

THE Freethinker

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The golden rule is that there are no golden rules.
—G. B. SHAW.

Blessed Are the Meek.

NOTHING could be more misnamed than the Sermon on the Mount. It is obviously not a sermon at all, and never could have been delivered straight off to one congregation. In reality it is a collection of religious and ethical maxims, of various value and significance; maxims that had, in one form or another, been floating about the East for many centuries.

The so-called Sermon on the Mount has always been highly lauded in the pulpit, although its teaching has very rarely been reduced to practice, even by those who most vaunted their piety and devotion to Christ. Divines and casuists have, indeed, taught us how to violate every injunction with a good conscience. Where the text is too hard for mortal virtue we have only to regard it as a counsel of perfection, instead of a positive command; and nobody is to be damned for not taking advice. There have always been some mystics, like William Law, for instance, who insisted on the literalness of Christ's teaching. You might not be able to attain to the "Christian Perfection" of the Sermon on the Mount, but you were bound to attempt it, on peril of your eternal damnation.

Other exhorters take the Sermon on the Mount with large grains of salt. They indulge in the greatest liberality of interpretation, and really give us a new Sermon on the Mount, containing not what Jesus Christ did say, but what he would have said if he had possessed the art of making himself understood. It is very kind on their part to make him intelligible, and we hope he is duly sensible of the obligation; but, at the same time, it is to be wished that they were a little more intelligible themselves, and a little more in harmony with each other.

Perhaps the most difficult text for the kind ingenuity of these gentlemen is "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." The two halves of this text are as opposed to each other as the front benches in the House of Commons. A table in the one case, and a semi-colon in the other, divides them; but they eternally face each other in an everlasting antagonism.

Meekness is a virtue of which few men are ever proud—if we may be pardoned such a paradox. It is generally commended in others. What it exactly means is rather to be determined by etymology than example. "Moses was very meek above all men," says the Bible (Numbers xii. 3); but as his meekness was capable of rising to murder, we had better drop the illustration. Johnson defines *meek* as "mild of temper; not proud; not rough; not easily provoked; soft; gentle." That is, *meek* is *meek*, for this is all the definition comes to. Richardson is not more helpful, although he gives a long and valuable series of extracts, showing the use of the word by English writers. It is the more scientific Skeat who throws a real light upon the matter. *Meek* appears to be a compound of softness and pliability. The meek person is a piece of human dough, that can be kneaded and moulded by others. A dog is meek when he takes a licking; a woman is meek when she stands any amount of male brutality; and a man is

meek when he bows his head to another man's arrogance. Meekness is passive; it can hardly rise to the level of an active virtue; and perhaps it is only not a vice on the principle that it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict it; the best thing being to do *neither*.

Whether meekness be good, bad, or indifferent, it will certainly never enable one to "possess the earth." The land of this kingdom is mostly owned by the aristocracy, and they are a remarkably meek body of men. According to Jesus Christ, we have only to be meek enough, and the lords will give us back the land. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." So they will, so they will—in coffins!

So exquisite is the absurdity of this text that an owl might laugh at it. That is, the text as it stands. But you must not let it stand; you must knock it about, twist it and turn it; and it will look a highly respectable piece of morality. Keep, "inherit," but play the devil with the "earth." Make it mean something else; make it mean anything. Tackle it like Bishop Porteus, who wrote as follows: "By inheriting the earth, he [Jesus] meant inheriting those things which are, without question, the greatest blessings upon earth, calmness and composure of spirit, tranquillity, cheerfulness, and comfort of mind. Now these, I apprehend, are the peculiar portion and recompense of the meek."

There now, you meek people, this is your inheritance of the earth. Not broad acres and big rents, not so much as a moderate-sized farm, not even three acres and a cow; but calmness, composure, tranquillity, cheerfulness, comfort, and such blessings, are to be your "recompense"; that is what you will get by giving up the tangible possessions to the people who are not meek, but very much the reverse. They have the solid property, and you have the spiritual blessings which are promised to poverty and meekness.

Jesus Christ may have meant this—only this, and nothing more; but, in that case, what an unfortunate way he had of expressing himself! It takes a bishop to penetrate the obscurity of his metaphors, and even then a great deal has to be taken on trust from the episcopal interpreter.

Let us brush away these subtleties. It appears to us that if Jesus Christ did not mean what he said, it is impossible to say what he did mean. The secret perished with him, and "interpretations" are only conjectures.

The plain truth is that the poor never were blessed, and never will be. Wiser than Jesus Christ was the old Hebrew who prayed for neither riches nor poverty, but the golden mean of sufficiency. Nor will the meek ever inherit the earth. Certainly they have not yet made a beginning. If the people are to become possessed of the land, which is their natural birthright, they will have to abandon meekness, and stand up resolutely for justice. Popular rights are never conceded; they are always wrested from the privileged classes. Kings and aristocracies give way slowly before democratic pressure. Every step of progress involves a heavy battle. And the Church has always befriended the wealthy and titled usurpers, preaching meekness to the people in order that they might *not* inherit the earth.

G. W. FOOTE.

Does Man Need Religion?

MODERN religion is very largely a matter of phrases. By long usage certain expressions have acquired a value that does not naturally belong to them, but which, by the mere fact of tradition and custom, exert all the authority of rationally established propositions. Words and expressions of a certain kind become, as Oliver Wendell Holmes said, polarised. Particular implications have gathered round them, and these implications prevent those who hear them from subjecting them to a careful and rational examination. They do not impose only upon those who hear them; they are equally effective with those who use them. The speaker or writer drugs himself before handing on the narcotic for the use of listener or reader. Observe the solemn and reverential way in which a Christian speaks of the Jesus of the New Testament or the God of the Bible. And consider the difference if the words Joshua and Jahveh were used in their place. Both would mean exactly the same, but in the latter case time has not been busy weaving the same associations, and the mind is left freer to examine the statements placed before it.

This is, indeed, one of the difficulties before the Freethought propagandists. Most of my readers will be familiar with the old *Punch* cartoon of two costers quarreling, and the friends of one of them urging him to "say somefink." "How can I?" was the reply, "'e's bin and gorn and used up all the best words." It is much the same with religion. Being first in the field, and having such a long start, religion has, so to speak, cornered all the best words. It has dominated life for so long that naturally it has become the hardest of tasks to purify the non-religious aspects of life of their religious associations. And the more insecure the fundamental religious beliefs become, the more strenuously religions struggle to retain the use of words that appeal powerfully to man's social nature. Truth, justice, morality, aspiration, idealism, etc., are all used as though they were parts of essential religion, and by constant association quite separate things are regarded as identical. The tactical advantage given to the religionist by this policy is obvious. The Freethinker is made to appear as fighting against certain things when, as a matter of fact, he is only contending for their independent existence and value.

I was reminded of this truth while turning over the pages of a work by a well-known writer on philosophy, and coming across an expression referring to "Freethinkers whose attitude to the religious problem proves how little sense they have of the deepest human needs." This is a common expression, and in the usual way one passes it by without particular notice. But when a writer of the rank of Hoffding uses it, one may be excused paying it a little attention. Not that its use by him gives it any greater measure of truth; it only becomes more impressive to a certain type of mind. For my own part, I do not hesitate to say that its use is no more than an illustration of the truth that even eminent thinkers are not secure against the tyranny of phrases. For a little independent thinking on the question would at least have shown Hoffding that whether religion is one of man's deepest needs or not is one of the principal issues between the religionist and the Freethinker.

On what ground can it be argued that religion is one of man's deepest needs? Is it that religion is, in a general sense, universal? No Freethinker will dispute that proposition. Human societies everywhere have developed some sort of a religion. That is admitted. The Freethinker is the first to point to the truth of this, and his philosophy is in nowise disturbed by the admission. For on that he has two comments to make. The first is explanatory. He points out under what conditions religious beliefs originate. He shows that they are natural, and therefore inevitable to the human mind at one stage of

its development. They do not emphasise a need, they merely express a conclusion that ignorance everywhere draws in the face of phenomena not properly understood.

The second comment is that if religion is, indeed, man's deepest need, it should become more firmly established, more difficult to eradicate, as the race grows older. But everyone knows that the very opposite of this is the case. All over the civilised world religion sits lightly upon an increasing number of people. Millions have rejected it altogether. How, then, can religion be called one of man's deepest needs? A deep and fundamental need cannot be suppressed. If a need is suppressed, its superficial character is demonstrated. But here is something that men and women can get on without; they are—in the light of every rational test—none the worse for being without it. They confess to no sense of loss at its absence. And their number precludes their case being dismissed as the manifestation of an abnormality. It is sheer folly to speak of, as man's deepest need, something that millions deliberately reject, and which is weakening even with those who still retain it.

Let me emphasise the fact that reaching the Freethought position is essentially a question of growth. This is true both historically and individually. The further back we go in human history—taking things generally—the more religious we find people as a whole. The non-religious man is unknown to primitive society. For good or ill, he is a product of civilisation, of culture, of acquired and inherited knowledge. And, individually, it is a simple and easily verified truth that the overwhelming majority of non-religious men and women commenced their lives with a belief in religion. Their Freethought represents sheer growth. Religious belief antedates advanced culture both historically and individually. The man who never thinks about religion, who never tests its teachings, remains a supporter of religion. I do not mean by this that the man who remains religious never thinks about it. Such a statement would be absurd. He may think and *may* remain religious; if he does not think, he is certain to continue so. But the man who does not think about it cannot become a Freethinker. In the main, religion in civilised society is something that a man inherits; it is due to no mental activity on his part. On the other hand, Freethought is something he acquires. He must think. Rightly or wrongly he must use his intelligence. It is a question of growth. And the problem of perpetual motion is simple compared to the task of explaining the process by which man outgrows his deepest need.

The notion that religion is man's deepest need is pure fallacy. It is not even his most enduring need. By a mere accident of association religion has been connected with all the more important affairs. The reign of the priesthood has secured the connection of religion with marriage, with the family, with birth, and with death. It has secured it a place in private and public life, and given religion authority to which it has no valid claim. But the whole process of civilisation consists in breaking down this connection, and in secularising human life. And if this is accomplished; if the purely social aspect of human life, from the cradle to the grave, is once recognised, how long will religion maintain its power? The essential nature of religion is contained in one word—supernaturalism. Divest religion of this, and all that is left is a mere name. And it is not the Freethinker only who says that the supernatural does not exist. It is the message of all modern scientific thought.

What need of human nature is there that is dependent upon religion? It is certainly not the need for beauty, for art, for poetry, for literature. All these have existed, and do exist, quite apart from religion. Family life, with all the affections that cluster round domesticity, are independent of religion. Social existence is equally independent. In all these instances religion does not help; it is helped. When

appeals are made, in the name of religion, for social justice, what is it that is touched—man's sense of justice or his religious belief? By nature, man is not a religious animal at all. As I have already said, that is something he acquires. But man is a social animal; and nothing can rob him of that quality without destroying his character as a human being. In short, once we get above the stage of primitive life, religion ever after lives by exploiting human nature. It has taught people to express themselves in terms of religion, much as the feeling of social solidarity is made to express itself in terms of personal loyalty to a reigning monarch. Those who look a little deeper into things, however, know that just as a feeling of loyalty to a king is no more than an accidental expression of the feeling of social unity, created and strengthened by generations of social life, so the connection of religion with the real needs of life is by nature accidental, and is doomed to disappear as man becomes aware of the true nature of the social forces.

The Freethinker is not, then, blind to the "deepest human needs." On the contrary, he is keenly alive to their reality and importance. His opposition to religion is not based upon ignoring certain aspects of human nature, but upon recognising all and allowing for all. It is too often assumed that the Freethinker denies the "facts" of the religious life. He does not; he recognises them all and explains them all. The issue is not one of a dispute about "facts" or "needs," it is really a dispute on a matter of interpretation. Are we to accept the naturalistic or the supernaturalistic interpretation? That is the whole issue and there never has been any other. The Freethinker admits the value of much that the modern religionist talks so much about, but he points out that complete satisfaction for every aspect of human life is to be found apart from religion. And the proof of the truth of this is found in the fact that such satisfaction is found. Millions of men and women, neither the least worthy nor the least intelligent, are finding to-day in social life all that the religionist finds in connection with religion, and their doing so is really conclusive. For just as the majority of these were once religionists, so religionists will one day be where they are. They have passed through the religious phase of development; and their having passed through it is proof, not that religion is one of man's deepest needs, but that it is a new phase of his development, and is to-day as reminiscent of a lower culture-stage as many parts of the body are reminiscent of his simian ancestry.

C. COHEN.

The Beginning of the End.

IT will be remembered that a few weeks ago the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury discussed the various attacks that have been made upon the Christian Faith as embodied in the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and passed resolutions reaffirming the Church's loyalty to those historical documents. The resolutions were moved by the Bishop of London. The Bishop of Hereford moved a mild amendment for which only three cast their votes, and thus the resolutions were adopted with practical unanimity. According to one speaker, the Church of England was in danger of becoming a secular organisation. On one occasion, while on his holidays, his lordship had the unhappy experience of hearing two extraordinary sermons, the one not naming "our Lord or Christ or Jesus or even God" from beginning to end, and the other being a deliberate attack throughout upon the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. Incontrovertibly the Bishops acted wisely in issuing a fresh declaration in support of the great creeds. As a matter of fact, Christianity is completely rooted in the miraculous. The Gospel Jesus is a miraculous being who cannot be placed in any known category. Being himself the greatest of all miracles, he naturally performed

miracles; and to those who believe in him as such, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and the Ascension are most credible events. The twenty-five Bishops who declared their complete and firm adhesion to the orthodox faith must be regarded as the apostles' genuine successors. They stand just exactly where Peter and Paul stood, and their Christianity is identical with that contained in the New Testament. As Dr. Ingram well said:—

"The Gospel was shorn of its power when the facts on which it rests were doubted or denied; the Gospel was a Gospel of deeds rather than words. Why otherwise should so many chapters be devoted to the death of Christ? Why should the Apostles have preached Jesus and the resurrection?"

Such has always been the creed of the true Church, and we know at what terrific cost she has often fought for it. To its doubters and deniers she has never shown the least mercy. Some of us remember with what awful cruelty she persecuted the famous Dr. Colenso because he ventured to criticise the Pentateuch, and the Bishop of Oxford maintains that, though she made many mistakes, her opposition to him was fully justifiable. Colenso's offence was that he attacked the belief in the infallibility of the Word of God; and in the controversy that raged so furiously for many years the facts which his criticism had brought to light did not count at all. The Church's doctrine of inspiration could not be assailed with impunity. To find mistakes in God's Book was an unpardonable sin. Bishop Colenso was paid for defending, not assailing, the Bible. Whether the Virgin Birth, or the Resurrection, happened or not, is not the point at issue, but the fact that it is an article of the faith which every clergyman is ordained to hold and teach. What the Bishops are now entitled to say to every minister in their dioceses is this: If you are an honest man you will leave the Church the moment you cease to believe the Articles of Religion. Now, to a man who really believes in an omnipotent God the question of miracles should present no difficulty whatever. If such a being exists, he can do anything he likes. It is to us utterly incomprehensible that people who call themselves Christians should boggle at miracles. To a believer in the supernatural, the miraculous should follow almost as a matter of course. Dr. Sanday disapproves very strongly of the step taken by the Bishops because, though a minister of the Church of England and a Professor of Divinity at Oxford, he rejects some of the miracles; but he is aware of the insecurity of his position, for in his *Bishop Gore's Challenge to Criticism*, just published, he says:—

"I was not disposed to put any limit to the Divine power or to ascribe any necessity to natural law as such. I did not for a moment doubt the power of God to make what exceptions he pleased. I only asked for better evidence of his will to make them" (p. 22).

To this the Bishop might reply that no evidence is required other than the continuous testimony of the Church. It is difficult to understand what other evidence could be expected. If the Church is what the New Testament represents her to be her testimony ought to be entirely convincing for all her members, and specially to all her ministers.

The *Church Times*, for May 15, informs us that "there are some who will think that the words of Dr. Sanday alone weigh more than the words of the whole Episcopate," and it must be admitted that as a critic he has done excellent and enduring work; but, our contemporary continues, "our present point is that Dr. Sanday rejects the testimony of the Church, rejects the interpretation of the Creeds put upon them by the authority of the Church, and claims for himself and others the right to exercise the teaching office in the Church with complete independence of judgment." We agree with the *Church Times*. We fail to see how those who reject the Christian miracles can reasonably claim to be Christians. In what respect do they differ from the Unitarians, or from those who call themselves Liberal Christians? We repudiated the belief in

miracles only because we had ceased to believe in the truth of Christianity itself. We renounced the miraculous because we had already lost the supernatural. If no exceptions to natural law are ever made the supernatural is perfectly useless, and all the claims made for Christianity fall to the ground.

The Bishop of London asserted that, in the absence of miracles, the Gospel is shorn of its power; but we hold that the Gospel never had any power of its own. The Church has been a power in history, and almost always an evil power; but apart from the Church, Christianity has been absolutely non-existent. For many years Jehovah was carried about in a wooden box, and the Christian God has been imprisoned in the Church all through the centuries. The Church's testimony is the sole evidence of his existence, and this carries no weight whatever except with believers. The truth is that the power which the Gospel is alleged to possess and exercise is the power of the people who preach it. The Christ believed in by the Church has never existed except as an object of belief. Dr. Ingram was wholly right when he said that if a non-miraculous Christ were accepted by the Church to-day the next generation would go a step further and think of "the Palestinian Jew moving on the stage of history" as nothing but a deluded man, or as a wholly unhistorical character. All the Bishops were alive to the fact that their Church is gradually drifting away from sound doctrine, and beginning to trample the venerable creeds under her feet. The fact which they so profoundly deplored causes us great rejoicing. The Bishop of Chelmsford stated that on Freethought platforms now, the names of Voltaire, Paine, and Bradlaugh are seldom heard:—

"A new type had arisen. The appeal of the street corner Infidel was now to the names of writers who were professedly connected with the Christian Church. It might be crude, but it was a great danger. He was speaking some time ago on the authority of the Bible, and a man said: 'You come here and ask us to receive the Bible and the facts of the Bible, and you know that learned men at Oxford and Cambridge tell us that Genesis is a myth and a fable, and others tell us that the first three chapters of St. Luke are not to be believed literally. You have a man at Westminster who criticises everything.'"

Voltaire, Paine, and Bradlaugh did not live in vain. Their labors are now bearing abundant fruit everywhere. Such men as Canon Cheyne and the late Canon Driver have done more to dethrone the Bible than any avowed Freethinker. They are undermining the very religion whose champions they profess to be—a fact for which we are devoutly thankful.

It is not likely that the resolutions so enthusiastically passed by the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury will do much to check the rationalising tendency which is so powerful just now in the English Church. Probably they will serve only to strengthen and quicken it. Criticism has come to stay, and reverence is foreign to it. It is the sworn enemy of superstition. It has done great havoc to the orthodoxy of so great a theologian as Dr. Sanday. He has moved considerably since he wrote his famous pamphlet against Dr. Conybeare, and is evidently still moving. He has been as angry now with the Bishops as he was then with the author of *Myth, Magic, and Morals*. Yes, there is a stream of Freethought making for itself a channel within the National Church, and all the Bishops are powerless to turn it back. They may call it all the bad names in their vocabulary, they may move innumerable resolutions against it, but it will flow on and grow stronger under their noses. It is the spirit of the age. It is reason awaking from its long sleep.

J. T. LLOYD.

We are free, and do not want a thundering tyrant; we are grown up, and require no fatherly care. Nor are we the bungled workman of a great mechanic. Deism is a religion for slaves, for children, for Genevieve, for watch-makers.—Heine, "Germany."

The Tyranny of Terror.

"Goblin Market," "The Prince's Progress," and Other Poems. By Christina Rossetti. The World's Classics. (Oxford Press.)

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI enjoyed the rare privilege of being treated in her own lifetime as a classic author. Now that her complete poetical works are published in a single volume, and reprints of other poems are being made constantly, the final seal of honor may be said to have been set on a great and deserved reputation. That such fame will lessen there is not much reason to anticipate, for it has been founded on the slowly formed but sure appreciation of all good critics and lovers of real literature. It is noteworthy that one family should have produced two such eminent poets as Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Christina shared with her brother the delight in mediæval coloring and theme, and in the sensuous appeal of verse; but, unlike Dante Gabriel, she had a strong strain of superstition in her character, and she soon lost her vision of a brightly hued and romantic world, and turned her eyes to the contemplation of purely religious subjects.

Almost from the first, her verse exhibited a definite personality. It is perhaps her sex which renders her lyrics more bird-like than her brother's verses. It can be nothing but her own constant experience of ill-health which made her dwell constantly on the morbid side of religion.

Death, which to Swinburne seemed own brother to sleep, was to her a more horrific shape, and was a perennial subject for her verse. The constant burden of her muse was the mutability of human affairs. And when to her physical ailments were added love disappointments entirely caused by religious bigotry, there is small difficulty in understanding how Christina Rossetti became a devotional poet; and one of such distinction that only Crashaw, Donne, and Vaughan can be held her compeers. And Donne, be it remembered, mitigated his raptures concerning the Savior by writing poems on such less sacred subjects as seeing his mistress getting into bed.

Many of Christina Rossetti's poems are very short, and are concerned with trite religious themes. In nothing is her undoubted power so much shown as in the fact that so few are commonplace. Had she not had genius, they might have sunk to the ordinary level of pietistic verse, orthodox in purpose and contemptible in execution. The only trait she has in common with the ordinary hymn writers is a certain morbidity in dwelling on the idea of mortality and the pathological side of religion. She disembowelled the Bible. Her brother, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, has even said that if "all those passages which were directly or indirectly dependent upon what can be found in the Bible" had been taken out of Christina's verse, it "would have been reduced to something approaching a vacuum."

Starting her poetical career as the one lady member of the Pre-Raphaelite enthusiasts, she, naturally, showed the effect of that romantic spirit in her first mature poem, "Goblin Market," and in the less extravagant "Prince's Progress," both of which have all the glow and rich tints of William Morris's early works. The meditative and introspective sonnets of even her later years have much in common with this early artistic impulse. But what a change was there! It is impossible not to deplore the narrowing down of Christina Rossetti's poetic interest. Here was a woman of warm blood and a passionate sense of beauty, who with better health and satisfied affections might have interpreted the joy of life. Instead, she turned with morbid pleasure to the contemplation of the fancied delights of a barren religiosity. She was a paradox, an anomaly; a Puritan among Anglo-Catholics, a nun outside the Great Lying Church. Necessarily preoccupied as she was with attenuated religious emotions, her melody with difficulty escapes monotony. And yet again and again the old

romantic instinct will out. The truth is, she was not a sacred, but, in the highest sense of the word, a secular poet. Her religious bias forced her sympathies into wrong channels. To the real world she became indifferent. With actual life, its questionings, its humors, its perplexities, its despairs, its hopes, its loves, there is no sympathy in her poetry. Beyond the wall of her residence her tired eyes saw but a mad world rushing to perdition. Her idea of wisdom is to withdraw from the tumult into an inner shrine of pious meditation, disturbed only by anxiety for the fate of the Christian Church.

Her piety was essentially of the womanly, prayerful, submissive kind, so attractive to priests of all ages and all countries. It asks no questions, it is posed by no problems. It only kneels in adoring awe. Naturally, her picture of "the world" is grim and forbidding, as given in one of the most vigorous and fantastic of her sonnets:—

"By day she woos me, soft exceeding fair,
But all night as the moon so changeth she,
Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy,
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.
By day she woos me to the outer air,
Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety:
But through the night a beast she grins at me,
A very monster void of love and prayer.
By day she stands a lie: by night she stands
In all the naked horror of the truth,
With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.
Is this a friend, indeed, that I should sell
My soul to her, give me my life and youth,
Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell?"

She does not overlook Nature; but, if she notices natural beauties, flowers, birds, it is always through a religious haze. Despite her "nest of new-born sweets," she seldom arrests with vivid, triumphant phrase. She could not rise to the art of Coleridge's—

"hidden brook,
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune,"

or to the magic of Meredith's—

"hear the heart of wildness beat
Like a centaur's hoof on sward,"

or the impressionism of Keats'—

"Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn";

but she has a music of her own:—

"When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me,
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree;
Be the grass green above me,
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And, if thou wilt, remember,
And, if thou wilt, forget."

Her poem, "Sleep at Sea" is full of haunting music:—

"Sound the deep water:
Who shall sound that deep?
Too short the plummet,
And the watchmen sleep.
Some dream of effort
Up a tiresome steep;
Some dream of pasture grounds
For homeless sheep."

These, however, are exceptions. When the spontaneous emotions of a poet is regulated and refined by ascetic priestly traditions, she is at a great disadvantage among singers of free utterance. It is to Christina Rossetti's undying credit that the poet is not merged in the Sunday-school teacher.

At the worst, she is never crude, extravagant, or commonplace. She has that fine quality inseparable from genius, and her lyrics have a fragrance all their own. She challenges comparison with the greatest of her sex. Mrs. Browning is the inevitable foil of Christina Rossetti, and the two suggest each other by the mere force of contrast. The author of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," "Casa Guidi Windows," and the "Cry of the Children" is the very antipodes of the woman who gave us the shy, devotional "New Poems." There is none, of course, of Mrs. Browning's fluency in Miss Rossetti's work, but the sister poet lacks the warm humanity of the other. Christina Rossetti, despite

the magnificent lyric gift, hardly stands the comparison. How should she? A delicate spinster, holding the Christian superstition in the most absolute and the most literal manner. Shadow, instead of light, was her nourishment, and her music was a delicate undertone, not more sorrowful than that of a tree sighing in the wind. We long for something individual. Like the dying farm laborer, we like something concrete. His friends tried to solace him with the joys of heaven. He raised himself for a last word: "'Tis all very well for thee; but give I the 'Pig and Whistle.'" His mortality, like that of most of us, was unequal to raptures "too severe."

Though Christina Rossetti cannot claim the highest place among her sister poets, yet she has evoked such music that she will not be forgotten. She loved the muses without misgiving, and the muses, loving her in return, have crowned her grave with honor.

MIMNERMUS.

Primitive Man.—IV.

(Continued from p. 324.)

"Savages have often been likened to children, but so far as intelligence is concerned, a child belonging to a civilized race at a sufficiently early age, the parallel is fair enough. Thus they have no steadiness of purpose. Speaking of the Dogrib Indians, we found, says Richardson, 'by experience, that however high the reward they expected to receive on reaching their destination, they could not be depended on to carry letters. A slight difficulty, the prospect of a banquet on venison, or a sudden impulse to visit some friend, were sufficient to turn them aside for an indefinite length of time.'

"In fact, we may almost sum up this part of the question in a few words by saying, as the most general conclusion which can be arrived at, that savages have the character of children with the passions and strength of men."—SIR JOHN LUNNOK, *Prehistoric Times*, pp. 463-5.

"The most obvious source of interest in the doings of infancy lies in its primitiveness. At the cradle we are watching the beginnings of things, the first tentative thrustings forward into life. Our modern science is before all things historical and genetic, going back to beginnings, so as to understand the later and more complex phases of things as the outcome of these beginnings. The same kind of curiosity which prompts the geologist to get back to the first stages in the building up of the planet, or the biologist to search out the pristine forms of life, is beginning to urge the student of man to discover by a careful study of infancy the way in which human life begins to take its characteristic forms."—PROFESSOR SULLY, "The New Study of Children" (*Fortnightly Review*, November, 1895), p. 725.

WE have noticed the feeble powers of reasoning and reflection among the most primitive races. "It is only in man," says Sir Ray Lankester,—

"it is only in man that the power of reasoning—the conscious use of memory, of deciding on this or that course of action by a conscious appeal to the record of the individual's experience inscribed in the substance of the brain—becomes a regular and constant procedure. And in the lowest races of man—as, for instance, the Australian 'black fellows' this power is much less developed than in the higher races, owing to the feebleness of their memory. Just as a little child or an old man recognises the fact that his memory is bad, so does the Australian native confess to the white man that he cannot remember, and marvels at the memory of the white man, who, he says, can see both what is behind and what is to come."*

The life of a man illustrates, on a small scale, the life of the race. The child is born without reasoning powers, memory, language, or moral ideas, and without instruction would attain a very low standard in these matters. "According to this way of looking at infancy," says Professor Sully,—

"the successive phases of its mental life are a brief résumé of the more important features in the slow upward progress of the species. The periods dominated successively by sense and appetite, by blind wonder and superstitious fancy, by a calmer observation and a juster reasoning about things, these steps mark the pathway both of the child-mind and of the race-mind. This being so, the first years of a child, with their

* Sir Ray Lankester, "Science From an Easy Chair" (*Daily Telegraph*, April 7, 1914).

imperfect verbal expression, their crude fanciful ideas, their seizures by rage and terror, their absorption in the present moment, acquire a new and antiquarian interest. They mirror for us, in a diminished, distorted reflection, no doubt, the probable condition of primitive man. As Sir John Lubbock and other anthropologists have told us, the intellectual and moral resemblances between the lowest existing races of mankind and children are numerous and close.*

"The very inferior savage, like our own infant children, does not know what to-morrow means," says Letourneau, and he adds:—

"All travellers are agreed in saying that the majority of the black races in Africa may be compared to our young European children. They have all the light-headedness, the capriciousness, the want of prudence, the volubility, and the same quick and confined intelligence, as a child."†

Herbert Spencer observes:—

"And how general is this type of unreflectiveness among inferior races is implied by Dr. Pickering's statement that, in the course of much travel, the Fijians were the only savage people he had met with who could give reasons, and with whom it was possible to hold a connected conversation."‡

He also remarks that Sproat's account of the Ahts may be taken as descriptive of the average state. Sproat says:—

"The native mind, to an educated man, seems generally to be asleep.....On his attention being fully aroused, he often shows much quickness in reply and ingenuity in argument. But a short conversation wearies him, particularly if questions are asked that require efforts of thought or memory on his part. The mind of the savage then appears to rock to and fro out of mere weakness."

And again:—

"Spix and Martius tell us of the Brazilian Indians that 'scarcely has one begun to question him about his language, when he grows impatient, complains of headache, and shows that he is unable to bear the exertion'; and according to Mr. Bates, 'it is difficult to get at their notions on subjects that require a little abstract thought.' When the Abipones 'are unable to comprehend anything at first sight, they soon grow weary of examining it, and cry—"What is it, after all?"' It is the same with Negroes. Burton says of the East Africans, 'Ten minutes sufficed to weary out the most intellectual' when questioned about their system of numbers. And even of so comparatively a superior race as the Malagasy, it is remarkable that they 'do not seem to possess the qualities of mind requisite for close and continued thought.'§

Letourneau observes:—

"But of all savage races none are more childish than the Polynesians. Their thoughtlessness and light-headedness are extraordinary. It is impossible to fix their attention upon anything for two minutes. The most civilised, the Tahitians, had no idea as to their age; to recall the date of an event that had happened two or three years previously was altogether beyond their power."||

The same writer also remarks:—

"D'Entrecasteaux bears the same testimony. 'The Tasmanians,' he says, 'express a wish for every kind of trifle, but drop them immediately afterwards; everything seems to distract them, nothing can occupy their minds'" (p. 553).

Lubbock cites Cook as saying that the tears of the South Sea Islanders, "like those of children, were always ready to express any passion that was strongly excited, and like those of children, they also appear to be forgotten as soon as they are shed." And again:—

"At Tahiti, Captain Cook mentions that Oberea, the Queen, and Tootahah, one of the principal chiefs, amused themselves with two large dolls. D'Urville tells us that a New Zealand chief, Tauvarya by name,

'cried like a child because the sailors spoilt his favorite cloak by powdering it with flour.'

He also gives the statement of Sir Richard Burton to the fact that the Negro kings of Western Africa, "from Gelele to Rumanika of Karawah, are delighted with children's toys, gutta percha faces, Noah's arks; in fact, what would be most acceptable to a child of eight—which the Negro is."*

Of the aborigines of Australia, Sir John Lubbock observes:—

"No single fact, perhaps, gives us a more vivid idea of the mental condition of these miserable savages than the observation that they cannot count their own fingers—not even those of one hand. Mr. Crawford has examined the numerals of thirty Australian languages, 'and in no instance do they appear to go beyond the number four.' Mr. Scott Nind, indeed, 'has given an account of the Australians of King George's Sound, to which a vocabulary is annexed, containing the numerals, which are made to reach the number five. The term for this last unit, however, turns out to be only the word many. In fact, the word 'five' conveys to them the idea of a great number, as a 'hundred' or a 'thousand' does to us.'†

Of the Esquimaux,—

"Dr. Rae, whose partiality for the Esquimaux is well known, assures us that if a man is asked the number of his children, he is generally much puzzled. After counting some time on his fingers, he will probably consult his wife, and the two often differ, even though they may not have more than four or five" (p. 513).

The Indians of Paraguay "could only count up to four." The Abipones can only express three numbers in proper words. The Dammaras,—

"when they wish to express four, they take to their fingers, which are to them as formidable instruments of calculation as a sliding rule is to an English school-boy. They puzzle very much after five, because no spare hand remains to grasp and secure the fingers that are required for units."‡

Of these Dammaras of South Africa, Galton says "Each sheep must be paid for separately. Thus, suppose two sticks of tobacco to be the rate of exchange for one sheep, it would sorely puzzle a Dammara to take two sheep and give four sticks." Galton adds:—

"Once, while I watched a Dammara floundering hopelessly in a calculation on one side of me, I observed Dinah, my spaniel, equally embarrassed on the other. She was overlooking half-a-dozen of her new-born puppies, which had been removed two or three times from her, and her anxiety was excessive, as she tried to find out if they were all present, or if any were still missing. She kept puzzling and running her eyes over them, backwards and forwards, but could not satisfy herself. She evidently had a vague notion of counting, but the figure was too large for her brain. Taking two as they stood, dog and Dammara, the comparison reflected no great honor on the man."§

Lindsay, in his *Mind in Animals*, says that—

"The Veddas of Ceylon are described by Hartshorne as 'quite unable to count.....They cannot count even by the aid of their fingers, having no conception of numbers.' Among the Amazon Indians there are no words for numbers.....Even at the present day many savage tribes of Brazil and Australia cannot count beyond two or four, and can only indicate higher numbers by gestures. Oldfield even describes a tribe who count no further than the number two, and designate all beyond by a word signifying 'many.'"

He also says, "The aborigines of New Caledonia 'can with difficulty count the lowest numerals'" (p. 452). These savages were not so far advanced in this matter as the chimpanzee "Sally" at the Zoological Gardens, whose keeper taught her to count up to five.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

* Professor Sully, "The New Study of Children" (*Fortnightly Review*, November, 1895), pp. 727-8.

† Dr. Charles Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 557.

‡ Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i., p. 82.

§ Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i., pp. 82-3.

|| Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 557.

* Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation* (1889), pp. 222-3.

† Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times* (1872), p. 448.

‡ Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times*, p. 513.

§ Galton, *Tropical South Africa*, p. 213.

|| Lindsay, *Mind in Animals*, p. 451.

Acid Drops.

A great deal is being made of the action of the Rev. E. W. Lewis, a leading Nonconformist preacher, who has given up a post worth £600 a year, in order to lead a life of poverty, preaching wherever occasion offers. Mr. Lewis appears to be taking St. Francis D'Assisi as a model, and we have no desire to say a word against his personal sincerity. Such a life is obviously nearer the New Testament ideal—which is the Eastern ideal—of a preacher of religion than that of men drawing large salaries, and clamoring for funds to raise the salaries of other preachers less lavishly paid. The mendicant preacher is a common figure with all Eastern religions, and we ought never to forget that Christianity is essentially an Eastern religion. It was born in the East, and it has never been really acclimatised to the West. What the West has had has been a Christianity modified in various directions, and so far an unfaithful representation of the genuine article.

But with every allowance for the sincerity of Mr. Lewis, his action only serves to emphasise the hopelessly irrational, non-social, if not anti-social character of Christianity. Consider what this ideal of a perfect man involves. A wandering mendicant preacher, without family or domestic ties; developing what he is pleased to call his "spiritual" nature, but quite obviously leaving the other part of his nature undeveloped. All cannot adopt the plan or society would dissolve into fragments. His poverty and self-sacrifice only gain emphasis from the wealth and arrogance of others. But it does nothing whatever to diminish either arrogance or excessive wealth. The Ascetic is much older than Christianity; he has been in the world for thousands of years, and no sane person will say that he has been instrumental in diminishing social evils. Usually his presence has had the opposite effect. Men do not make the world better by leaving it. The rational enjoyment of all that the world offers is a much healthier plan than that of ignoring either its beauties or its possibilities. Above all, the ideal of St. Francis presupposes a world in which extreme poverty and extreme wealth are perpetual and irremovable features. And that is a supposition that no progressive sociologist will readily grant. A good man in the world, sharing its activities and striving to purify them is an inspiring sight. A man shutting himself out from it—no matter how good or sincere he may be—is, at best, a pitiful sight. Naturally, the surrender of £600 a year has impressed Christians greatly. It is an illustration of the Christian's standard of value.

Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago, one of the ablest and most popular Free-thought advocates in the United States, delivered a lecture for the Twin City Rationalist Society at Minneapolis. The local clergy replied to him on the spot, but not at the same time. They called upon the owners of the hall not to let it to the Rationalists again, and the call met with a favorable response. We congratulate the local clergy on the preservation of the Christian business instinct, which started so well in the proceedings of Cashier Judas and the death-dealing performances of General Peter in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Their reply to Mr. Mangasarian was simple, easy, and effective. Once more—we congratulate them.

The Weekly Rest Day Bill, recently introduced in the House of Commons, was doomed from the first, and expired amid many peals of laughter. Mr. Harry Lawson's happy description of the Bill was, "It's a Bill a maiden aunt might have drafted after listening to a sermon on the want of Sabbath Observance." Mr. Henry Chaplin declared that "soon the Sabbatarians will want to prevent hens laying on a Sunday."

To cane or not to cane? that is the question which Dean Inge has disinterred, after having had a decent burial long ago by all educationalists. The gloomy Dean laments the abolition of the "wholesome birch." It is appropriate that the official of a reactionary Church should admire the methods of Wackford Squeers and Dotheboys Hall.

Rev. H. Barrow Williams, the well-known Calvinistic minister of Llandudno, is on the rampage, and Welsh heretics in high places had better beware. "I know men," he is reported to have declared, "who are practically heathen—professors in our colleges—(shame)—and we cannot consistently with our deepest convictions entrust the tuition of our boys and girls to educated heathens. These people should realise their position, and I say that if they cannot reverence our sacred institutions, we must prefer

their room to their company. (Applause.)" This is a clear warning to the professors against incurring the loss of their bread and butter. But suppose these gentlemen, as is very likely, defy the warning? In that case the Rev. H. Barrow Williams and his clerical colleagues will have to "realise" their "position." The note of alarm, indeed, is perceptible in their threats already. They would show less tempor if they were not afraid that, after all, their own is the dying cause.

The Catholic Archbishop Whiteside, speaking on "Motherhood" at Liverpool, said that keeping children alive was necessary. "They would live, grow up, marry, rear families, increase the Catholic population, and, finally, the number of citizens of the kingdom of heaven." How transcendental! Presumably, the heavenly "citizens" will wear clogs.

Professor Phillimore, orating at Glasgow, said that "the dirty work the Catholic Church had to do was to make more tolerable or less intolerable the social conditions of the day." How true of all Churches! If the masses did not think of the mansions in the skies, they would not tolerate living in slums on starvation wages.

Despite the rejection by the House of Commons of the Sunday Closing Bill, the Bishop of London is still proceeding with its sister measure in the House of Lords. Notoriously careless about his facts, the Bishop informed the House that "nobody challenged the statement that wherever Sunday closing had been tried it had proved a success." As a matter of fact, the statement is being constantly challenged, and proofs have been brought forward of cases where it has quite failed as a reformatory measure. And Lord Salisbury actually challenged the statement on the spot. He pointed out that in Wales the rate of drunkenness on Sunday was '64 per 1,000 from 1885 to 1895, and '65 from 1902 to 1912. On the other hand, in England the cases were '46 and '45 during corresponding periods. Sunday closing certainly does not lead to a smaller consumption of intoxicating drink, and does not always mean even a decrease of Sunday drinking. Saturday night drunkenness often gets more pronounced. There are, of course, other causes that make for a general decline of drunkenness; but of these, as may be expected, the Bishop of London does not appear to have the slightest conception.

This is the way the Rev. A. E. T. Newton, Vicar of Whittlesey, near Peterborough, speaks of our English "Sunday":—

"It has neither history nor theology behind it. No primitive or mediæval theologian knew aught of it. Nowhere out of these isles and America is it known. Neither South of Europe of Romanism, nor Northern Europe with its Protestantism, nor Eastern Europe and the Greek Church know anything about it. It is a mushroom in its growth and an evil fungus in its existence."

Mr. Newman goes on to advocate the right of liberty to Sunday games, and to do that which helps a man "most to realise that it is good to be alive." He points out the dangers of a Sunday with nothing to do, and says it would be a good thing if "pious people" would organise a concert and a dance after service hours. Mr. Newman is on the right road, but he errs in thinking that Sabbatarians have at heart the moral and intellectual good of the people. They have not. Their principal purpose is a theological one. Otherwise, they would welcome the opening of picture palaces on Sunday, which, on the testimony of the police everywhere, have done more to keep the streets decent on Sunday evenings than all the sermons that were ever preached.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Bayonne has been denouncing the Boy Scout movement in France. His objection appears to be that there is no religion mixed up with it. He says they are offered the religion of honor, justice, truth, and conscience, but God is disregarded and ignored. For our part, if we must have a religion, this seems the most admirable one that can be selected. The Bishop says that the boys will not understand such "pretentious jargon." We beg to differ. A boy of nine or ten years of age has a fairly keen perception of truth and honor; and, at all events, if these things are beyond him, it is certain that what are called the "truths of religion" are above his comprehension. The fact of the matter is that the French leaders of the Boy Scout movement appear to have wisely kept God and the clergy out of it, and naturally they do not like it. So "honor, truth, and conscience" become to the Bishop "mere pretentious jargon."

Superstition is a hardy plant. As an inducement to subscribers to a Catholic school, an advertisement in the

Universe informs us that "Blessed Lourdes rosaries and medals which have touched the spot where Our Lady appeared, will be sent to contributors on application."

A good joke is always welcome, and one occurred in connection with the recent Ipswich by-election. The chairman of the Lloyd George meeting related the following story. A canvasser told an old lady that the Chancellor was likely to make a railway to heaven. "I don't know about that," the old lady replied, "but he has made the waiting-room a good deal more comfortable."

Mr. Lloyd George's theology is generally a bit shaky. In his Ipswich speech, replying to the old objection that the Insurance Acts would ruin English industries, remarked that unemployment had dropped from 8 to 2 per cent. since 1910. "England," he added, "has never had such prosperity as she has had since she began to look after the sick, the broken, and the aged, and every man who believes in providence will know the reason why." We wonder if Mr. George really believes this? That God is on their side is a common idea amongst religious statesmen. Mr. Gladstone carried the Almighty with him every time he changed his mind. Mr. Lloyd George seems equally sure of always having the Deity's company. The oddest thing of all is that Mr. George's opponents express the same assurance of the divine support.

The *Saturday Journal* is publishing a series of articles on "What Happens to Us When We Die?" and the editor promises that they will embrace "all sorts of opinions." We have seen that sort of announcement before, and it often means all sorts of opinions—within limits. Contributors are allowed to differ about religion, but they must not reject it altogether. They must always find room for it somewhere, and express a certain feeling of sorrow for their departure from orthodoxy. The writer of the article in the issue for May 21 is described as a "well-known author," and the concealment of the name is itself symptomatic. Writers are afraid to avow themselves, editors are afraid to print, publishers are afraid to publish. We have not the direct persecution of earlier days, to which a man might yield without a feeling of personal degradation, but we have a religious tyranny exerted which inevitably lowers the character of those who submit to it, and enlists them as agents for ensuring the same demoralisation in others.

We are convinced that this general timidity is largely unwarranted. Because a few parsons shriek out when writers are allowed to speak plainly through the columns of a paper, or because a few bigots write protesting, it is assumed that the whole of the public is up in arms. The fear is, we believe, unwarranted. The bulk of the public really care for a respectful, firm, straightforward speech. There is no real need for editors to be so timid, so fearful of exposing themselves to a popular clamor. This dread of giving offence is really a heritage; it belongs to a time when the Churches actually possessed the power to punish by death or imprisonment those who gave offence. The tradition remains after the power has largely gone, and writers terrify each other into evasion or suppression. The old hand—who has never tried plain speech—cautions the beginner, and he in turn hands on the warning as though it were the product of his experience. The result is that writers and editors are, as a rule, a cowardly lot. They are daring within the limits of safety. The first editor of a widely circulated newspaper who has the strength to lift himself out of the rut, and give the same opportunity for anti-religious as for religious news, will probably discover that he has been all along trembling before a bogey of his own creation.

The *Daily Telegraph* has raised a sum of nearly £40,000 for the benefit of the Young Men's Christian Association. We presume that it is the traditions of the house of Levy that is responsible for this zeal on behalf of a Christian institution.

Plaster Saints is the alluring title of a new play in which a parson runs amok and proves himself a first-class hypocrite. Other plaster saints, varying in size from an inch or so to the ample proportions of Falstaff, may be purchased at Catholic toyshops throughout Europe.

Mr. Israel Zangwill says that the reason for the reaction against Rationalism is that Freethinkers have taken consolations from people, and given them nothing in return. This reminds us of Charles Lamb's jest, "I design to give up smoking, but I have not yet fixed upon an equivalent vice. I must have *quid pro quo*."

A sailor, charged recently at the Guildhall with a minor offence, was found to be a religious picture-gallery, for he was tattooed from head to feet. Round his neck was the snake that tempted Eve; on his back was the Lord's Prayer; and on his chest and legs were portrayed the twelve disciples. Even his arms and bald head had sacred decorations. Despite the optimists, one Christian has "the needle."

"Arley Lane"—the writer of "Pulpit and Pew" in the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*—devotes a couple of columns to a sketch of a recent lecture by Sir Oliver Lodge. There is a good deal of good-humored sarcasm in the sketch, and Sir Oliver is "chaffed" for his knowledge of the "Creator's" aims and intentions in creating the world as it is. There is nothing easier, for anyone who can talk at all, than to talk in the strain adopted by Sir Oliver Lodge, but he is really no more an authority on the topic than the primitive worshiper of thousands of years ago, or the most ignorant of preachers to-day. Says "Arley Lane," "Delightful as was his discourse, it raised a dozen queries for one it tried to meet. Sir Oliver rambled on, and on, and on, without much connection, without clear final aim, always agreeable, but leading to nowhere." We can quite believe that the lecture roused more doubts than it allayed—to the critical listener. But we do not suppose that many in the audience were that way inclined. The majority probably came to hear familiar expressions uttered, and cared little about anything further.

Sir Oliver repeated the very old observation that it was impossible to imagine all things originating without having been conceived in a mind. This is sheer confusion. One is quite warranted in retorting that it is impossible to imagine a mind *originating* the universe. You may conceive a mind planning or arranging forces or material already in existence, because that is analogous to what we ourselves are constantly doing. But that leaves the question of origin untouched. The truth here is that our only conception of mind is by way of a relation, and it is utterly impossible for anyone to form the slightest conception of a "mind" antecedating everything else and creating everything. Sir Oliver Lodge is simply illustrating the vulgar confusion between originating and arranging. When he says we can conceive the universe *originating* in a mind, he really means that we can conceive it *arranged* by a mind. And these are quite distinct propositions. No one can conceive the first, and there is no necessity for his making the attempt. No one can think beyond existence, since thinking implies existence. We are not bound to think of the universe originating in a mind. We simply cannot think of such an originator.

The other half of Sir Oliver's confused statement is no more than an assertion of human impotence badly formulated. We do not *know* how the present cosmic arrangements have come about; we can conceive—granting a mind of adequate calibre—that some mind arranged things as a mechanic arranges his materials. Granting the assumption of the existence of such a mind, this is conceivable; but it is not probable, and it is not necessary. For so long as the beauty and "order" of nature express relations between the various parts of nature—and this must always be the case—there must always remain the possibility, if not the probability, of this beauty and order occurring without the intervention of mind. One might almost say that this must be so, since "order" is not something that is *established*; it is inevitable. Scientifically, there is no such thing as an absence of order; there can only be a variation in the kind of order existing. And the discovery of the way in which any order is maintained is a problem of scientific inquiry. It provides no basis whatever for the spiritualistic moonshine of Sir Oliver Lodge.

Mrs. Annie Besant, who is now President of the Theosophical Society, is lecturing on "Mysticism," including such subjects as "The God-Idea" and "The Christ-Idea." The lady in the mist might try to answer some of her previous arguments to the contrary.

The latest begging dodge in religious circles is an imitation "Special Summons" in behalf of the funds of a certain St. Savior's Church. It is printed on blue paper and conforms to all the characteristics of a legal summons. Copies are delivered at front doors indiscriminately—even if the inmates are Atheists. The cheek of the thing is—quite Christian.

"The Futurist Man's Dress" was the title of a lecture by Signor Marinetti at the Doré Galleries. Let us hope that the costume won't be too much like David's when he danced before the ark.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £146 15s. Received since:—Col. B. L. Reilly, £1 1s.; R. Wood, 10s.; S. E. Nokes, 5s.; Mr. Vickery (Peckham), £1 1s.; Richard Johnson, £5; Arthur Powell, £1; T. W. Love, 2s. 6d.; T. C. Riglin, 2s. 6d.; John Grange, £2 2s.; J. M. Wood (Winnipeg), 4s.

W. CROMACK.—Thanks for cuttings. They are always useful, even though we may be unable to use them at the moment.

H. GEORGE FARMER.—Please send your new address at once to enable to send proofs.

R. WOOD.—The "continuation of improvement" in our health seems fairly certain.

RICHARD JOHNSON.—Glad to have your best wishes for our "good fighting form" in the future. We think you do well not to travel to the Conference unless you feel pretty sure of weather and health. You wear wonderfully well, but it isn't wise to tempt Providence, as the Christians say,—as though he were always looking out for a meal.

JOHN BLUNDELL.—The passage occurs in *King Lear*, Act IV., scene vi.

D. RUSSELL.—Our contributor's pen-name "Abracadabra" is a word that was greatly used by the "Occultists" of the Middle Ages. It is mere gibberish, but as written in the form of a triangle was believed to be powerful as a charm, particularly against disease. Glad to have your appreciation of the quality of this journal.

C. F. BUDGE.—There was certainly a stage at which the followers of the Pagan deities accepted their existence as a fact. At a later stage the tendency was, with the more rationalising and cultured, to represent them as symbols. We see exactly the same process in the case of Christianity. All religions appear to follow much the same road of development—and decay.

BONNAICE.—We are glad to have your tribute to the *Freethinker's* "cheerful and wholesome tone" and abstention from the vulgarities that are patronised (for business reasons) by so many other papers. We quite sympathise with you in your present state of mental unrest, but we beg you not to try to force your mind; trust to time and reflection.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS FREETHINKER.—Yes, it is something for the Christian Evidence lecturer you name to be proud of when he contemplates the maltreatment of two young ladies by a couple of thousand infuriated Tunbridge Wells believers. Undoubtedly the responsibility for this brutality rests with the Christian Evidence lecturer, who has been busy filling their minds with his filthy slanders. Luckily, the police appear to have done what they could, or the consequences might have been really serious. For our part, we should be inclined to let the Tunbridge Wells hooligans severely alone. If the Christians of the place are content with the knowledge that in 1914 Tunbridge Wells is so far behind the times that no two opinions on Christianity are permitted, we are content with it as evidence of the value of Christianity.

J. JACKSON.—We are afraid that our regular contributors would not be able to join in the correspondence you name, unless some special occasion presented itself for their so doing. Glad to know that you have been doing your part.

D. ENGLAND.—It is difficult to advise you without more precise knowledge. You would probably find Mr. Cohen's *Determinism* and Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs* of use to you.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

Lecture Notices must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

Delegates to the N. S. S. Conference who arrive in London in time on the Saturday evening will receive an informal welcome at the Bay Malton Hotel, 160 Great Portland-street. The Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, and several members of the Executive, will be in attendance. There is still on hand a supply of small bills advertising the evening meeting, and we hope that London Freethinkers will see that these are well and profitably used. They are to be had

on application at this office. It is also probable that an excursion may be arranged for the Monday following the Conference. Details of this will be announced at the morning meeting. The Conference luncheon is to take place at the Café Marguerite, Oxford-street, at 1 o'clock. Tickets 2s. 6d. each.

Mr. John Grange, the veteran Bradford "saint," whose name is so well and so honorably known in that district, sending his annual contribution to the President's Honorarium Fund, compliments Mr. Foote on preserving his mental powers unimpaired in spite of all his bodily troubles. He refers to the Editor's recent criticism of Kipling as "a marvel of incisiveness." "It is the finest thing of its kind," he says, "that I ever read at any time."

Mr. Arthur Powell, a personal friend of Mr. Foote's, whose subscription is acknowledged in this week's *Freethinker*, is a veteran Secularist, and old age is now telling upon him visibly. But in body and mind he was built on one of nature's best models; one of those who (allowing for the religious conventionalism of Robert Burns's energetic language) "derive their patent of nobility direct from Almighty God." Mr. Powell has an old friend, counting more years than he does himself, being eighty-two, and still taking an interest in the progress of advanced movements. Mr. Powell sends his older friend the *Freethinker* in batches of half-a-dozen or so. After reading the last batch the older friend wrote Mr. Powell an interesting letter, from which we are permitted to extract the following passages. Referring to the fact that the *Freethinker* has passed its seventeenth-hundredth number, the writer says:—

"What an immense quantity of editorial and other work these figures represent, besides his other important literary work, much of it now, I suppose, untraceable; the Presidency of the N. S. S.; and last, but not least, his lectures in widely separated parts of the country, involving much tedious travelling, and sudden, cold-catching changes of temperature—from the warm lecture-room to the chilly, draughty railway-carriage. Truly an amazing record of work..... You see I have been taking some interest in the public life of the Editor of the *Freethinker*. On first hearing him address a public meeting, when he was little more than a lad, his able and earnest style so impressed me, that I thought he had a great future. What will it be? I asked myself. Anticipating Mr. Asquith's well-known words, I replied (to myself) Wait and see. We can now see."

Forty-three or forty-four years—perhaps even forty-five—have elapsed since Mr. Powell's old friend took note of the youth who had already devoted his life to Freethought. If the record closed to-morrow it would be a fair stroke of work in the world—and for the world. George Meredith—one of the master-geniuses, whose true greatness, both of mind and character, has yet to be fully recognised—was also taking note of that youth, and told him, only a few years after, that he was fighting "for the best of causes" although he knew "how profitless it must be." The Master's fight is over, except through his writings; the Disciple's will last until his hour strikes on "the horologe of time."

The completion of the third edition of the *Golden Bough*, which grew from the original fine book published in two volumes, and is Dr. Frazer's masterpiece, has suggested to some of his admirers that this is a "fitting occasion for offering him some token in recognition of his great services to learning." This is not expressed as it might be, for Dr. Frazer is anything but a pedant, but we quite agree with the object and the occasion. It is proposed that a Frazer Fund be raised, with a view to promoting the study of Anthropology by means of grants to travelling students, of either sex; the Fund to be held in trust by the University of Cambridge. The Secretary and Treasurer is Mr. F. N. Cornford, Trinity College, Cambridge. Contributions to the Fund may be sent to him, or to the "Frazer Fund Account," Messrs. Barclay & Co., Mortlock's Bank, Cambridge. The Committee includes a number of distinguished scholars and writers. We hope the Fund will be liberally supported. No honor can be too great for an investigator and thinker like Dr. Frazer.

Human institutions are inventions. They are devices to aid in the promotion of human welfare. They should be judged by the same standards of utility as agricultural implements and everything else. Whatever can be made over to advantage, they should be made over. And whenever they can be rendered useless by something better to take their place, they should be sent without sighs or lamentations to the junk-pile. Nothing is too sacred to be improved.—J. H. Moore, "Ethics and Education."

Christian Apologetics.

VI.—PALEY'S EVIDENCES (No. 2).

ANOTHER example of Christian Evidence reasoning by our great apologist Paley is that relating to Celsus and Porphyry (Part I., chap. ix., sec. 9). Paley says:—

"Near the middle of the second century, Celsus, a heathen philosopher, wrote a professed treatise against Christianity. To this treatise Origen.....published an answer, in which he frequently recites his adversary's words and arguments. *The work of Celsus is lost*, but that of Origen remains.....Celsus, or the Jew whom he personates, uses these words: 'I could say many [other] things concerning the affairs of Jesus, and these, too, different from those written by the disciples of Jesus, but I purposely omit them.'.....It is not easy to believe that if Celsus could have contradicted the disciples upon good evidence in any material point, he would have omitted to do so.....This statement of Celsus proves that the Gospels were composed by the disciples of Jesus, strictly so called."

In the foregoing statement of Celsus I have inserted one word—that placed within brackets—which must have been inadvertently omitted by an early copyist. Celsus has said "many things concerning the affairs of Jesus," which contradict the accounts in the Gospels, some of which will be noticed presently. Meanwhile, Paley is greatly in error in thinking that the statement of Celsus which he has quoted "proves that the Gospels were composed by the disciples of Jesus, strictly so called." What it does really prove is, that at the date when Celsus wrote (A.D. 178), the Gospels were asserted by Christians to have been written by disciples of Jesus. Celsus simply accepted what was said of the origin of the Gospels in his day.

Speaking of another hostile writer, Paley says:—

"What Celsus was in the second century, Porphyry became in the third. His work, a large and formal treatise against the Christian religion, *is not extant*. We must be content, therefore, to gather his objections from Christian writers who have noticed, in order to answer them.....Porphyry objects to 'the abomination of desolation'.....to John's application of the term 'Word'; to Christ's change of intention about going to the feast of Tabernacles; to the judgment denounced by St. Peter upon Ananias and Sapphira.....Neither Celsus in the second, Porphyry in the third, nor the emperor Julian in the fourth century, questioned the authenticity of the New Testament books, or even insinuated that Christians were mistaken in the authors to whom they ascribed them."

Here I may say that Paley is again in error as to what this unquestioning attitude proves. It proves only that opponents of Christianity, who lived at a period too late for investigating the origin of that religion or its writings, gave assent to the Christian view because they had no means of disproving it. At the date when Celsus wrote, all the canonical Gospels had been in circulation for some time. According to the historian Glover, "Celsus was above all a man of culture—candid, scholarly, and cool." His book, which was entitled the *True Account*, was "powerful and popular, and it proved a real obstacle to the spread of Christianity among the educated classes. Origen's answer decided the controversy in the Church's favor." Scholars who have endeavored to reconstruct the arguments of Celsus from Origen's reply have found the order disarranged, the objections presented sometimes in the author's own words, sometimes in paraphrases or epitomes, and they are often left to discover what he may have said from details of the rejoinder.

Porphyry was a Platonic philosopher of great learning, who, near the end of the third century, wrote fifteen "books" or chapters against both the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Neither of the works written by Celsus and Porphyry has come down to us. We have therefore no means of knowing exactly what these two cultured Pagans had to say against Christianity. True, Origen replied to some of the matters in the work of Celsus, and some later Christian writers have preserved a few extracts from

that of Porphyry; but these fragments give a very inadequate idea of the contents of the books in question. To form a correct estimate of them, we require to see the works as a whole. How is it, then, that neither of them has been preserved to our day? Paley merely tells us that "the work of Celsus is lost" and that of Porphyry "is not extant." But why is this the case? Did not our ingenuous apologist know? Well—yes; Paley *did* know; but he thought it might not redound to the credit of the Christian Church to give the reason.

During the two centuries in which the Christians were merely tolerated by the Roman authorities, any heresy might be taught, and any book hostile to the Christian religion might be placed in circulation, with perfect freedom. But as soon as Christianity was made the religion of the State, all heterodox writings and all attacks upon the orthodox religion were rigorously suppressed. The movers in these matters were the Christian clergy, by whose influence edicts were issued against the possessors of such writings. Thus, in A.D. 325, in the reign of the emperor Constantine, an edict was passed in which it was stated:—

"As Porphyry, an enemy of godliness, for having composed wicked books against Christianity, hath found a fitting recompense in being infamous, and having all his impious writings destroyed, so now it is my pleasure that Arius and those of his sentiments shall be called Porphyrians.....If anyone shall be found to have concealed any writing of Arius, and shall not immediately bring it and consume it in the fire, death shall be his punishment."

A few years previously, under the same emperor, all the copies that could be found of the works of Celsus and Porphyry were consigned to the flames. The writings of the so-called heretic Arius were now doomed to the same fate. Arius believed all the New Testament scriptures, but differed from many other Christians in his interpretation of the first two verses in the Gospel of John. The majority held that "the Son was of the same substance, essence, or nature as the Father, and was equally eternal with the Father." Arius maintained that "the Son was begotten by the Father before all worlds, but did not exist before he was begotten." It was thus a case of tweedledum and tweedledee. It would appear, however, that all copies of Porphyry's book had not been destroyed; for in A.D. 392 an edict of Theodosius was issued in which it was enacted:—

"All writings whatsoever which Porphyry or anyone else has written against the Christian religion, in the possession of whomsoever they shall be found, shall be committed to the fire"—the penalty for non-compliance being death.

A similar proclamation was issued in A.D. 449, after which we hear no more of these "wicked books." The work of Porphyry was of a more scholarly character than that of Celsus, and was considered far more dangerous to educated persons; hence only the former is specially named. We see now the significance of Paley's disingenuous statement—"the work of Celsus is lost"—that of Porphyry "is not extant."

We will now see something Celsus has said "concerning the affairs of Jesus" which differed from that recorded in the Gospels. Celsus says, in effect, that the mother of Jesus was a poor Jewish country-woman whom her husband or betrothed, a carpenter, had divorced for adultery; that her child, Jesus, was the son of a soldier named Panthera; that Jesus was taken to Egypt and lived among Egyptian conjurers, whose arts he there acquired; that upon returning to Palestine Jesus practised these arts, and persuaded the common people that he was a god. Certain obscene details of the story, however, Celsus "purposely omitted," not caring to soil his parchment with them. Paley is discreetly silent respecting the foregoing, and Christian advocates denounce the story as a foul slander—which it may have been—but it was not fabricated by Celsus. That philosopher heard it recounted by opponents of Christianity in his day—probably Jews. The question to

be determined is: Was the story invented to discredit the accounts in the Gospels? or, Was it known before any of the evangels appeared? This question has never been answered; I will therefore leave it—for the present. Renan's reconstruction of some of the arguments used by Celsus runs as follows:—

"Perhaps it ought first to be made a subject of examination whether any man really dead has risen with the same body.....Living, your Jesus has been able to do nothing for himself; dead, do you say he rose, and showed the marks of his suffering, the holes in his hands? But who has seen all that? A woman with an evil spirit, as you yourselves confess.....At his tomb there were present, some say one angel, others say two, to announce to the women that he had risen. For the Son of God, as he appeared to be, had not the power alone to open his tomb: he needed someone to come and displace the stone.....If your Jesus really wished to make his divine power to shine, he should have shown himself to his enemies, to the judge who condemned him, to the whole world. For since he was dead, and God besides, as you pretend, he had nothing more to fear from anyone: and, apparently, it was not that he should remain concealed that he had been sent.....Dead, he only causes himself to be seen in secret.....His suffering had had innumerable witnesses.....It is the reverse of what should have taken place," etc.

From the foregoing it will be seen that Celsus had read Mark xvi. 9, where Jesus "appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons." Celsus compares the Christians of his day to a number of frogs sitting in the mud, squabbling, and saying: "God exists, and we next to him; and it is for our sake that the whole world was made: and God will come and take us up to heaven, except those who are wicked, whom he will burn with fire." We know from other sources that the early Christians did talk in this way.

I will now briefly notice Paley's statements respecting Porphyry.

(1) That apologist says: "Porphyry objects to 'the abomination of desolation.'" The word "objects" is far too mild. Porphyry asserted that the book of Daniel was a forgery written in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (168—164 B.C.), and that the "abomination of desolation" mentioned in that book (and named in Matt. xxiv. 15 as referring to the Romans) was fulfilled in the reign of Antiochus—which is true.

(2) Porphyry objects "to John's application of the term 'Word.'" The reference is to John i. 1—14, which commences, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Porphyry, as a Greek scholar, would know that to call Jesus "the Word" was simply ridiculous; for the term *Logos* denoted word, saying, discourse, doctrine, speech, account, reason; but never a person. The Gospel writer took the idea from Philo.

(3) Porphyry objects "to Christ's change of intention about going to the feast of Tabernacles." This is incorrect. In John vii. 8, Jesus says to his brothers—"Go ye up unto the feast: I go not up yet unto this feast." But as soon as his brothers had gone up, Jesus also went up—but secretly. Porphyry did not object to "Christ's change of intention"; he objected to a great moral teacher telling a downright falsehood. In Porphyry's time there was no "yet" in the passage; that word was inserted (in some copies) later. In the Revised Version it is stated: "Many ancient authorities omit yet." Amongst the latter is the oldest MS.—the Codex Sinaiticus.

(4) Porphyry objects "to the judgment denounced by St. Peter upon Ananias and Sapphira." Just so; and if the narrative in the Book of the Acts (chap. v.) is true, Peter was a cold-blooded murderer. But the account is not true. The chief priests and Sanhedrim, it is stated, several times arrested the apostles, and having nothing to charge them with, let them go. But had Peter struck two persons dead, as recorded, the double murder would have been widely known; Peter, and any apostles present at the murder, would have been brought before the authorities, charged with the deed, found guilty, and stoned—as in the case of Stephen. Yet the pious

Christian who fabricated the doings of Peter could not perceive this obvious fact—neither does the unthinking church or chapel-goer of the present day.

ABRACADABRA.

The Stormy Petrel of Doubt.

CHRISTIANS who live by the profession of their beliefs have a delightfully picturesque habit of drawing profit from the hell of infidelity. It is a strange habit, in these days, a monstrously strange habit; in many respects it is funny; but, like most things and customs and ideas that owe their existence to Religion, it is fraught with results, with effects, that are unlovely and painful. The ludicrousness is mixed up with the sadness, the fun with the tears, the cruelty with the amusement, the bitterness with the sweetness. Looking upon some of these religious characteristics from a broad viewpoint, we laugh; but, often, when we enter the narrow spheres of the individual, we see nothing but tragedy. Coming to the personal, we notice all the hardness, the coarseness, the hatefulness, of their operations. We see them in naked reality. Their malformations are more ugly than grotesque. They sicken us. We wonder how it is that humanity allows Religion to exist.

You know what happens when the stormy petrel of doubt pays its first of many visits to the young mind. The mind never lives a recluse. Action, in various forms, but particularly in speech, is inevitable. One might say that the activities of intelligence were the fruits of the functioning of the mind, just as mind is the effect of the functioning of the brain. The young mind cannot resist its own power. Doubt cannot be imprisoned. At first the comments are humorously poohpoohed by the elder people. Experience and knowledge are theirs by right of life and living. What satisfies them should surely be accepted unquestionably by their children.

Slowly the doubts develop. With increase of strength comes the trouble. The storm threatens. Ultimately it bursts upon the family circle; and the home peace is disturbed by the rushing winds of mental conflict. In the glaring lights of anger and disappointment, Christian habits crucify themselves; the hard sadness tastes bitter; the comic element is displaced by tragedy, the little tragedy of the common people.

Is it idle sentiment to ask how many homes, even in these presumably enlightened days, are transformed into storm scenes? How many mother-hearts, sailing along on love's silver seas, are suddenly caught in the storm and all but wrecked? How many sorrows, in the shape of broken hopes, tattered disillusionments, torn ideals, crushed memories, litter the waters, when the storm subsides.

Seldom does the raging of the winds penetrate from the family seclusion. We cannot tell of the amount of useless human suffering heralded by the stormy petrel of doubt. All we know is that thousands of homes, at this very moment, are shivering and trembling in the blast of the gale; that in the unseen social heart of humanity there goes on a hateful turmoil and strife blown into being by the winds of religious bigotry. Part of the tragedy is that so little of the destructiveness of the storm ever becomes known.

The mother-heart suffers most. It is a characteristic of mother-hearts, this suffering. But how much of it comes directly from a public opinion engineered by Religion? To what an extent is the influence of our neighbors' opinions responsible, and to what an extent is the influence of belief responsible?

Crude, perhaps somewhat cynical, questions these are; and yet there is the rankle of truth in the suggestion that the hell of infidelity is not so much hell for the infidel as it is for his relations. The public opinion, whose forum is the Church, is, seemingly, a weightier matter in the estimation of our friends than the opinion of God. What our

neighbors may say is more important than what God may think.

All over the country we see this so-called infidelity masquerading as belief, that business may not suffer, or that social position may not be rendered unpleasant. And in the little lives of the common people we see the same forces in activity. The hell of infidelity opens its mouth for our Christian friends when the neighbors, the acquaintances, begin to notice that so-and-so has ceased attending church. The love our mothers have for Jesus is a detail compared with the worship they yield to churchy public opinion.

Religious ardor is not responsible for the disturbances that arise when the stormy petrel of doubt comes on the wings of knowledge. Religious ardor is dead. But the old lessons linger long in the women minds. They have been taught to recognise the Church as the guarantee of moral respectability; taught to see danger in the drifting from it; taught to expect hell in disbelief; and the teaching returns to be woven into garments to hide weakness. The despicable religious ideas that surround alienation from the Church are used to cover the ugly nudity of the power of a contemptible public opinion, governed by the Church. To endure the commiserations of good church-going acquaintances is hell to the mother-heart.

Where did the mother-minds get those ideas? Where were they taught to see moral death in infidelity? In church. Who were the teachers of this atrociously dismal prison of ideas? Who passed the poison into minds that, otherwise, would have been pure? Who continue to imbue the mother-minds and mother-hearts with this damnable doctrine, this tissue of evil lies? The pastors, priests, ministers of the Gospel; the black-coated gentlemen who walk amongst us with a lovely moral halo around their benevolent heads.

Outside the church our mothers have little time, and less inclination, to read what Jesus said on any subject under the sun of humanity. Inside the church they are told what Jesus said. It needs interpretation, of course. The simplest Saxon requires interpretation. And from this elaboration springs that discolored vision used to enwrap the maleficent influence of a public opinion born in the same gloom.

With the coming of doubt there is the Devil to pay—a double Devil; one disguised as Deity, the other naked custom. It is strange to sit listening to the paying process. Sometimes the maternal words raise an edifice of such imposing structure that a faithful mind could not but worship; but an unfaithful mind is quick to see the rapid change from God to neighbor, quick to feel the slenderness of the religious building, quick to see the foundation-stone shattered by the banality of church opinion. Although the tears drop hot upon a faithless heart full of faith, there is still the clear vision that sees the horror of those hypocritical accusations that emanate first from the pulpit. They are like snakes sneaking over human love. The mother-heart could never imagine them, nor tolerate them, did not some human power assist their entrance. Condemnations of vility, convictions of damnation here and hereafter, are foreign to the mother-mind. Love knows them not. And yet, at those storm-times, we experience this unnatural combination.

While priests have been responsible, in the past, for the building up of the church-opinion that operates as the human influence, they are also responsible for the teaching that gives this human influence its poisonous qualities. The hell of infidelity has been profitable to them; but in the ordinary life of humanity how much unknown sorrow has it caused, how many unseen tears, how many wounded hearts?

When the glories of religion are being counted, and God's blessings named one by one; when the ministrations of God's apostles are being recollected and praised; and the goodness of God is being extolled to the skies; when man's debt to priests, to the Church, to the Christian influences are being

sung in mellifluous strains, perhaps it is not foolishness to draw aside, for a moment, the curtain of the commonplace, and gaze, for a little, on the innumerable storms with their bitterness, their sorrows, and griefs, and miseries, that have followed the visit of the Stormy Petrel of Doubt to the young mind.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Artists and Freethought.

"The majority of historians would have us believe that Atheists in art were unknown. The principle is nicely applied, when we come to think of it; unless a painter believed in the Trinity, say, he was incapable of anything truly artistic."—WILLIAM REPTON, *Freethinker*.

IN Ford Madox Hueffer's recent book on *Rossetti*, the point of Ruskin's attitude to art is discussed, and Hueffer strongly condemns his "over-emphasised asceticism and his continual falsification of æsthetic standards to give body to his ethical doctrine." This charge against Ruskin is substantially true, but not wholly true, as we shall see presently. Ruskin, at one time (and, indeed, with very sparse modification throughout his life) went to the utmost limits of sheer religious bigotry to maintain his doctrine that all great art was the expression of a religious man. He even went so far as to narrow this down to a Christian religious man.

Yet I have said this is not the whole truth. After Ruskin's death, an Edition de Luxe (in 39 vols.) of his works appeared, with compendious notes from his hitherto unpublished MSS. In this work, *The Thesis*, alluded to above, which Ruskin held for so many years, was cancelled peremptorily in the following lines:—

"How far has art been strengthened by her employment in religious service? Many careful thinkers on this subject, and I myself, very strenuously in past years, have contended that the occupation of artists in the representation of divine histories or persons, has stimulated and purified the powers of the art so employed. It is not, of course, possible for me to-day to enter with you even on the first steps of so vast an inquiry; but it will be part of my subsequent duty to lay before you the grounds of my now fixed convictions that few of the greatest men ever painted religious subjects by choice, but only because they were either compelled by ecclesiastical authority, supported by its patronage, or invited by popular applause; that by all three influences their powers were at once wasted and restrained; that their invention was dulled by the monotony of motive and perverted by its incredibility.....I then thought that all the nascent and dawning strength of art had been founded on pious faith; whereas I now with humiliation, but I dare not say with sorrow, recognise that they were founded, indeed, upon the scorn of death, but not on the hope of immortality; founded, indeed, upon the purity of love, but the love of wife and child, and not of angel or deity; and that the sweet skill which gave to such feelings their highest expression came not by precept of religion, but by the secular and scientific training which Christianity was compelled unwittingly to permit, and by the noble instruction received from the remnants of that very heathen art which Christianity had done her utmost to destroy."*

This is a fine passage, but it crumbled to ruins that false sentimental structure which Ruskin had built around it. Alas! how few know of this passage. This Edition de Luxe cannot be purchased under a small fortune, whereas the ordinary editions, bearing the teachings which Ruskin abandoned, are circulated by the thousand.†

Of course, to all thinking people, the early contention of Ruskin's was arrogantly foolish, for as John Stuart Mill has pointed out in *Liberty*, there are a considerable number of the world's "brightest ornaments" to be classed amongst the sceptics in religion. Art alone can claim not a few of these ornaments.

In the early days of European art (the fourteenth to sixteenth century) there were no documented

* Italics mine.

† For years the present writer only knew this Ruskin, and it was Mr. Chapman Cohen who brought the passage in question in the Edition de Luxe to the writer's notice.

biographies, or *lettres intimes* of artists, from which to learn their philosophy and religion. Indeed, in some cases, only their art-works have come down to us, and when we remember that at this period art was bound hard and fast to religion, these works, in many ways, speak as plainly as any discourse. Religion is always conservative, and so, too, is art. For a religion to allow an innovation in its art would simply conduce to an innovation in its ritual and dogma, and so could not be tolerated. Thus, when we find in these early days of strict priestly domination a deviation from the set art of the Church, one may safely infer an act of spiritual non-conformity, if not scepticism, however small.

When Giotto (1266-1337) deviated from the recognised art form, it was in fact an act of scepticism or non-conformity. Although the great "reformer in the art of painting" is said to have devoted his genius to the Franciscans, he evidently did not hold to their precepts, since he could bring the "bride" of St. Francis into ridicule in his *Canzone*. Indeed, Mather says that Giotto was "by no means a faithful believer." There is a story told of him in Saocchetti's *Novelle* which certainly is not agreeable with a pious reputation. Giotti was asked why Joseph was always depicted so melancholy? and he replied, "Has he not reason, seeing his wife [the Virgin Mary] pregnant, and not knowing by whom." It is a most irreverent remark, and I think there are good grounds for those who doubt the sincerity of his religious life. (See *Quarterly Review*, July, 1904).

In the fifteenth century the real effect of the "infidel" renaissance began to be felt, and painters may in fact, from this period, be divided into two classes: those in whom faith predominated following the Church tradition, and those in whom reason predominated following the Greeks. Among these latter were Masaccio (1401-28), whose work Rio called *naturalisme classique*, Mantegna (1431-1509), "the most pagan of all the pagan artists of his age" (Heaton), Perugino, and Botticelli.

Perugino (1446-1524) is the first artist of whom we have precise evidence that he was a Freethinker. Vasari says "he was an irreligious man, and could never be made to believe in the immortality of the soul." There are several of his paintings in the National Gallery.

Botticelli (1446-1510), a fine, poetic, imaginative artist, and perhaps the earliest painter of mythological and allegorical subjects, was, in spite of the religious atmosphere of most of his work, decidedly a free man in theology. He narrowly escaped the stake for lending his brush to express Palmieri's theory on the nature of angels. Botticelli was one of the first to illustrate a modern work of imagination—which he did in Dante and Boccaccio.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), "the divinely endowed," as Vasari calls him, was the harbinger of the dawn in art of what J. A. Symonds termed that "passionate outgoing towards the ancient world—the renaissance." His great work, the *Last Supper*—perhaps the most famous picture in all the world—reveals the significance of his art. What an immeasurable distance separates him from his predecessors who treated this subject! Here no dumb, meaningless physiognomies are grouped around Christ, but real transcripts of humankind. Every face, figure, and attitude bespeaks an individual, as much so as Christ. This same human, individual expression pervades all his works—the *Mona Lisa*, which so "absorbed and fascinated" Michelet, *St. Anne and the Virgin*, *John the Baptist*, etc. Vasari says of Leonardo that "he had taken up such heretical notions that he really belonged to no religion, and, in short, that he laid more store by his quality as a philosopher than as a Christian." Müntz thinks him a Deist, whilst Heaton calls him an Atheist. He was certainly a most pronounced Freethinker, as is evident from his *Enigmas*, which contain some biting sarcasms on priests and religion.

Heine says, in his *Romantic School*, that "the painters of Italy combated priestdom more effectively perhaps than did the Saxon theologians," and

that the "vigorous marbles" of Michael Angelo and the "glowing flesh" of Titian were "much more fundamental theses than those which the German monk nailed to the church doors of Wittenburg." Now the art of Michael Angelo (1475-1564) is Pagan. It came, not from Christian Byzantium, but from Pagan Greece. As Walter Pater points out, that even in the *Doni Madonna* Angelo actually brings the Pagan religion, and with it the unveiled human form, the sleepy-looking fauns of a Dionysiac revel, into the presence of the Madonna as simpler painters had introduced other products of the earth, birds or flowers. "Scarcely any other great painter," says Lecky, "so completely eliminated the religious sentiment from art.....By making the *Last Judgment* a study of naked figures, and by introducing into it Charon and his boat, he most effectually destroyed all sense of its reality."

One cannot associate such a work as the *Last Judgment* with the Revelation of St. John. It seems to be more a setting of an Æ-chylean drama. Heaton says that "although this idea of a day of wrath is pre-eminently a Christian one, Angelo has conceived the scene in a wholly Pagan spirit."

There can be little doubt that Angelo belonged to Rationalism. That ardent Republican who could rush to the defence of Venice against imperial cannon; that rebellious spirit that could defy a Pope; that brooding mind that could philosophise on Death, the mistress of all, as he did in his poems, was not the man to subscribe to a *Credo*. Walter Pater has summed up his religion thus:—

"In earlier days.....he might have been for spiritualising the papal sovereignty, like Savonarola; or for adjusting the dreams of Plato and Homer with the words of Christ, like Pico of Mirandola. But things had moved onward, and such adjustments were no longer possible. For himself, he had long since fallen back on that divine ideal which, above the wear and tear of creeds, has been forming itself for ages as the possession of nobler souls."

The other painter who helped to free mankind from that "Alp-like burden of Christianity" which Heine speaks of was Titian (? 1477-1576), that superb colorist, whose art, as Kugler says, is the "expression of life itself." It is said that where Angelo gave the nude its most scientific expression, Titian gave its most sensuous. His Madonnas and Venuses have equally all that charm of life about them. It was this vivid realistic art that led Ruskin to say that "there is no religion in any work of Titian's; there is not even the smallest evidence of religious temper or sympathies, either in himself or in those for whom he painted. His magnificent *Assumption of the Virgin* is considered his finest work. It was painted for the Church of Santa Maria de Frari, and it is said that the pious brothers of Santa Maria were at first somewhat disturbed by the bold beauty of their altar-piece. Here, in England, the National Gallery possesses, among other of Titian's work, the splendid portrait of Ariosto, and a charming *Bacchus and Ariadne*, both of which—the former especially—display wondrous harmonies of color.

(To be continued.) H. G. FARMER.

Correspondence.

PLOTINUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Through some mischance an Irishism crept into my article of last week, entitled "Concerning Souls." Towards the conclusion there is a riotous attempt at period-fixing. To be explicit, I may say that the year A. D. 203 is taken as being the time of his birth and A. D. 262 that of his death. This would make it about one thousand years between the time of Plotinus and that of Elisha; if it were two thousand years, the contrast of the two lives would be just as vivid. The reader with a love of chronology may reckon how many years previous to the times of Calvin, Luther, Knox, and Spurgeon this good and noble man lived. I can imagine the hell-fire doctrine of Spurgeon being flourished in the face of Plotinus. I say I can imagine it, because I have just heard a toy terrier barking at the thunder.

CHRISTOPHER GAY.

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.

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