, Allah, how good thou art to the children of wolves! Thou hast made these men fight in order that we might have the ineffable bliss of devouring their bodies; how good thou art to the children of wolves!" And it is this arrogant feeling that the earth and the fruits thereof were made specially for him that has caused man to imagine a God designing and arranging everything with a view of making him happy and contented.

That we may understand the meaning of natural selection it is well that the facts upon which the theory rests should be briefly stated. And, first, it assumed that the proposition, that all animated matter has the power to increase beyond the means of subsistence, is one of irrefragable truth; and that, were it not for the constant operation of checks, the number of beings that would be produced under favorable conditions would outstrip nature's capability to provide enough food to enable them all to live. It has been calculated by Linnæus that a plant which produced only two seeds annually, and whose seedlings only produced two, would, in the course of twenty years, produce no fewer than one million of plants. Nature kills off the young of animals and destroys thousands of eggs and seeds. For every seed that comes to maturity, a thousand perish; for every animal that survives and lives to a good age hundreds die young or are destroyed at birth. And nature kills man in precisely the same way. When too many are born a famine kills thousands, and disease kills more. Among the millions of plants and animals that exist no two are alike. Either from inherited qualities or other similar causes there are found to be some variations from other existing beings in every creature born into the world. However slight these variations they constitute an advantage or a disadvantage to the individuals possessing them. These variations take place under two well-ascertained conditions—under nature according to geographical position and the constantly changing conditions of life; under domestication as the effects of habit, and, in regard to plants and the lower animals, the result of artificial selection, or selection by man on account of possessing some superior qualities which were thought worthy of preservation. From the fact of there being more beings in existence, as compared with the amount of food at their command, a struggle for existence is set up in which the "fittest" or those best adapted to their surroundings get the advantage, while the weak and those in other ways unfit for the uneven battle have inevitably to succumb.

And all experience goes to show that it is only "those who survive" in the great struggle for existence that the theologian points so triumphantly as the evidence of the wonderful designs of an all-good and all-wise God.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Phenomena of Procreation.—III.

(Concluded from p. 299.)

WHEN the yoke of an egg is examined, a white spot is seen on its upper surface. This white spot is the germ-disk from which the embryo arises, and all the remaining material contained within the yoke membrane is rich food provided for the needs of the growing embryo. If an egg which has been incubating for several days is examined, the embryo is seen surrounded by membranes, parts of which are provided with blood vessels. The fluid in these tubes is propelled by the pulsation of the embryo's heart, which begins to beat on the second day of incubation. These blood vessels, in the first instance, convey the food particles contained in the yolk, and afterwards from the white of the egg to the expanding embryo. This blood circulation also enables the embryo to obtain oxygen from the air which penetrates the pores of the egg shell, and supplies it with an instrument for expelling the waste matters it produces in the course of development.

The importance of these two circulatory processes, which together constitute the respiration of the evolving bird, is made manifest by the fact that the embryo perishes from suffocation when the pores of the shell become choked with any foreign substance. If the embryo is to develop into a chicken, duckling, or any other nestling, unimpeded access to oxygen, and ability to discharge its waste carbon-dioxide are absolutely essential. Realising this, poultry breeders and bird fanciers make a point of keeping eggs that are intended for hatching, clean before, and during the period of incubation.

Some of the snakes, the crocodiles, and the various turtles are oviparous, and their embryos are remarkably similar to those of the feathered family. Unlike birds, however, reptiles do not brood over their eggs, but resign their hatching to the gracious warmth of the sun. Various snakes give birth to living young, as do some of the lizards. With these viviparous reptiles, the eggs are retained in the oviducts until the young are fully developed, and are then expelled from the body by muscular movement. Viviparous snakes are moderately prolific. "The garter snake sometimes gives birth to as many as 45 in one brood; the rattlesnake produces 9 to 14; the copperhead, 7 to 9; and the water-moccasin, 7 to 14."

Some of the embryological phenomena relating to those organisms in which internal development is universal remain to be briefly outlined. To meet their new requirement, the oviducts of mammals have been enlarged and arranged to enable them to hold their eggs during development. This expanded organ is the uterus or womb. In primitive mammals such as the kangaroo and opossums, a right and left uterus has been evolved through the enlargement of a part of each oviduct. But, in the higher mammalia, the right and left uteri become fused in the course of embryological development, and there then remains one single uterus, which is connected with each ovary by a Fallopian tube. The eggs formed in either oviduct are conducted along the corresponding tube into the womb, where, if they have been impregnated, they evolve into embryos. In all mammals, man among them, the egg cells are impregnated by sperm cells which have joined them after passing through the secretions of the lining membranes of the womb and its tubes. The egg divides almost immediately after fecundation, and may have undergone marked changes by the time, usually a day or two, that it passes from the tube into the womb.

The number of egg cells fertilised on a single occasion varies considerably with different animals. Apes, horses, cattle, and women usually produce one at a birth, although twins and triplets are far from uncommon. The pig, rabbit, rats and mice, the domesticated dog and cat produce quite a litter of young. The number of offspring appears to depend on the number of egg cells that are matured and fertilised. With different mammals the period of pregnancy is also subject to wide variations, and is to some extent conditioned by the size of the animal. The guinea pig is pregnant for about three weeks; the rabbit and squirrel deliver their young after thirty days. Gestation occupies three months in the lion; four months in the pig; six months in the bear; nine months in the cow, and a little more than nine months in the human female. The whale takes ten months, the horse eleven, the giraffe fourteen, and the elephant twenty-two months from the copulative act to the casting of the young from the womb.

The embryological arrangements for nutrition and respiration previously described in the case of birds become far more elaborate with mammals. The connection established in the egg of the bird between one part and another is in mammals developed into a system of communication between the blood channels of the embryo and those of its mother. This may easily be verified through an examination of the embryo of a rabbit, which answers for a study of mammalian embryos in general. The membranes which encompass a rabbit's embryo are abundantly furnished with blood vessels running towards the embryo's heart. Lining tissue (epithelium) of the doe's womb encircles the embryo, and this tissue absorbs the nourishing blood from the heart and arteries of the parent body. Tree-shaped outgrowths may be seen embedded in the external membranes of the embryo:—

"These tree-like processes receive their blood supply from the embryo's heart through blood vessels in the umbilical cord attached to the embryo at the umbilicus or navel. As a result of this close attachment of the membranes of the embryo and the lining of the uterus, the blood vessels of the two are near enough to allow osmosis. From the maternal blood capillaries, foods, and oxygen osmose into those of the embryo, and the excretions of the embryo's cells pass into the maternal blood. Solid bodies, like red-blood cells, cannot pass from the maternal to the embryo's blood; and the blood cells in the embryonic blood vessels are formed from certain cells belonging to the embryo. However, the important point is that food, oxygen, and excretions osmose between the maternal and embryonic blood vessels in the membranes which attach the embryo to the wall of the uterus."

The membranes which fix the embryo to the womb are termed the placenta. As a rule, the placenta or afterbirth detaches itself from the womb as soon as the young are delivered, and is itself driven from the body through the muscular motions of the uterus. The embryological phenomena just passed under review substantially explain the large size of most mammals at birth. The provisions for internal nourishment are so elaborate, and the time occupied in the greater mammals for intra-uterine development is so long, that the highly evolved condition of the newly born offspring is easily understood.

The placental structure which attaches the unborn mammal to the womb of its mother and provides a nutritive connection between them is a specially mammalian organ. It is not present in the monotremes, which lay eggs, and its condition in the marsupials is little more than incipient. But with all the higher mammals it occurs in some form or other, "always acting as a double vascular sponge, by which the blood of the mother nourishes and purifies that of her unborn young."

As already intimated, the eggs or ova, after their development within the ovaries, soon reach maturity, and are automatically expelled. If, at this period, they are impregnated by the male element, they soon evolve into embryos; but if they are not, they soon lose their vitality and perish. Under favorable con-

ditions, then, fertilisation of the ripe egg is accomplished through its union with the spermatozoon. This union is believed to occur in the human female in the upper third of the oviduct, or Fallopian tube, the fertilised ovum afterwards entering the uterus, where it develops the attachments necessary to the nutrition of the embryo or foetus during its development within the womb.

Direct knowledge concerning the development of the human embryo was far from complete until Wilhelm His published his investigations in his work on Human Embryology. A few isolated descriptions of the appearance of the embryo during the first few months of pregnancy were previously available, and even now the obstacles which bar increased information are very serious. The main sources from which detailed knowledge is obtained are post-mortem examinations, operations, and abortions.

Nevertheless, many phenomena are now clearly demonstrable as a result of observation and experiment. From the fertilised ovum, then, proceeds the embryo, and from this the foetus is evolved. If we adopt the scheme of His, the ovum phase covers the first two weeks; the embryonal period covers the third, fourth, and fifth weeks, in the course of which, the principal organs make their appearance until in the foetal stage the embryo passes into the foetus, when, at the end of nine months, the child is born. The average length of the embryo at the age two weeks is approximately 0.1 ins., at eight weeks 1 in., at three months 2 ins., and at birth 19.7 ins.

One of the earliest ova was described by Peters in 1899, and was ten or eleven days old. In this case, as in various others of later development which were subsequently studied, there was nothing which in the slightest degree distinguished the human embryo from that of other animals. One human embryo about four weeks old which was figured by Mall would pass for that of a rabbit or a dog.

The doctrine enunciated by Haeckel, which that eminent zoologist founded on Van Baer's law: that the development of the embryo or foetus broadly represents the phases through which its ancestors have passed in the course of evolution, and which is more briefly stated in the expression that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, remains unshaken. Even Louis Agassiz was powerfully impressed by these facts although he never had the courage to admit the truth of evolution. Some of the universally acknowledged embryological facts are sufficiently striking. At one stage the human embryo possesses gill-slits and a two-chambered heart like a fish; at a later stage the gill-slits disappear and the heart becomes reptilian. At a still later stage a monkey-like tail is present, and even at birth the child uses its feet in most ape-like fashion, and not until it is several months old are the essentially animal instincts replaced by those that are specifically human. As a distinguished naturalist remarks, unless the phenomena of embryology point to evolution they are most mischievously misleading, and apart from their evolutionary interpretation, remain utterly meaningless. It is not claimed that the embryological record holds good in every little detail, but in a broad and general way. In the words of Maitland Balfour, "It may be compared to an ancient manuscript with many of the sheets lost, others displaced, and with spurious passages interpolated by a later hand."

T. F. PALMER.

I say that the State power should not be used to arrest discussion, because the State power may be used equally for truth or error, for Mohammedanism or Christianity, for belief or no-belief, but in discussion truth has an advantage. Arguments always tell for truth as such, and against error as such; if you let the human mind alone, it has a preference for good argument over bad; it oftener takes truth than not. But if you do not let it alone, you give truth no advantage at all; you substitute a game of force, where all doctrines are equal, for a game of logic where the true have the better chance.—Walter Bagehot, "Literary Studies," vol. iii.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15 and 6.15, E. Burke, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 5.45, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): F. Schaller, 11.30, "Atheism"; 7.30, "Atheism and Christianity."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, "Beelzebub," "Science and Superstition."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ST. HELENS BRANCH N. S. S. (Central Café): Saturday, May 16, at 7.30, W. Jones, "The Philosophy and Poetry of Omar Khayyam."

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