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When we marry, the choice is voluntary, but the duties are not matter of choice. They are dictated by the nature of the situation.—EDMUND BURKE.

The Word of God.

An Open Letter to the

MINISTERS OF ALL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

GENTLEMEN,—

I am going to address you on a very important subject, and I shall do it in very plain language. It is my desire to be understood, both by yourselves and by others who may read what I write. At the same time I have no intention to be rude or personal. The truth of what I utter may hurt your feelings, but in that case you have only yourselves to blame.

You are, all of you, as Christian ministers, the expounders of a book called the Bible, which you all allege to be the Word of God. Many of you, being Catholic priests, do not treat this book with exactly the same veneration as others who are Protestants; you put the Church first, and the Scriptures second, and make the truth and authenticity of the one rest upon the living authority of the other. Yet it is evident that all of you, Protestants and Catholics alike, would be lost without the Bible. Say what you will about tradition, and inspiration, and infallibility, it is after all the BOOK on which you depend. Were the Bible lost for ever, and all recollection of it obliterated from men's minds, the Christian religion would certainly disappear. The "fathers" and "divines" would be some assistance for a while; but unless you had the BOOK to quote from, to select texts from your sermons, and to put into the hands of children, nothing could save your faith from speedy, absolute, and irrecoverable destruction.

Now it is upon this Book—the Book of God, as you call it—that I wish to address you; and my right to address you is involved in my being an English citizen. In this country the Bible is only allowed to be printed by certain printers; it is "appointed" by the King, that is, by the Government, to be "read in all the churches" of the Established Religion; it is put into the hands of the children in our public schools, supported out of the rates and taxes, and they are forced to read it as a sacred volume; and, further, it is protected by law against such criticism as may be applied to other books, so that men are still liable to terms of imprisonment like common thieves for bringing it "into disbelief and contempt." This being the case, and your BOOK being set up by law as something holy, I have a right to ask you some questions about it. Every book that is published, in a certain sense challenges criticism; but a book like yours, which claims, and enjoys, such an exalted position, should have its reputation established beyond any reasonable doubt. Every man, I think, must agree that a book, which we may be imprisoned for bringing into "disbelief and contempt," ought to be God's Word, whether it is or not. For my part, however, I do not believe it is; and, before I have done, you will know why.

The Book of God which you use in this country is printed in English; in other countries it is printed in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and so forth. It is not alleged, however, that God wrote himself, or inspired men to write, in these languages. The Bibles in use in the various Christian countries are translations. Now I know something of translating, and I know it is simply impossible to translate from one language into another with perfect accuracy, and sometimes difficult to translate with any approach to accuracy. I am sure, therefore, even without an examination, that the English Bible cannot be the real Book of God. Besides, there is more than one translation into English. The Authorised Version, done in the reign of James I., in 1611, was very largely a collation of previous translations. The Revised Version was done by an "appointed" Committee of Christian scholars in the last generation; and it was done, I suppose, because the old version was unfaithful. This new version is found fault with in turn, and many disputes have arisen over special passages. In the face of these facts, I say that you have no right to pass off your Bible as the Word of God. You may declare it is pretty nearly the same, or as nearly as you can make it; but the very same it is not, and in learned books, not meant for the people's eyes, you admit its deficiency.

Have you then, I ask, the hardihood to stand up and tell me that this is all I am entitled to expect from my "Maker"? If a father has any communication to make to his children, should he not make it in their own language? Do you believe that God is not as able to speak in English as in Greek or Hebrew? Ought not his "Revelation" to be expressed clearly, definitely, unmistakably? Ought it not, therefore, to be expressed, not through questionable translations, but at first-hand, in all the several tongues on this planet? It would cost God no effort to do this, for he is omnipotent; and no trouble, for he is omniscient. Can you assign any legitimate reason for his not addressing us all in the only way in which we should be sure to understand him?

I will now go back to your real Book of God, if such exist, and ask you a few questions about that. Is not the Old Testament written in Hebrew? Is not Hebrew a language very hard to understand? Was it not written right on, from side to side of the parchment, without a break between the words? Was it not written without vowels? Would it not be difficult for one man to be quite sure of the meaning of another who wrote in this way? Would not the writer himself, after a lapse of time, be occasionally puzzled to know what he meant himself? Is it not a fact that the meaning of a vast number of passages in the Hebrew Bible is still disputed? Have not candid authorities, like Sir William Drummond, confessed that they hardly knew of any two Hebrew scholars who translated six consecutive verses in the same way? Is not all this now admitted by Christian scholars, such as the late Canon Driver and the late Professor Bruce? Does not the latter plainly declare that the Masoretic Hebrew text—that is, the text now in use, with vowel points—is only "a translation by Hebrew scholars of the vowelless original"? Does he not decisively assert that the "errorless autograph" is a "theological figment"?

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

A Critic in a Fog.

SOME years ago the Rev. F. C. Spurr left these shores for Australia. One of his objects in going there was to stem the flood of unbelief at the Antipodes. He went, he preached, he returned; and Australian unbelief does not appear to have been greatly affected by his presence or his preaching. He is said to have had a successful church, which is quite probable. But a well-filled church does not always mean a real gain to Christianity as a whole. It may only mean—it usually does mean—that one church is filled by depleting a dozen others, and the popular preacher is surrounded by a number of clerical failures. And meanwhile the number of those who reject Christianity altogether steadily increases.

This year Mr. Spurr returned to England. And one of his earliest discoveries is offered to the world in a recent issue of the *Baptist Times*, in the form of an article on "The Bankruptcy of Rationalism." Rationalism, he says, "has been brought to bay. Men are finding it out. Some of its chief exponents are being subjected to deadly criticism, from which they cannot emerge with honor. Rationalism is already bankrupt." There it is! Rev. F. C. Spurr has said it. And if further proof be needed, it is supplied. While Freethought societies are crying out for funds, the *Daily Telegraph* raised £40,000 for the Y.M.C.A.! Here is proof beyond question—to a clergyman. If £40,000 can be raised for a Christian institution, there must be something in it. It commands respect—Christian respect. It carries conviction—to a Christian. What a pity Jesus did not make his appearance with a good fat banking account in his hand.

Rationalism means with Mr. Spurr two things. At one time it means the control of human affairs by reason; at another time it means a system of thought that is in opposition to religion. And he skips from one to the other, with obviously no clear perception of the distinction between the two. Part of the time he is attempting to prove that reason cannot be trusted, and so saws off the branch of the tree on which he is sitting. For if reason is not to be trusted, what are we to say of Mr. Spurr's reasoning? It must be admitted that he gives a fair proof of his own contention, but he is certainly not aware of it. On the contrary, he goes along quite cheerfully reasoning against the use of reason, and never realises that, blundering as are his own efforts, they yet serve the purpose of demonstrating the foolishness of his own position.

Of course, reason is not an infallible guide in human affairs, but it is the best we have. Very often we cannot be certain we are right when we have used what reason we possess; but we are still less certain if we ignore reason, and act in opposition to its dictates. And, in any case, reason—human reason—as a force in human affairs is here, and its function is to analyse, discriminate, and to pass judgment. We all do this; Mr. Spurr does it. Talking glibly about "intuition" and "instinct" does not alter the fact, but only obscures it, because people have such very hazy ideas as to what is intuition and what is instinct. For the justification of instinct or "intuition" is reached ultimately by reason. We cannot avoid reason passing judgment upon the value of the qualities of human nature whether they are of a ratiocinative character or otherwise. The "Rationalist" does not ignore the non-ratiocinative nature of many of the factors of life; he merely asserts that, so far as they become or can become the objects of conscious judgment, the only sound rule is to test them by reason. Indeed, we cannot avoid doing this. For denial of the rule is really an admission of the rule. To reason against reason is still to reason, even though it be reasoning of an absurd and self-contradictory character.

After protesting that reason cannot be a guide in human affairs, Mr. Spurr discovers that things are ruled by Reason—with a capital letter—after all. "There is a Supreme Reason in the universe, but it

is not human reason." Well, if it is not human reason, then it is probably not reason at all. The only ground on which I can say that other men have reason, or on which I may assume that animals have reason, is that their actions conform to mine. Human or animal reason is the only reason that anyone knows. And if we recognise reason anywhere else it must be because it manifests its presence in substantially the same way. The reason of man is only a fragment of the "complete Reason." But whether human reason is a fragment or the whole, it cannot alter its quality. If the whole is like the parts, the parts must be like the whole. A "fragment" of anything must be like the whole thing, otherwise it is not a fragment at all. So that, in the same sentence, after protesting that the reason in the universe is not human reason, Mr. Spurr ends by affirming that it is the same as human reason—only there is more of it. Oh, the childishness of this man!

These would-be philosophers, how simple they are! They seem to imagine that words acquire a special value if they are only printed with capital letters. "We believe," says Mr. Spurr, "that since the part is personal, the Whole cannot be less than personal." Mr. Spurr does not really mean "less than personal," he means that the whole is personal. For that is the essence of his Theism. The Atheist is not concerned whether the "whole" is less or more than personal. His point is that it is *not* personal. And whether it is less or more, if it is one or the other, it is different. What Mr. Spurr really wants to prove is that there is a personality controlling the universe other than human personality. What he says is that it is *more* than human personality. Well, in that case, it may not be personality at all. For the moment you destroy the characteristics of what we mean by personality, you have no right to give it that name. If a cat hasn't legs or a spinal column, if it breathes through gills instead of lungs, and lives in the water instead of on land, what kind of a cat is it? Of course, you may call this a cat if you please. So may Mr. Spurr call his production philosophy; but the character of a thing is not derived from the name, it is the name that should describe the thing.

Mr. Spurr asks Rationalists to face Sir Oliver Lodge's question and say frankly whether they believe that the human species represent the highest form of life in the universe. I do not see that there is anything to face. At present, the human species is the highest we know. It is the highest that Sir Oliver Lodge knows. And until some evidence is forthcoming it is stupid either to believe or disbelieve. What Sir Oliver Lodge really meant—but did not say—was whether it was possible that higher forms of life existed. Well, it is possible—all things are possible that do not involve a contradiction. But suppose this to be so, and suppose there exists evidence enough to warrant a belief on the subject, we are no nearer a God than we were before. All we have is a species of superman—but not a deity. It might make room for some of Sir Oliver's "spooks," although, judging from the communications said to have been received from them, their superiority is not very obvious. And the joke of the whole situation is, that although Mr. Spurr blunders into the same confusion as Sir Oliver Lodge, he does not accept the grounds on which Sir Oliver really bases his beliefs.

How does Mr. Spurr establish the bankruptcy of Rationalism? First, the "New Science" is proving itself the foe of Rationalism. "The Materialists have gone; the Vitalists have arrived." Biology, chemistry, and evolution are aids to faith. The new philosophy, in the person of Bergson, is "a thorn in the sides of Rationalists." "The science of comparative religion has become our weapon." "Human nature is turning on Rationalism." There does not seem any adequate reason why Mr. Spurr should not extend this list. It is so easy to talk, and mere assertions give so much comfort to a great many people. And to meet Mr. Spurr on his own ground

one need only make assertions in the opposite direction. Whatever the "New Science" may mean, science is more rationalistic and more materialistic than ever. Even Sir Oliver Lodge disclaims being a Vitalist, and says that Vitalism is useless as an explanation of anything. Bergson is a mere fashion with a class, and in any case does not find a God essential to his system. At any rate, he ignores him. Mr. Watson may return to his "Father's House," but others are taking apartments elsewhere. And comparative mythology has demonstrated the common origin of all religious beliefs in the fear-haunted mind of the primitive savage. As assertions these are quite as good as those of Mr. Spurr, and they have the additional merit of being provable in detail.

We have had, says Mr. Spurr, a century and a quarter of Rationalism. It has had the help of "such important Rationalists as John Stuart Mill, Professor Huxley, Ernest Renan, Herbert Spencer, Ernst Haeckel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Goethe, Schopenhauer, and others." Mr. Spurr is convinced that had one quarter of what they said been true, the Church must have inevitably perished. And yet, see what has happened! Professor Gilbert Murray is compelled to admit that a reaction has set in against Rationalism. The Church is alive, there is a new stirring of religious life. Above all, there is the £10,000 raised by the *Daily Telegraph*.

Let me—although it is not easy—treat Mr. Spurr seriously for a moment. In what has the Free-thought attack failed? What has become of the Bible that Paine attacked? Of course, so far as the mere paper and type is concerned, it is still here. But so far as belief is concerned, it is Paine's Bible that is believed in by the majority of educated Christians. What has become of the doctrine of eternal damnation? Why, Christian papers were only recently denouncing Roman Catholics for continuing to issue a little book teaching what all of them once preached. What has become of miracles of a particular Providence? and a dozen other doctrines? They are either dead or dying. What has become of the power of the Church? As Churches, that is, so far as they represent supernaturalistic doctrines, they are afraid to interfere openly in social affairs. They can only do so in the name of social betterment or moral improvement. There never was a more brilliant triumph in human affairs than that marked by the last hundred years of Free-thought. And it has been very largely brought about by men without money, without position, fighting one of the strongest, wealthiest, and most powerful superstitions in all human history. Of course, there is the possibility of reaction. That is always possible in human affairs. Wise men are fully aware of the fact; but only fools or knaves count it a gain.

C. COHEN.

"The Difference Christ is Making."

A SERIES of leading articles, bearing the above title, and written presumably by the editor, Sir Robertson Nicoll, is now appearing in the *British Weekly*, the claims so dogmatically set forth in which are at once of so surprising and groundless a character as to call for a most critical examination. The central and often-repeated contention is that whatever improvement is effected in the moral and social conditions of the people is due solely to the influence of Christ. No attempt whatever is made to substantiate such an assertion. It is taken for granted that the excellence of the Christian religion is demonstrable from history, and that the supreme argument for its truth is derivable from the numerous benefits which mankind have received from the Galilean. Now, we maintain that no divine has a moral right to make such an assertion without proving its truth. It is stated that "to the great and simple intellect of Walter Scott, and many others, the effects of

Christianity on slavery and polygamy were sufficient proofs of its divine origin"; but a vague statement of that kind is evidentially valueless. Harriet Beecher Stowe knew much more about slavery than Walter Scott, and surely no one could read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1853, and conscientiously say that the effects of Christianity on slavery were sufficient proofs of its divine origin. It may be objected that the famous book just mentioned is only a work of fiction; but unfortunately for the objectors, the distinguished authoress issued *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which contained the original facts and documents upon which her heart-breaking story was founded. What effect has Christ ever had upon polygamy? The Gospel Jesus never uttered a word in condemnation of it, while in the Epistles only bishops are exhorted to have but one wife. It is well known that neither in Greece nor in Rome, nor among the Germans, was polygamy practised, while among the barbarian kings of Gaul, under Christianity, it prevailed unchecked for several centuries. To the Mormons it still forms an integral part of religion.

The writer of the articles under consideration is flagrantly heedless of the facts of life. Take the following extract as a sample:—

"It seems idle in the present day for any man to separate himself from Christianity and say, 'Though I am not a Christian, I think so-and-so.' In fact, he is a Christian in many respects, and he cannot cease to be one, however much he may wish it. He might just as well try to cease to be a Briton. The Spirit of Christ is to be found in strange places, and cannot be restricted to areas defined by strict lines of creed."

This is sheer nonsense, and the writer ought to be ashamed of himself for having put it on paper. There are thousands of people in this country at the present moment who do separate themselves from Christianity, repudiating it root and branch. In no respect whatever are they Christians, no matter what Sir Robertson Nicoll may say to the contrary. Though they will never dream of trying to cease to be Britons, they have succeeded in completely ceasing to be Christians. The object of that absurd extract is to break the force of "the objection that so much of what has been won is due to the efforts of those who are not Christians." To show that such a plea does not fully apply to this country, at least, he declares that in many respects we are all Christians. He might just as well call noble-minded and good-hearted Chinese Christians. As an illustration of the difference Christ has made, Sir William supplies the following quotation from a paper on the slums of Scotland which appeared in the *Glasgow Evening News* only a few weeks ago:—

"After careful study and personal examination, I do not hesitate to say that the condition of housing in Scotland is a standing disgrace to the nation. I find, not only in the big towns, but in the smaller towns, a great scarcity of houses and a lamentable state of congestion, misery, and wretchedness. Nothing short of a revolution will put Scotland in the position it ought to occupy."

We were extremely surprised to see that dismal report in an article on the difference Christ has made, and could not understand what purpose it was intended to serve. Here is another puzzling utterance:—

"Nevertheless, it must be owned that after two thousand years the Christian Church is very far from the comprehension and the faithful following of her Master."

It is a most curious fact that the improvements cited as due to Christ are all of a very recent origin, which proves, if Sir William is right, that the Spirit of Christ is coming into vigorous life when the Church of Christ is dying. It is incontrovertible that the overwhelming majority of Britishers are no longer churchgoers; but if the words of the Gospel Jesus are to be taken as they stand, his Spirit was to dwell in the Church and make her co-extensive with the human race. From his throne in her midst he would convict and convert the whole world. That prophecy was made two thousand years ago, and yet

to-day the Church, so far from winning the world, is rapidly losing the bit of it she once gained. However, we are assured that "the Spirit of Christ is to be found in strange places," having evidently abandoned the Church into which he was originally sent. In other words, history has signally falsified Christ's prophecy, and his spirit, in consequence, keeps strange company. The truth is, that what Sir William regards as the Spirit of Christ is, in reality, that rational Humanism which has slowly been coming into its kingdom ever since the revival of learning, and the consequent gradual decline of supernaturalism. The reverend gentleman contends that the twentieth century is a vast improvement upon the eighteenth, and so it doubtless is; but the explanation of the difference lies in the diffusion of natural knowledge and the decay of supernatural beliefs.

Some Christian sayings become wonderfully illuminating when the hand of criticism is laid upon them. One of them is, "Trust in God and keep your powder dry." If you neglect to keep your powder dry, your trust in God will be of no avail to you; but, on the other hand, if you do keep your powder dry, it makes no difference whether you trust in God or not. Russia was defeated in the war with Japan, in spite of her trust in God, because she had an inefficient Army; and Japan won, despite her Atheism, because she was wide awake and up-to-date in her military equipments. As Napoleon so aptly said, "The good God is always on the side of great battalions," or as Julius Civiles put it, "God sides with the strongest." Another equally significant saying is, "God helps those that help themselves." Of course, he is the help, not of the helpless, as the hymn has it, but of the helpful. Those who really need help never get it from above, while those who help themselves have no means of ascertaining whether God helps them or not. That is to say, the Almighty never gives any direct evidence that he deserves to be so called. The same principle fully applies to the Spirit of Christ which, Sir William informs us, "is to be found in strange places." We will take one or two of his own illustrations of the difference Christ has made. He describes the eighteenth century as a period when people took their lot easily, declining to trouble themselves with great schemes, accepting things as they were, living friendly, social, and easy lives, seeing, as a rule, only what they wanted to see, and then adds:—

"And yet every real student of the period knows that the condition of the poor was appalling. The want of work, the scarcity of provisions, the horrors of work-houses, the swarms of vagrants were notorious and undeniable."

He avers that though pity and kindness were to be found here and there, the prevailing mood was stern. The early Methodists were hated because of their sympathy with the poorest classes. For that reason, the Duchess of Buckingham denounced the impertinence of Methodism and its outrage on good breeding in reducing all ranks to the common level of sinners, saying to the Countess of Huntingdon: "It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth." Sir Robertson Nicoll is of opinion that the condition of the poor is incalculably better in the twentieth century. Certainly an improvement has occurred, but it is so very slight that to treat it as the work of an omnipotent Christ would be to insult him. The bare idea of its being due to a God of infinite love is unutterably ludicrous. The existence of rich and poor, of class divisions and antagonism, of prisons and lunatic asylums, of workhouses and reformatories, cannot possibly be reconciled with the existence of an infinitely powerful, wise, and loving Heavenly Father. A perfect Creator and an imperfect creation are inconceivable anomalies. A Gospel described as the power of God unto salvation in a world still steeped in degradation and woe is the most fantastic stupidity with which the world has ever been tormented and mocked.

And yet, after all, Christ *has* made a difference. Belief in him has resulted in all sorts of evils under which Christendom is still groaning. The elevation of an imaginary world, with its equally imaginary interests, to a position of supreme importance necessarily led to a shameful neglect of the real interests of the only real world known to us. To exhort people to think continually of death and fear it, to set their affection on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth, and to devote their whole time to the task of preparing to meet God beyond the tomb, is to degrade them in their own eyes, and to discourage the cultivation of the noblest qualities of manhood. The passion of love for Christ has never failed to express itself in hatred and cruelty towards all heretical Christians and non-Christians. Happily, the imaginary Being who has made such wicked differences is at last passing; and like his coming, his passing is both slow and sure. More happily still, his passing implies, and is in fact caused by, the Coming of Man to make the world anew.

J. T. LLOYD.

"Meredith" for the Million.

Selected Poems by George Meredith. (Constable & Co. Ltd.) 1s. net.; 1914.

THE publication of this volume arouses mixed feelings. Had it been issued years ago at the modest price of a shilling, it would have helped to widen the reputation of a very great writer and thinker during his lifetime. As it is, it will but increase the wreaths upon his tomb. The selection is by the Master himself, and when that is said, all is said. For, by virtue of his splendid gifts, Meredith's best work remains among the brightest gems of English literature, so rich in glorious genius and transcendent talent. Tennyson has told us that, when Byron died, it was as though the firmament had lost a mighty star, in whose vanishing the world was left to chaos and night. Meredith was more to us than Byron, for he had been a living glory of our State for over half a century, and the star of his genius had wheeled so long and with such majesty that we had grown inured to his presence, and looked upon him as essential to the aspect of our heaven. So continuous was his influence, that the intellectual life of our time runs in a channel largely of his making, and to ends that but for him had been shaped far other than they were.

A striking instance of the provincialism of the average English reader was the comparative unpopularity of George Meredith. Popularity, of course, may mean nothing or everything. It may be that of "You Made Me Love You" or of "The Messiah," of "The Rosary" or of "Don Quixote." It may be absolutely damning, or the one incontestable proof of supreme merit. The tests are universality and endurance, for only noble work shall win and keep a lasting position. The best appeals in the long run to all, like "Hamlet," though not in equal degree. With no advertisement, no clique, no famous opposition, but by sheer merit, George Meredith won his place in art.

Like Shakespeare, Meredith unlocks his heart in his verse. His magnificent novels remain among the finest works in our language; but in the poems we have Meredith's own passion; his great heart beating at the sight of love and of heroism. The poems are so personal that one is tempted to imagine that, instead of having worked on the book, the author had worked straight on us. He defies, like Whitman, our æsthetics, and proves that the greatest thoughts are those which are quickest dismembered and absorbed by the reader, and turned into part of himself.

Genius refuses to be labelled. Study these poems separately, and you think you can classify the author. In one poem he seems to be optimistic, in another he appears pessimistic; and then, perhaps, "Juggling Jerry" or "The Old Chartist" comes to

upset the pleasant little theory. At the bedrock of his work lies the Horatian liking for the golden mean.

To dip into this book is, of course, to re-read the old favorites, and to bring home more forcibly how large is the proportion wherein we hear "the voice of great Nature." Her praise is hymned in "The Woods of Westermain" and in many other glorious lines, such as "The Thrush in February" and "Love in the Valley," where the golden cadences linger in the ear like the notes of an ascending skylark.

Those who think that poets are always extremists will do well to ponder Meredith's lines, "Lucifer in Starlight," one of the sanest and noblest utterances in the language:—

"On a starred night, Prince Lucifer arose,
Tired of his dark dominions swung the fiend,
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose,
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law."

The same perfect sanity appears in the lines from "Modern Love":—

"Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
Where hot for certainties in this our life!—
In tragic hints here seek what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore."

A more ironic note is sounded in the dramatic "Juggling Jerry," where the dying showman says, with a fine touch of stoicism:—

"It's past parsons to console us;
No, nor no doctor fetch for me.
I can die without my bolus;
Two of a trade, lass, never agree!
Parson and doctor!—don't they love rarely,
Fighting the devil in other men's fields!
Stand up yourself and match him fairly;
Then see how the rascal yields."

Read Meredith's magnificent tribute to Shakespeare:—

"O lived the Master now to paint us Man,
That little twist of brain would ring a chime
Of whence it came and what it caused, to start
Thunders of laughter, clearing air and heart."

In another sonnet he describes the Master's laugh:—

"broad as ten thousand beeves
At pasture!"

It is a resplendent distinction that, apart from the play-going public, who agree to crown Shakespeare as the King, his most resolute partisans are those of his own household, poets and novelists, men with the blood of genius flowing in their veins. And in Valhalla assuredly the artist of "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel," shall not sit far below the artist who gave us "Hamlet." For Meredith through a long life lifted his voice in praise of high and noble things:—

"Are not his footsteps followed by the eyes
Of all the good and wise?
Though the warm day is over, yet they seek
Upon the lofty peak
Of his pure mind the roseate light that glows
O'er deaths perennial snows."

MIMNERMUS.

The Greater Bacon.

Oxford has been busy celebrating the seventh centenary of the birth of Roger Bacon. A statue in the University has been unveiled, addresses delivered, and it is proposed to translate and publish the whole of his writings. The interest in Bacon is, of course, mainly historical; but from this point of view he is worthy of more attention than any thinker that Christendom produced till the end of the sixteenth century. Sir Archibald Geikie well described him as "one of the most remarkable men that ever studied within the walls of the University of Oxford." He mastered practically all the knowledge of his time, and was the real

founder of the experimental philosophy of Europe. In many respects he was a greater and clearer thinker than his famous namesake, Francis Bacon. At all events, the latter had the advantage of coming several centuries later, and pursuing his work in a freer atmosphere and under much more favorable conditions than the thirteenth century monk.

* * *

Bacon was a Somersetshire man, born at Ilchester in 1214. Like most men of his age who longed for genuine knowledge, his principal teachers were Mohammedan and Jewish scientists. After working for years, and spending all he possessed on manuscripts, the manufacturing of instruments, and the cost of experiments, he seems to have experienced a season of depression, during which he joined the Franciscans. His new masters forbade him to write anything under pain of imprisonment, and for some time the order was observed. Then the man's natural craving asserted itself, and "some few chapters, written at the entreaty of friends," called down the anger of his superiors, and Bacon was sent to Paris to await the pleasure of the General of the Order. His pleasure was soon expressed, and Bacon went into an imprisonment that lasted ten years. Here he remained, deprived of books, writing materials, and instruments. The *Catholic Times* calls him "that illustrious Franciscan," and says that the Order is proud of its son. Its appreciation of him while alive was ten years imprisonment.

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The malice of his enemies overreached itself. It was reported to the Pope, Urban IV., that Bacon had written works of an heretical nature. One of his chaplains—who afterwards became Clement IV.—was commissioned to inquire into the matter, and he, on his election to the papal chair, ordered Bacon to supply him with a copy of his writings. The cost of materials alone was great and Bacon was penniless. The Pope sent nothing, and the Franciscans would give nothing. "How often," writes Bacon, "was I repulsed and looked upon as a shameless beggar. Distressed above all that can be imagined, I compelled my friends, even those who were in necessitous circumstances, to contribute what they had, to raise money at interest, to sell their property, to pawn the rest." The money, however, was found; and in about eighteen months Bacon wrote the *Opus Majus*, *Opus Minus*, and *Opus Tertium*, three works that place him in the front rank of the world's thinkers.

* * *

A few of his sayings will well illustrate the bent of Bacon's mind: "Physicists ought to know that their science is powerless unless they apply to it the power of mathematics, without which, observation languishes and is incapable of certitude." "He who knows not mathematics cannot know any other science; and what is more, he cannot discover his own ignorance, or find its proper remedies." "The shortness of life requires that we should choose for our study the most useful objects, and exhibit knowledge with all clearness and certitude." "Authority is valueless unless its warranty is shown; it does not explain, it only forces us to believe. And so far as reason is concerned, we cannot distinguish between sophism and proof unless we verify the conclusions by experience and practice." Experiment and verification; these were the keystones of Bacon's teaching and which entitle him to be called the first of the moderns.

* * *

How much he actually discovered, or how much he received from his Mohammedan teachers is uncertain. But it is certain that he was acquainted with the manufacture of gunpowder, that he made phosphorous, laid down rules for the construction of a telescope, suggested reaching the Indies by sailing to the west, and a reform of the calendar that was not carried out until 1582. There are hints in his writings that he was not unacquainted with the power and uses of steam, speculated on a machine that appears to have been a diving bell, and in astronomy, botany, optics, and chemistry, was as universal a genius as Da Vinci; but one working under such difficulties that, after forty years labor, there was wrung from him the despairing cry, "I repent that I have given myself so much trouble for the good of mankind." He died in 1294.

* * *

In the history of Christianity there is nothing more disgraceful than the Church's treatment of Roger Bacon. Altogether, nearly a fourth of his life was spent in prison, prohibited from writing under penalty of "many days' fasting on bread and water." For centuries after his death his writings were only studied surreptitiously by the few. Not for 450 years after his death was his *Opus Majus* translated into English. The Oxford orators glibly attribute Bacon's persecutions to the faults of his age. So they were; but the dominant factor of the age was the Christian Church. It was that which made the life of the student of

science so unbearable. It was that which caused Bacon to be handed down in popular legends as a mere mediæval wonder-worker. It was the Church which embittered his life, as it embittered the lives of thousands of others. It was the Church that caused Bacon to complain from his cell that he was "unheard, forgotten, buried." The first of the moderns, Roger Bacon paid the price that so many have paid who faced Christian superstition in the interests of a liberated humanity.

C. COHEN.

Acid Drops

There was a National Liberal Club dinner the other evening to celebrate the completion of a hundred years of peace between Great Britain and America. Andrew Carnegie, the multi-millionaire, and Lord Shaw, both of Dumfermline, were amongst the speakers, and were well reported in the *Daily News*. So was the Rev. Dr. Horton, who, we suppose, represented Jesus Christ,—who gets on better with rich society now than he used to in the early days of his career. Finally came the statement that "Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, presided over this gathering." Just as if he were the mere toast-master of a public festival, instead of being in all probability the brainiest man in the assembly. Mr. Robertson presumably made a speech from the chair, but not a single sentence of it is reported. His name is included like "the stars also" in the Bible story of Creation, simply because it could hardly be omitted. Such a vulgar insult must be owing to Mr. Robertson's being a well-known Freethinker. The *Daily News* represents the Nonconformist Conscience—the most wonderful Conscience on earth.

The "assembly of converts" on the "Strand Citadel" platform at one meeting of the Salvation Army's International Congress contained, according to "Colonel" Kitching,—

"442 ex-drunkards
47 ex-burglars
58 ex-gamblers and 'bookies'
12 ex-pugilists."

Still the London police have plenty to do. Isn't there some mistake with the figures or the descriptions?

A negro choir from the Southern States sang a "coon hymn." This was sung to a kind of cake-walk. The first verse was as follows:—

"When trouble came in Noah's time,
My, didn't it rain!
Forty days and forty nights,
My, didn't it rain!"

This is the stuff that is going to save the world—if we are to credit King George and Queen Mary, and above all Ex-Queen Alexandra. What faith some people do possess!

"An Hour in Hell" was one of the most "blasphemous" of Mr. Foote's early lecture-titles. Thirty years ago it positively frightened people. A good many Christians came to hear the lecture in fear and trembling, half expecting to see a divine judgment on the wicked editor of the worst paper in the world. It was openly suggested by well-known good Christians that the local authorities should prevent such awful lectures from being delivered. Owners and lessees of halls were told that they ought to be ashamed to let their premises for such purposes. Even some old-fashioned Freethinkers expostulated with Mr. Foote for "outraging" Christian feelings in that way. In vain did he reply that he only proposed to take people into Hell for an hour, and bring them out again, instead of leaving them there for ever and ever. His jocosity only made the matter worse. In some provincial places feeling ran so high that there was talk of arresting him. But nothing happened except to Hell itself, which suffered a good deal in the course of the campaign. Since then Hell has suffered on all sides. Its fires have failed; it has cooled down in an astonishing manner; it is in many parts a safe receptacle for frozen meat. And that "blasphemous" title of Mr. Foote's which caused such a commotion is so meek and mild nowadays that like the "Hades" that takes the place of "Hell" in the Revised Version of the New Testament it would hardly frighten a cat off a garden wall.

What a change has taken place during those thirty odd years! Here is an illustration. One of the features of the recent Salvation Army Congress in London was "A Day With God." The words suggested a picnic with the

Almighty, at so much a head, with the "Blood and Fire" Army taking the commission on the sale of tickets. It would be hard to imagine anything more "blasphemous," unless it was unprintable. Yet a London morning newspaper, of unimpeachable piety, mildly calls it "an expressive phrase" if a little strong for some of the more sensitive believers. "Expressive!" That's good! We shall get back in time to the innocent simplicity of the miracle-plays. Some future General Booth—perhaps the present one—will be advertising a cinema scene between "Old Nick and Jahveh," or the "Bethlehem Boy and the Championship"—or something else of that sort. Oh, yes; the world *does* move—and even Christians move with it.

General Booth was loud in his praises of the way in which the press has treated the Army meetings. And there is no doubt that the praise has been earned. Journalists have discovered that the Army is good "copy," and in addition the Army has a very good press service of its own. Reports of its own meetings are sent out broadcast, it prepares all sorts of statistics and picturesque accounts of its own work, and these go into various papers without readers being in the least aware that they are reading the Army's own accounts of its doings. It would be well if editors of papers, when they publish these accounts, print with them a notice, "Supplied by the Salvation Army." Readers would then be in a better position for estimating their value. As it is, the Army gives the reporter a statement, the statement is published in a newspaper, and then the Army quotes, or reprints, its own statement as independent testimony. Perfect candor from a newspaper office would be a new Book of Revelations.

General Booth says that the Salvation Army still believes in a real God, a real Devil, a real heaven, and a real hell. We may add that it also believes in real cash.

"Providence" has been leaving the "militant" Suffragettes in the lurch lately. What are a few burnings and explosions in churches and other empty places to killing children by lightning, swamping London, digging fatal chasms in Paris, wrecking big liners, smashing trains, and other "Acts of God"? Man—and even woman—is *where* in the destructive line when that same "Providence" starts business.

"The Act of God," by the way, is not an infidel joke. It is a legal finding in the courts of England. The coroner's jury returned it the other day in the case of the children who were struck dead by lightning near London. That ended the matter. There was no suggestion of proceedings against the responsible party. Maybe it was thought impossible to serve the summons.

Mr. Bottomley does well to denounce the "God" that Christian clergymen preach about as the author of these "judgments." But, after all, this *is* the God of the Bible, this *is* the God of Christianity.

There are no limits to the ways in which priests everywhere seek to saddle their maintenance upon the whole of the population. In Pennsylvania the clergy are trying to get either free passes or reduced rates in travelling about the country. The legal authorities have, however, ruled that such a concession would be contrary to the Public Company Law. The argument of the clergy is that they are paid such poor salaries that they cannot afford the expenses of travelling. The reply to this seems clear. Let their congregations pay them more, or let them stay at home. If the congregations desire their ministers to travel—and we can well believe that in many cases they do—they should pay their expenses. There is no reason whatever why these congregations should expect the community at large to pay for the relief they get from the minister travelling from home.

"Here in England," says the *Catholic Times*, "the Christian religion is decaying with a rapidity none the less swift that it is so silent. Men are not opposing Christianity loudly. They are denying it that compliment. They are dropping it quietly. Year by year England becomes more indifferent to religion, more materialistic, more secular." We do not believe that things are vitally different in England to what they are elsewhere. The truth is that the movement away from Christianity is co-extensive with civilisation. It is proceeding more rapidly in some countries than in others, but that is the only difference. All the "revivals" and all the efforts of the clergy can do no more than produce a semblance of vitality in an organism that is stricken with death.

Of course, the *Catholic Times* makes this alarmist pronouncement for a purpose. Its text is the necessity of closer union amongst Catholics for political action. We Catholics, it says, "will have influence with the overwhelming majority of our fellow countrymen in proportion to our unity among ourselves, and the weight that such unity will enable us to bring to bear upon the electorate, the candidates, and the party in power." Quite so; and that does foreshadow a real danger. A party strongly knit together may, although a minority, yet wield a great power in the State. And when the ground of this union is not a purely social one, we have all the worst evils of religious bigotry and tyranny before us. It means that the Roman Church is prepared to sacrifice all other considerations to its own aggrandisement. What this means, affairs in France, Spain, and Italy have shown. Fortunately, the Roman Church itself is not secure from the operation of those forces that are causing the decay of religious belief among other sects, and every advance of Free thought minimises the danger indicated by the *Catholic Times*. There is only one sure way of checking the anti-social tendencies of Christianity, and that is by multiplying the number of Free-thinkers.

"The River of Doubt" is a newspaper headline referring to ex-President Roosevelt's alleged discovery of a 1,000 miles long river in Central Brazil. We hope that there is more truth in the discovery of the river than in Teddy's description of Thomas Paine as a "fifthy little Atheist," which is a world's record of three lies in three words.

Mr. Israel Zangwill says, "The New Testament was entirely written by laymen of my race." It would have been more to boast of had the work been written by honest men of any race. And how about the Old Testament?

According to Mr. Alan Dale, the well-known dramatic critic of the *New York American*, the Roman Catholics have a censorship of the stage, and they have a white list of plays that their people may see. What an independent, manly citizen the Roman Catholic is, to be sure! The priest tells him what to read; makes out a list of his amusements; at election times dictates who he is to vote for; and keeps one eye on his salary all the time.

In that religious paper, the *Referee*, Mr. George R. Sims, writing in "Mustard and Cress," says: "Hallo, Up Above! This is June, not December." The pious readers will be apprehensive of "Dagonet's" future.

Writing in *Lloyd's Weekly News*, Monsignor Hugh Benson tells a tale of a mediæval Yorkshire village, where a caravan of a bull-fight arrived on a Sunday. Of the population fifty went to church, and about 450 to the bull-fight, and the church-roof fell in and killed the faithful fifty. The editor says that Monsignor Benson will answer the difficulty next week. By that time his readers will have recovered from the shock.

Commenting on the Weekly Rest-Day Bill, an artful measure introduced by the Sabbatarians, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* reminds the promoters that twenty millions of persons read the Sunday papers, and that the restriction of Sunday labor would interfere only with the production of the Monday morning papers. A palpable hit!

The *Christian World* thinks but little of the Day of Intercession for the Church in Wales, apparently because the churches only drew small audiences. At Norwich Cathedral only twenty-five persons were present. We should have thought that number quite enough. All that seems necessary is to call the Lord's attention to the matter. But the *Christian World* evidently thinks numbers the important thing, and that the Lord, looking down on Norwich, will say: "What's this? Intercession for the Church in Wales! Wants me to upset the Government Bill, and only twenty-five present! Not good enough. Next business." We are afraid the *Christian World* does not discriminate between the Deity and Mr. Asquith.

From a note in the *Christian World* we see that Rev. Dr. Griffith Jones is astonished at the public listening so eagerly to Sir Oliver Lodge and others when they deliver themselves on religious problems. So are we; but we can easily understand it. Ordinary men know that the clergy are not better informed than themselves, and they apparently hope that men of science, who are informed on other subjects,

will have some information to dispense on this one. What people have to realise is that, on such questions as the existence of God or the soul, Sir Oliver Lodge is no greater authority than the most ignorant of Salvation Army preachers. Both of them can do no more than profess belief. Neither can show the slightest evidence to warrant that belief.

Dr. Griffith Jones is laboring under the delusion that a clergyman is an expert in religion, and therefore ought to be listened to with attention. He is nothing of the kind. He may be an expert so far as a knowledge of religious teachings is concerned, but that is all. He may be able to say authoritatively how one ought to stand when saying prayers, what kind of dress a parson should wear, or what doctrine is orthodox; but as regards the real meaning of what are called "religious" frames of mind, or concerning the origin of religious beliefs, the ordinary clergyman exhibits a most deplorable ignorance. That is really the condition of his being a clergyman, and his education is designed to perpetuate it. He is not trained to understand the significance of numerous states of mind—both normal and morbid—masquerading as religion. He is not trained to observe the significance of the same feelings that in one case manifest themselves as religious convictions and in another case express themselves in relation to purely social activities. He is like a man discoursing on the steam-engine in the absence of a knowledge of physics and mechanics. And, as a matter of fact, the world's reliable knowledge about religion has not been derived from theologians, but from those who have taken religious phenomena as part of phenomena in general, to be explained on the same lines that science has found so helpful elsewhere.

Pastor Russell, the American evangelist, has hired a London theatre in which he is giving a cinematograph illustration of the Bible story. Pastor Russell is a "whole-hogger" in religion, and accepts the Bible in the most literal manner. His performance is called *Creation*, and we can see great possibilities in it. Eve's adjustment of the fig-leaf—once an actual part of the old miracle play—would have to be omitted, but the separation of light from darkness, the creation of woman from a rib of Adam, with other items, should make interesting pictures. One of the religious papers says that Pastor Russell's comments on the pictures may be treated as "comic relief." The absurdity seems to lie in the preacher taking the Bible story to mean what it says.

The new *Chinese Review*, published in London, but edited by two Chinamen, contains a comment by one of its editors that is well worth attention. In 1912, he says, "the honorable and high-minded" promoters of the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition decided to add to it a touch of Chinese color. So it was proposed to install an opium den, and attempts were made to hire Chinese sailors to play the part of opium smokers. Now, says this editor, suppose the tables were turned, and the promoters of a Chinese exhibition proposed representing Great Britain by a low-class public-house, with English sailors to play the part of drunkards. "Great Britain would probably have sent a fleet of warships to demand reparation for the national insult." Contrasting English virtues with foreign vices is a favorite pursuit with the average Englishman, and in time he naturally ignores other people's virtues altogether.

Here is another passage that contains an important truth:—

"One looks in vain in Western newspapers for reports of progress and of incidents illustrating the higher and better traits of Chinese character; but the ravages of a White Wolf or the details of a political murder are immediately boomed with an energy worthy of a better cause. And the dismal pessimist, ignoring all the wonderful progress made in China during the last fifty years, in the face of untold difficulties, chants his funeral lay with a gusto and a vehemence which tempts us to conclude that he must be paid to do it."

That, it must be confessed, is the way in which our glorious British press usually instructs its readers. After the expulsion of the Monarchy from Portugal, not the least notice was taken of the constructive work that the new Government attempted and performed. But anything in the shape of an "outrage" on either side, or a collision between the Government troops and a few Royalists received instant and lavish notice. It was the same with Turkey after the dethronement of Abdul Hamid. And the misfortune is that the average reader doesn't seem to possess enough intelligence to realise that, in the very nature of the case, these "lurid" and exciting incidents can only be mere incidents in the general life of a nation.

1,374 starving dogs were saved by the London police last year. Christians were too busy saving their own souls.

Mr. W. Hill Murray, who introduced the Braille system for the blind into China, estimated that one person in every 600 is sightless in that country. Our Heavenly Father is rather careless of his children.

Are the angels on strike? We ask this question with due solemnity, for we notice that "God's houses" have to be protected by paid watchmen against Suffragette attacks.

The peerless patterers of the Christian Evidence Society are almost the sole defenders of the Design Argument. Even the dear *Daily News and Leader* recently referred jestingly to the "old argument from design, Paley's watch and the watchmaker. Nowadays, watch and watchmaker have somehow failed to keep time."

"Hall of Science ideas still linger round the rostrums in the parks," says a writer in the *Referee*. Other correspondents suggest that Freethought is dead. It needs a referee to decide between the disputants.

It was one of life's little ironies that in a daily paper the two headlines, "Salvationists in Congress," "Barbaric Revivals," should have been in adjoining columns.

A Nonconformist preacher, wishing to be topical, preached a sermon on "A Mixed Grill." Did it include a description of the horrors meted out to the heterodox in the next world?

Mr. Brandon Thomas made a big fortune out of the play called *Charley's Aunt*, which has been translated and played in eighteen languages. Would the Bible have been translated into so many without artificial pushing?

M. George Brandes, the eminent Danish critic, landing at New York, was asked by an interviewer what he thought of their great statue of Liberty. "Is that all the Liberty you have?" he said. They tried another subject.

A number of pious ladies and gentlemen have been writing in the *Saturday Journal* on "What Happens to Us When We Die?" We will listen to them, if they can make us hear, when they are dead. Not before.

"They have broken my heart and my spirit between them, and I no longer care to live." These words occurred in a letter found on the body of Sister Anastasia, the head mistress of Shilton Roman Catholic Schools, who was found drowned in the river at Normanton. The jury returned a "temporary insanity" verdict, but added a rider stating their opinion that the deceased had been unkindly treated at the convent.

Mr. Burch, a wealthy manufacturer, collapsed at the Harvard-Yale baseball match, where he was a spectator. The doctors called in pronounced him dead. But his wife, who is a Christian Scientist, had the body brought to New York, and a well-known "healer" with a lot of other people prayed over it for hours. It wouldn't budge, however, and they had to get on with the funeral. But we daresay the Christian Science lady will go on believing in the nonsense all the same.

Christian professionals don't seem to see that the harder they try to get people to come to church the more surely is Christianity decaying. They are going to carry on a "Come to Church" campaign, to secure the attendance at church of every man, woman, and child in England and Wales on a Sunday in next January. *Every* man, woman, and child! We know a few who won't go,—in spite of all the impudent "invitations" left at their houses.

The Rector of Walberton, Sussex, advertises for "fifteen God-fearing Englishmen" to superintend the farming of 640 acres of land in Canada. We do not know what is the connection between "God-fearing" and agriculture, unless the Rector hopes to get his men at a reduced rate.

Three poor Christites in one day's "wills." Rev. Reginald Alfred Gatty, of Hooton Roberts, Rotherham, left £2,079; Rev. Edward Clowes, of Bexhill, £10,640; Rev. Alfred Cooper, Brighton, £15,524. Average about £9,000. How Judas's mouth would have watered at the figure!

Puritanism is a fearful and a wonderful thing. There is not a nude statue in any public place in the whole of the United States, but Coney Island has a seething mob of trippers every Sunday during the summer, and "Tammany" is a by-word throughout the civilised world. It was well said that it would have been better if Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrim Fathers instead of the other way about.

Throughout Sunday collections were made in the London churches and chapels for the hospitals. Why do Christians have to collect money in the same way as ordinary tourists? Have they no use for prayer?

A writer in a parish magazine, describing a bazaar, says, "crystal-gazing, palmistry, and fortune-telling are also available for more adventurous visitors." Adventurous! It would not require the courage of a tame rabbit to face such nonsense.

"We in England have a hard, direct, swift speech, if we will only use it, instead of ranting, like Shelley and Milton and people like that," said a Mr. Richard Aldington. Something similar to the flowers of speech used by the Ever-Blessed Carpenter of Nazareth might do.

The Rev. J. Williams discussed the question of church members' contributions at a Calvinistic Conference at Llanrwst, and said some people would only contribute half-a-crown if the world caught fire. Why should they? They only pay that sum now to insure themselves against fire in the next world.

The following report appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of Wednesday, June 17:—

"RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH.

'VAIN NONENTITIES.'

At Lambeth Police-court yesterday Thomas William Stewart, 31, a lecturer, of Derby, was charged before Mr. H. C. Biron with behaving in a disorderly manner.

Police-constable Gibson, 901 W, stated that on Monday night he found a large crowd assembled in Brixton-road. The speaker was speaking on Atheism and the crowd were throwing missiles at him.

Prisoner: Do you think the opposition was organised?—
Constable: I don't think it was.

Mr. Biron: The point is that you have no right to hold a meeting in a public street.

Prisoner: Technically, there is no legal right to hold a meeting: but, as your worship is perfectly well aware, as a fact all magistrates allow the right of free speech.

Mr. Biron: The right of free speech in the proper place. Nowadays everybody seems to think that he has a right to say what he pleases in the public street. It is getting an abominable nuisance.

Prisoner, who had previously mentioned that he was in a bad state of health, explained that this was the last of a series of meetings. Probably, he added, it was the last meeting he would address.

Mr. Biron: I am delighted to think it is the last. Now go, and take your farewell, and don't trouble us any more. Prisoner was then discharged.

As Stewart was leaving the court his worship remarked, sotto voce: 'At the present time there is a perfect plague of vain nonentities who will obstruct the streets by talking rubbish.'

Some will blame us for inserting this. Others would blame us for not inserting it. We believe the best plan is to insert it, and let it tell its own tale.

The defenders of the Christian superstition are using the cinema to bolster their religion. A film has been prepared, entitled "Creation, from Nebula to Perfection," under the auspices of the Bible Students' Association. We wonder if it includes the creation of Eve from Adam's rib and the other absurdities of "Genesis." If so, the *Freethinker* staff will have to book seats.

The recent heavy storm in London was on a Sunday. That is how "Providence" remembers the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914—Previously acknowledged, £170 12s. 6d. Received since:—Mr. and Mrs. James Neate, £1; Captain G. B. Taylor, £1; R. J. Binns (Auckland, N.Z.), 12s.; F. O. Richards, £1.

B. T.—Your remittance has arrived safely, but you do not give your name, and we cannot very well send the paper without it—unless you want "B. T." put before your address on the wrapper. Glad to hear that, although you have had the *Freethinker* only for "some time" through the kindness of a friend, you regard its editor as "your best friend" and "feel that you have known him personally all your life." With regard to your query, it would be the lady who would be liable to any legal proceedings—not the man. Barbaric law cannot be dodged in the way you suggest. We are sorry we cannot give your friend any practical advice.

G. B. TAYLOR.—We should not mind being with you on board your good ship in the Bay of Biscay—whence you write your pleasant letter. Your subscription to the Ramsey Testimonial is passed over to the Treasurer.

E. B.—Many thanks. Shall have attention.

H. DAWSON.—(1) The *Freethinker* is never "published late this week," and could not be so except by some unforeseeable accident. If the fault is not your local newsagent's it is the fault of his wholesale agent's. Pressure should be put upon the latter. (2) The report shows you gave a good lecture, but what is there in it which has not been said by N. S. S. lecturers and writers for the last fifty years? We judge by the progress of our propaganda, not by the mere increase of useless numbers. The Salvation Army is a big affair, reckoned that way, but is there one Christian the more in any "Christian country" because of its existence? Has it converted one single *Freethinker*? We have converted a crowd of Christians. (3) We never saw any gain in the multiplication of Freethought societies. We have seen lots of them come and go. But the old N. S. S. remains, and the *Freethinker* is still the only weekly Freethought journal in England, commanding (and not with cash) most of the best brains in the party. We wish success to all sincere workers for Freethought, but we cannot act on their judgment instead of our own.

W. P.—Mr. Foote will write you himself shortly.

A. L. (Beccles).—A violation of the directions printed every week in this column is sure to cause delay, besides wasting the editor's time and energy.

JAMES NZATE, a London veteran, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, trusts we "may live many more years yet for the 'best of causes.'"

DR. F. DE LESLE (New Zealand).—Your subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund was acknowledged last week. There was no time to reply to your letter, which reached us *via* Dr. Nichols. Pleased to hear you say you "wish it was ten times as much." Also that you are "glad to see that the subscriptions are rolling in this year more rapidly and in larger amounts than formerly" and that you "hope the pace is not too fast to last."

C. JELLEE.—Glad you find so much help from the *Freethinker*. The whole subject of organisation is under consideration, and the district you name may then receive attention.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We wish you good weather and a good gathering.

E. JOYCE.—Your order is passed over to our shop manager.

A. WYCHERLEY.—Macmillan's half-crown edition of Omar Khayyam is the best. It contains all four editions. The fourth edition is still copyright, and it is much the best. Thanks for cuttings.

A. J. YOCRG.—We regret to hear of Mr. Thomas Thorp's death at Sand, and of their giving him a Christian burial at All Saints' Church when they knew he was an Atheist. We note what you say at the end of your letter. Mr. Foote's health has greatly improved.

J. T. L.—Miss Vance had already sent in an obituary notice, which was in type.

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.

Editorial.

I AM sorry to say that Mr. Cohen has not been looking very well lately. The wintry June we have have had in "God's Own Country," as the clergy call it, has rather worsened the cold he was suffering from at the Conference on Whit-Sunday. He really ought to take a holiday. He went to Southsea last week-end, and I hope he will stay there or go to some other place equally eligible. I am therefore sitting in the editorial chair again, and I think I had better remain there. I will not thank Mr. Cohen at the fag-end of a hurried paragraph. I will do it next week. And I shall have to tell the "saints" of some of the grave difficulties that have to be confronted in the near future.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

The June number of the *Secular Education Chronicle* (quarterly), issued by the Secular Education League, is priced at one penny, but we do not know of any shop where it is sold. Readers of ours who would like to see it—and we hope many will—should apply to the Secretary, Mr. H. Snell, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, London, W.C. Amongst other items is a report of the Seventh Annual Meeting held at Caxton Hall on March 24. Mr. Foote was ill then and confined to his bedroom. His absence from the meeting was sympathetically referred to by Sir Henry Cotton, who took the chair for the President, Mr. George Greenwood, who was unable to be present. "Sir Henry," the report says, "took the opportunity to express his great regret at Mr. Foote's illness, which prevented him from being present. He was indefatigable in the cause, and his sound judgment was greatly valued." The report adds that at the public meeting later on, "Sir Henry also referred again with sympathy to the ill-health of Mr. Foote."

We are pleased to see from the official report that Mr. George Greenwood continues his Presidency of the Secular Education League. It was feared that a bad accident had incapacitated him for life, but he is recovering the use of his lower limbs, which is an excellent piece of good fortune after a twice-broken kneecap's necessitating two operations. All who know Mr. Greenwood's services to the cause of progress will be heartily glad to hear this good news.

The report of Mr. Halley Stewart's speech at the League meeting shows that he is back from his trip in search of health with a fair supply of that desideratum. We judge by the vigor and trenchancy of his address.

Mr. Cohen's article on "The Consolations of Religion" is reprinted from our issue of April 26 in the *New York Truthseeker*. The source of the article is duly acknowledged.

The Birmingham Branch is having its Annual Picnic on Sunday, July 5, to Stourport, and the members would like to meet Freethought friends of the district. Full information may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. Jas. Partridge, 245 Shenstone-road, Birmingham.

We have received (on Tuesday afternoon, much too late for the *Freethinker*) a further list of subscriptions from the Treasurer of the Ramsey Testimonial Fund—Mr. B. T. Hall, Club Union Buildings, Clerkenwell-road, London, E.C. A glance at it shows there is a mistake somewhere. Names are included which were acknowledged in former lists. We have returned the list to Mr. Hall for correction.

The Salvation Army is played out in the worst sense of the words. It is no longer taken seriously by the bulk of the people. When it was first established it was taken as a really earnest—if vulgar and absurd—agency for saving souls. The crowds who watch its parades no longer regard it in that light. "Blood and Fire" makes no impression now. Familiarity, if nothing else, has bred contempt. "The Army" has taken its place as one of the regular shows of the day. This is quite legible on the faces of the spectators. We have watched them very carefully during the recent Salvation Congress performances.

Is Religious Belief Universal?—III.

(Concluded from p. 390.)

"Lacking ability to think, and the accompanying desire to know, the savage is without tendency to speculate. Even when there is raised such a question as that often put by Park to the Negroes—'What became of the sun during the night, and whether we should see the same sun, or a different one, in the morning,' no reply is forthcoming. 'I found that they considered the question as very childish..... They had never indulged a conjecture, nor formed any hypothesis about the matter.' The general fact thus exemplified is one quite at variance with current ideas respecting the thoughts of primitive man. He is commonly pictured as theorising about surrounding appearances; whereas, in fact, the need for explanation of them does not occur to him.

"We see in the young of our own race a similar inability to concentrate their attention on anything complex or abstract. The mind of the child, as well as that of the savage, soon wanders from sheer exhaustion when generalities and involved propositions have to be dealt with."—HERBERT SPENCER, *Principles of Sociology*, pp. 87-89.

"Non-religious tribes may not exist in our day, but the fact bears no more decisively on the development of religion, than the impossibility of finding a modern English village without scissors or books or lucifer matches bears on the fact that there was a time when no such things existed in the lane."—PROFESSOR E. B. TYLOR, *Primitive Culture*, vol. i., p. 425.

Of the Veddahs of Ceylon, Sir J. Emerson Tennant says, "They have no religion of any kind—no knowledge of a God or of a future state; no temples, idols, altars, prayers, or charms" (*Ceylon*, vol. ii., p. 441). Mr. Bailey, long a resident among them, confirms this judgment, "They have no knowledge of a Supreme Being! 'Is he on a rock? on a white ant-hill? on a tree? I never saw a God' was the only reply I received to repeated questions. They have no idols, offer no sacrifices and pour no libations."*

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

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

M. Bik says of the Arafaras of Vorkay (one of the Southern Arus):—

"To convince myself more fully respecting their want of knowledge of a Supreme Being, I demanded of them on whom they called for help in their need, when their vessels were overtaken by violent tempests. The eldest among them, after having consulted the others, answered that they knew not on whom they could call for assistance, but begged me, if I knew, to be so good as to inform them."‡

Wallace, the naturalist, says of the wild tribes of the Moluccas and New Guinea that when he endeavored to ascertain their ideas respecting the Creator of the universe, he could only get from them a confession of total ignorance on the subject. "The intellectual capacities of those tribes were so feeble that he doubted whether they could be made to appreciate or understand what was meant by a God."§

Similarly, the naturalist Bates says of the Indians of the Upper Amazons:—

"Their want of curiosity is extreme. One day we had an unusually sharp thunder-shower. The crew were lying about the deck; and after each explosion all set up a loud laugh, the wag of the party exclaiming, 'There's my old uncle hunting again,' an expression showing the utter emptiness of mind of the spokesman. I asked Vicente what he thought was the cause of

lightning and thunder? He said, 'Timaã ichoqua.'—I don't know. He had never given the subject a moment's thought! It was the same with other things. I asked him who made the sun, the stars, the trees? He didn't know, and had never heard the subject mentioned amongst his tribe. The Tupi language, at least as taught by the old Jesuits, has a word—Tupãna—signifying God. Vicente sometimes used this word, but he showed by his expressions that he did not attach the idea of a Creator to it. He seemed to think it meant some deity or visible image which the whites worshiped in the churches he had seen in the villages. None of the Indian tribes of the Upper Amazons have an idea of a Supreme Being, and consequently have no word to express it in their own languages. Vicente thought the river on which we were travelling encircled the whole earth, and that the land was an island like those seen in the stream, but larger. Here a gleam of curiosity and imagination in the Indian mind is revealed: the necessity of a theory of the earth and water has been felt, and a theory has been suggested. In all other matters not concerning the common wants of life the mind of Vicente was a blank, and such I always found to be the case with the Indian in his natural state."*

As to the "High Gods"—Baïame, Deiramalam, and Bungil—which the late Mr. Andrew Lang, in his book, *The Making of Religion*, tells us the Australian aborigines believed in, Lord Avebury points out that Bungil, according to native belief,—

was an old man who once lived on earth and possessed great multitudes of cattle, an idea which cannot evidently have arisen before the advent of white men, as there were no cattle in Australia. He had a dispute with the Jay, who let out the winds and blew him away. He is now the star Homalhaut. Bungil, moreover, is a common title of respect. Mr. Howitt himself was often called Bungil.†

Professor Tylor, dealing with the idea that the Australian belief in a "Great Spirit" was derived from missionary teaching, declared "this view will not bear examination."‡ After further study of the subject, however, he changed his opinion. He observes: "Let us now, however, inquire whether Baïame, near 1840 so prominent a divine figure among the Australians, was known to them at all a few years earlier"; and points out that Backhouse, a minister of the Society of Friends, who spent a long time in Australia between 1832 and 1840; William Buckley, the "wild white man," who lived thirty years among the natives of the district, till he had forgotten English; and the Rev. L. E. Threlkeld, the first grammarian and lexicographer of New South Wales, are all agreed that the natives had no idea of a Supreme Being.§

Mr. Thomas, in his *Natives of Australia* (p. 216) objects that Henderson gives a long account of Baïame, of which he learnt particulars from a native in 1829, three years before the missionaries came to those parts. But Lord Avebury observes that—

"Mr. Thomas does not give the exact reference or quote the passage on which he relies. Henderson speaks very doubtfully. His informant, he says, 'endeavored to explain to us their rude system of mythology. We experienced, however, great difficulty in comprehending the import of what he intended to communicate.' I do not find that Henderson anywhere speaks of Baïame as a Creator or attributes to him any divine powers, but says that he was 'the father of the race, and formerly sojourned amongst them.'"||

But, even before the missionaries arrived, the natives had opportunities of picking up European ideas, for there was a British settlement at Port Jackson as early as 1788. The truth seems to be that Baïame was a chief who once lived among them. Mr. Hartland says that, since 1840,—

"his Biblical characteristics, as reported by missionaries, constantly expanded down to the publication of Mr. Brough Smythe's work in 1878, and that in the most recent accounts—those of Mr. Matthew, who is

* Rev. F. W. Farrar, "On the Universality of Belief in God and in a Future State," *Anthropological Journal* (1864), ccxviii.

† Cited in Lindsay's *Mind in Animals*, p. 206.

‡ Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation* (1889), pp. 214-5.

§ Rev. F. W. Farrar, *Anthropological Journal* (1864).

* H. W. Bates, *The Naturalist on the Amazons* (1864), p. 294.

† Lord Avebury, *Marriage, Totemism, and Religion*, pp. 165-6.

‡ *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii., p. 339.

§ Lord Avebury, *Marriage, Totemism, and Religion*, p. 162.

|| Lord Avebury, *Marriage, Totemism, and Religion*, pp. 164-5, citing Henderson's *New South Wales*, p. 147.

not a missionary—they have so far disappeared that he is now only said to have created the tribesmen themselves."

Professor Frazer has dealt with the subject at length in an article in the *Fortnightly Review* (July, 1905)—since included in the third edition of his *Golden Bough*. He points out that—

"It is to be observed that the reports of moral Supreme Beings among the Australian aborigines come chiefly from Victoria and New South Wales, that is, the parts of the continent where the natives have been longest under the influence of the white man. If we could deduct from these reports the elements of fraud, we should probably find that the residue would be small indeed; and we might acquiesce in the opinion of Professor Baldwin Spencer: 'I do not think that there is really any direct evidence of any Australian native belief in a "Supreme Being" in our sense of the word.'"

Professor Frazer also cites the testimony of Mr. J. F. Mann, who says:—

"Many persons try to persuade themselves that they can detect the existence among these natives of a true religion and a knowledge of a Supreme Being; but they forget that these Blacks are extremely shrewd, so that when they perceive the object of the conversation, they readily adapt all that they have been taught on this subject to their replies. I have always found that the rigmorole stories which many of them told me, and which are supposed to represent their religious belief, were founded upon the teachings of missionaries and others."†

Professor Frazer also narrates the experience of Dr. A. W. Howitt, the ethnologist, who, wishing to learn some particulars about a spirit named Brewin, questioned two of the most intelligent natives, one of whom was a member of the Church of England:—

"After consulting together for a few minutes, one of them said, 'We think that he is Jesus Christ.' When this answer proved unsatisfactory, they laid their heads together again, and after mature deliberation declared that he must be the Devil. Which, says Professor Frazer, illustrates the readiness with which the natives adapt their answers to the supposed taste of the inquirer, and the little dependence that can consequently be placed on their statements on this subject."

But whatever may be the case as to the coast tribes of Australia, who have been so long in contact with Europeans, there is no doubt as to the absence of religious ideas among the central tribes of Australia. Professor Baldwin Spencer and Mr. Gillen, who lived with the natives, learned their language, won their confidence, and who witnessed and took part in their most secret practices and ceremonials, and whose work, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, is universally recognised as the most careful, minute, and trustworthy study of savage life ever compiled, declare emphatically in this work that—

"The Central Australian natives, and this is true of the tribes extending from Lake Eyre in the south to the far north, and eastward across to the Gulf of Carpentaria, have no idea whatever of the existence of any Supreme Being who is pleased if they follow a certain line of what we call moral conduct, and displeased if they do not do so. They have not the vaguest idea of a personal individual other than an actual living member of the tribe who approves or disapproves of their conduct, so far as anything like what we call morality is concerned" (p. 491).

The women and children are taught to fear a powerful spirit; but the youth, at the initiation ceremonies, learns for the first time "that such a being does not really exist, and is only an invention of the men to frighten the women and children."

In future articles we shall consider the origin of religious belief.

W. MANN.

The Fauna and Flora of the British Isles.—II.

(Concluded from p. 389)

THE fauna and flora of Scotland, like those of Ireland, are of composite origin. In Ireland, in the Hebrides, and in Skye a dark-furred field mouse is found which is special to these stations within the British Isles, and its only other known European habitat is in Portugal. This mammal is a relic from ancient days, and, in company with the natterjack toad, which is occasionally met with both in Ireland and Scotland, it is of southern origin. A weevil, which is quite common in Erin, occurs as a rarity in England and Scotland; but in order to again encounter it, one must travel to the Mediterranean region and the Atlantic Islands. Two species of woodlice which occur in Britain reach their northerly limit in Caledonia. Again, two species of snails are to be included with the southern fauna, and these also do not extend farther north than Scotland. There is a fern which is found in secluded spots in Southern Ireland and Wales—the bristle, or Killarney fern—but we must journey to Spain to again encounter this plant, which also thrives in Madeira, the Canary Islands, and the Azores, while it is once more met with in the West Indies and South America. To once more quote Dr. Scharff:—

"The thirteen species of liverworts peculiar to the British Islands all occur on the West Coast, and all have their nearest relations in tropical and sub-tropical countries. This seems to show that at some remote geological period, when a much milder climate prevailed in Northern Europe than at present, they advanced northward, and are the last remaining relicts of this modified tropical flora."

Plants and animals of Arctic ancestry are more fully represented in Caledonia than in the Emerald Isle. So far as the British area is concerned, the ptarmigan is confined to Scotland. It flourishes in Scandinavia, and, like the Arctic hare, it reappears in the Alps and Pyrenees. The snow bunting, a markedly northern bird, does not breed south of the Tweed. Scotland possesses several insects of boreal origin; the white underwing occurs in the North of Scotland, in Scandinavia, and in the Alps. Two dragon flies are confined within our area to Scotland, and one of them is found elsewhere in Norway, the Alps, and the mountains of Silesia. Various other organisms have a similar distribution.

Many of the vegetable growths of Scotland are pronouncedly Arctic in character. Crombie declared that the British Alpine flora bore a closer resemblance to that of Scandinavia than to that of any other country. The Scottish primrose, the rock draba, the blue menziesia, are special to Scotland and the Scandinavian countries. The dwarf birch and the mountain avens, whose remains are so conspicuous in many Glacial deposits, are members of the same Arctic group. The mountain avens still flourishes in the Alps and Asiatic highlands, and it grows in Ireland, on the Atlantic coast, in a mild climate, right down to the level of the sea. But whether the avens is of Arctic or temperate origin seems hard to ascertain, as it grows luxuriantly both in an intensely cold and in a quite equable climate.

The Lacustrine deposits of Scotland have given up the remains of the Irish giant deer, the moose deer, the reindeer, the beaver, and other organisms long since in that country extinct, as well as the remains of the roe deer, which is still to be numbered among contemporary Scottish mammals. This group must be regarded as of mixed origin.

Turning to the Germanic element in the Scottish fauna, the beaver commands attention. This highly intelligent quadruped, of which one species alone survives, is still extensively distributed. It is now completely extinct in Britain, but it was fairly abundant both in England and Scotland down to a couple of thousand years ago. The beaver is trembling on the verge of extinction throughout Western

* Cited by Lord Avebury.

† J. F. Mann, "Notes on the Aborigines of Australia," *Proceedings of the Geographical Society of Australasia* (1885), p. 40.

Europe, although a few colonies survive in the rivers of Germany and Austria, where they are protected both by public opinion and the State. In the Russian Empire it is still abundant, but as an undomesticated creature it is destined to die out in its old-world home. That the beaver belongs to the Germanic fauna is evidenced by the fact that its fossils have never been discovered in Spain, Italy, or Ireland.

The absence of that common British insectivore, the mole, in Ireland, is significant. Geologically speaking, its present distribution is of recent date, and, like the beaver, it is of Eastern origin. Its contemporary range is instructive. It is native to nearly all Asia north of the Himalayas. Nevertheless, its habitat is restricted, although it has had ample time for dispersal throughout the land masses of the Western World. The mole has reached Northern Spain, but has migrated no further south in the Peninsular. In Italy the mole has now reached Lombardy, but is unknown beyond its boundaries. In the Scandinavian region it has so far failed to establish itself in the extreme north, although it is comparatively common in the south and centre. It cannot be contended that the climate has checked its advance, as the mole easily adapts itself to temperature and soil. Both the beaver and the mole have left their remains in the later Pliocene strata of Norfolk. They were therefore living in England many thousands of years ago, and although they invaded Scotland, the sea barrier which then divided Britain from Ireland prevented their entrance into the latter country.

Another Scottish mammal which is absent in Ireland is the roe deer. This animal lingered in England in the northern counties until quite recently, and may still be seen here and there. When the English forests were in their glory, the roe deer was quite plentiful in our woodland wilds; but those days are departed for ever. The Continental distribution of the roe deer is practically similar to that of the two preceding animals. But although its migratory powers were extensive, it is entirely unknown in the Mediterranean region. Its failure to secure a footing in Ireland is to be explained by the insuperable obstacle presented by the sea.

The prevalence of newts in Britain, and their extreme scarcity in Ireland, despite the Emerald Isle's highly favorable amphibian environment, constrains the conclusions to which the before-mentioned organisms have led us. The common toad, which is almost universally distributed from the South of England to the North of Scotland, has never been discovered in Ireland, although this organism has an extensive range from Gibraltar to Japan. Scotland entertains one snake only, the viper; but even before the days of the blessed St. Patrick, the sister isle refused, as she still refuses, to give any hospitality to snakes. A lengthy list of spiders, insects, molluscs, and other organisms of similar distribution to those already cited might be set forth. Suffice to say that all confirm the conclusion that the Scottish fauna blends with that of England, and differs materially from that of Ireland.

Weighty evidence exists that a land connection between the Isles of Northern Scotland and Iceland united the two countries within geologically recent times. Gaikie contended that the flora of the Faröes and Iceland led to the conclusion that this land bridge existed after the Glacial Period had passed away. Ostenfeld, after a systematic survey of the vegetation of the Faröe Islands, came to a similar conclusion. The animal inhabitants of Iceland also support the view that this island has quite recently formed part of the European continent. Iceland appears to have been linked with Europe by way of the Faröes, Shetlands, and Orkneys.

One might surmise that many plants and animals may have been dispersed through the agency of winds, ocean currents, migratory birds, etc. These factors are by no means entirely inoperative in organic distribution; but the theory advanced seems

much more fully to account for the facts. For instance, it has been shown that out of 277 species of plants growing on the Faröe Islands, not more than ninety-eight are at all likely to have been carried there by the winds.

"The direction of the ocean currents is unfavorable to the occasional carriage of seeds by water. As regards the transport of seeds by birds, it appears that the flight of migratory birds across the Faröe Islands is inconsiderable. The suggestion that birds during migration might carry seeds on their wings or feet to distant lands is not confirmed by actual observation. Many thousands of such birds have been carefully examined by Professor Winge and Dr. Knud Andersen, who noticed that their crops and stomachs were always empty. They never observed any seeds adhering to the feathers, beaks, or feet of the birds. Dr. Andersen, moreover, is of opinion that migratory birds are scarcely of any importance as plant disseminators."^{*}

Although the fauna and flora of Britain proper are closely allied, their distribution is related to local conditions. The more northerly Scottish forms become rarer as we journey south. The British grouse is special to our islands, but it is only a variety of the willow grouse of Northern Europe. This bird is resident both in Caledonia and Erin, and ranges in England as far south as Shropshire. A white flowering orchid which is distinctly boreal in character is distributed from Iceland to Saxse. The animals and plants of Arctic type are fairly numerous in England generally, but they are most fully represented in the northern counties and in Wales.

A faunal element which is mainly restricted to the South-West of England startlingly resembles that of Ireland. This Lasitanian series is composed of the lingering organisms of the once rich group which entered England from South-Western Europe at the period when our country was united to Ireland by links of land. Various plants furnish illustrations of this Iberian invasion, while a spider, a centipede, and sundry molluscs are to be numbered among the animals of this group.

Organisms of Germanic ancestry are also numerous. Some of these have extended to Scotland, while others have a distinctly southern range. The dormouse has not yet succeeded in reaching the more northerly region, while its present Continental range, coupled with the circumstance "that no member of the genus to which it belongs has as yet been found, either recent or fossil, outside the limits of Europe, suggests that the dormice and their allied genera all originated on our Continent."

Very local in England is the sand lizard, while it stretches across North-Eastern Europe into Western Asia. Four of our best known fresh-water fish are not native to Ireland, but are plentiful throughout the greater part of the European Plain. A surprisingly large percentage of our plants and invertebrate animals are considerably confined to the South-East of England. The Continental distribution of these organisms also indicates their Germanic origin. The stag-beetle, the swallow-tail butterfly, and various fresh-water and terrestrial molluscs are members of this group.

The facts furnished by contemporary forms of life find substantial support in the remains disinterred from the superficial deposits of the English area under review. The organic relics from caverns and brick-earth include those of various small rodents and the saiga antelope. These organisms still survive in Asia and Eastern Europe. But their fossils have never been discovered in Italy or Spain, although their bones occur in France and Germany in deposits similar to those that have yielded them in England. These mammals doubtless migrated to England from the Continent before the land bridge had been broken. There is another rodent, the hamster; but this animal does not appear to have reached England, although its remains have been found in France. The hamster seems to have advanced from the East, and then retreated; but there is some reason to think that it is again invading the West.

* *European Animals*, p. 64.

Another group of animals, seemingly of more southern origin, lived in England in company with the organisms previously referred to. Among these was the lion, which appears to have survived in our country down to the dawn of the historic period. The hippopotamus has left its remains in the same deposits which contain those of the lion. This huge creature wandered as far north as Yorkshire, and its existence there certainly seems to presuppose a continuous land connection with Southern Europe, or possibly Africa.

Several of our native species are admittedly indigenous; at all events, several of our varieties must be of local origin. But this does not in the slightest degree invalidate the evidences of their ancestors having entered our islands from the Continental areas previously specified. Moreover, while the British fauna and flora have been enriched by the organisms which have wandered from other lands, our islands, in return, have been the scene of the evolution of other species which have probably added to the wealth of theirs. Nevertheless, the innumerable plants and animals which have been received in Britain immensely outnumber those it has given, and in consequence the overwhelming majority of our species are to be regarded as settlers from other soils.

Putting aside the few organisms of indigenous evolution, we find that a small faunal and floral group came to us from North America along an ancient land bridge which stretched across the Northern Atlantic to Europe. A more important series of organisms of boreal and Alpine character was derived partly from Scandinavia and partly from the mountainous areas of Continental Europe. The Lusitanian species arrived from Spain, while the Germanic group invaded Britain from Eastern Europe, or possibly from Asia.

The Spanish or South-Western element is probably the oldest, although the American group is undoubtedly very ancient. These migrations of flora and fauna were not the events of a few centuries, but covered immense periods of time. The incoming organisms established themselves in our islands when the land stood much higher than at present, and large areas of the former continents are now, and have long since been, subjected to the sway of the sea.

In conclusion, it becomes obvious that the chief flora and fauna of Great Britain and Ireland are of pre-glacial date, and, although countless plants and animals perished during the mournful Ice Age, a sufficient number survived in warmer retreats to replenish the country when the glacial wave retreated to its Arctic home. The persistence of the southern flora and fauna through all the Glacial Epoch cannot otherwise be accounted for. Another reason why the Lusitanian group is still so richly represented in Ireland is that the climate is mild and damp; and these southern organisms have also been spared the struggle with the hardier Germanic stocks which came into Britain while that island was still united with the Continent, a connection which continued after Ireland had been separated from us by the sea.

T. F. PALMER.

Farther still, they acknowledge that the providence of God is attentive to human concerns. Why, therefore, does he neglect the whole world, of which we are a part? If it is because he is not at leisure to look to it, neither therefore is it lawful for him to survey that which is inferior and us. Why also, when he surveys us, does he not behold that which is external; and thus look to the world in which we are contained? But if he does not look to that which is external, in order that he may not see the world, neither will he behold us.—Plotinus, "Against the Gnostics."

We have no hope from theologians, to whatever school they may belong. They and all belonging to them are given over to their own dreams, and they cling to them with a passion proportionate to the weakness of their arguments.—J. A. Froude.

The Inquiry.

(AFTER CHARLES MACKAY.)

TELL me, thou sun, great source of life and light,
Of all man's faiths, hopes, fancies, which is right?
The sun, unceasing in his steady glow,
In yon far sphere, responds—I do not know.

Tell me, thou wind, that blowing since the prime
In ether chaos cosmos formal time,
The winds of doctrine that do round me blow,
Which is the true, oh, wind?—I do not know.

Tell me, thou gentlest moon, of sage and serious face,
Surely the record thou so far canst trace?
The silver moon, effulgent, stately, slow,
Sad heaven ascending, saith—I do not know.

Tell me, thou sea (whose tides the moon obey),
Tell me, majestic ocean—hush thy play—
Canst thou the riddle solve? In ebb and flow
The solemn sea replies—I do not know.

Tell me, ye clouds that o'er the azure pass,
And leave no stain on heaven's eternal glass;
Ye immemorial vapors, e'er ye go,
Pray tell us—ah, it rains!—I do not know.

Then to the faculties the question I
At length preferred, the everlasting "Why?"
Love grieved, faith shrunk, hope whispered soft and
Reason arose and answered—This we know: [low,

The best is ours if we will take the best;
And let old dumb Oblivion take the rest:
Nor petulant and pessimistic go.
Know what you can—and value what you know.

ANDREW MILLAR.

What wonder if you torn and naked throng
Should doubt a Heaven that seems to wink and nod,
And having moaned at noontide, "Lord, how long?"
Should cry "Where hidest thou?" at eventide;
At midnight, "Is He deaf and blind, our God?"
And ere day dawn, "Is He indeed at all?"

—William Watson.

Obituary.

We deeply regret to record the sudden death of Mr. Wilhelm Hecht, of Edmonton, who passed away quietly in his sleep, early last Sunday morning, at the age of 73. We tender our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Hecht and to their son, John, who is well-known not only as an energetic member of the Edmonton Branch, but to our London Branches generally, as one of the most earnest and devoted workers and speakers for the Freethought cause. A simple but impressive funeral oration was delivered at the graveside by Mr. J. T. Lloyd. Tributes of sympathy and respect in the shape of some beautiful flowers were sent by friends. One remarkably large and exquisite bunch of freshly gathered roses, from the members of the Edmonton Branch, having carried its silent message of sympathy to the mourners, was sent to the Winchmore Convalescent Home, so that its fragrance should bring pleasure to the inmates, rather than be wasted on a grave. Upwards of 40 local Secularists were present, the General Secretary, Miss Vance, and Miss Stanley, V.P., representing the N. S. S.—E. M. V.

Our cause has also lost an ardent worker in the person of Ernest Leaver, who died at the early age of 28, on June 14, the cause of death being cancer. The deceased was a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, and unsparing in his work for Freethought. His desire that a Secular Burial Service should be read at his graveside was carried out by Mr. Nelson King, of Ilkeston, at his native town of Bridlington, Yorks.—E. M. V.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Mr. Miller's, 8 Matthias-road, Stoke Newington): Monday, June 29, at 8.30, Business Meeting—To receive Delegates' report, etc.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): Howell Smith, B.A., 3.15, "Atheism and Modern Thought"; 6.15, "Christianity and Buddhism."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brookwell Park): 6, Mr. Hope, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.30, Mr. Marshall, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "The Christian Life"; 7.30, Miss Kough, "Glorious Immortality."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, E. Burke, "Luther and the Reformation."

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