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This thing is God: to be man with thy might,
To go straight in the strength of thy spirit,
and live out thy life in the light.
—A. C. SWINBURNE.

The Origin of Supernatural Ideas.

"Religion, as understood by the lower savage races, differs essentially from ours; nay, it is not only different, but even opposite. Thus, then, the deities are evil, not good; they may be forced into compliance with the wishes of man; they require bloody, and rejoice in human, sacrifices; they are mortal, not immortal; a part of, not the author of, nature; they are to be approached by dances rather than by prayers; and often approve what we call vice, rather than what we esteem as virtue."—SIR J. LUBBOCK, *The Origin of Civilisation*, p. 116.

"There presided nothing sentimental or meditative at the origin of religion, there was a stampede simply of a multitude of souls in mortal terror or hope, and no such thing as independence of thought; it is less of sentiment, properly so-called, than of sensation and of action, that religions have been born. Primitive religion was not a means of escape out of this world, a port-hole into the blue; the earliest gods were not in the least ethereal, they were possessed of solid muscles, of arms capable of dealing blows. To explain the origin of primitive beliefs by a nascent idealism, is to explain them by their precise opposite. One becomes an idealist when one is on the point of ceasing to believe."—M. J. GUYAU, *The Non-Religion of the Future*, pp. 41-42.

HUNDREDS of different definitions have been given of the word "religion," but a definition upon which all scholars are agreed has yet to be found; probably it never will be.

According to Scheleiermacher, religion consists in the consciousness of dependence on a higher power. Hegel pricked this definition by remarking that if consciousness of dependence constituted religion, the dog would possess most religion.* Professor Ratzel, on the contrary, thinks "Religion is everywhere connected with man's craving for causality, which will ever be looking out for the cause or causer of everything that comes to pass."†

Professor Brinton defines religion as the belief that behind the activities of nature "lies the ultimate, invisible, immeasurable power of Mind," and that "man is in communication with it."‡ Herbert Spencer finds the origin of religion in ghost or ancestor-worship. Guyau holds that "religion is the outcome of an effort to explain all things—physical, metaphysical, and moral—by analogies drawn from human society, imaginatively and symbolically considered."§ The late Mr. Andrew Lang held that "The origin of a belief in God is beyond the ken of history and speculation."‖ According to Tiele, "the essence of piety, and therefore the essence of Religion, is adoration."¶

Matthew Arnold, by his definition of religion, as "Morality touched by emotion," excluded the supernatural altogether—a proceeding similar to playing *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

Professor Seeley applies the name of religion to "any habitual and permanent admiration."** Professor Leuba truly observes of this definition that "Should we concur in this extension, it would be difficult to stop anywhere. We should have to admit almost anything which anyone may have a fancy for designating by that much-abused word"; and adds, "Since the function of words is to delimitate, one defeats the purpose of language by stretching the meaning of a word until it has lost all precision and unity of meaning." Professor Leuba defines religion as "(1) A belief in a great and superior psychic power—whether personal or not. (2) A dynamic relation—formal and organised or otherwise—between man and that Higher Power tending to the preservation, the increase, and the ennobling of life."* Professor Max Müller, in his *Origin and Development of Religion*, contends that religion arose from a conception of the infinite—a notion derived from his study of the highly metaphysical religions of ancient India. Mr. J. M. Robertson, dissatisfied with every existing definition of religion, claims to have deduced a definition in which—

> "there is room for every religion ever historically so-called, from Fetishism to Pantheism, and from Buddhism to Comtism, without implicit negation of any claim made for any one religion to any moral attribute, save of course that of objective truth or credibility."†

The definition runs to six clauses, and fills a whole page, which he sums up shortly as:—

> "Religion is the sum (*a*) of men's ideas of their relation to the imagined forces of the cosmos; (*b*) of their relation to each other as determined by their views of that, or by teachers who authoritatively recast those views; and (*c*) of the practices set up by those ideas."‡

As this definition does not exclude Atheists, it seems rather too comprehensive.

Charles Bradlaugh observed:—

> "On the whole, then, as all believers in God include in the word 'religion' some belief in a Deity, and as they certainly have a prior claim to the term, it appears to me to be wiser, franker, more honest, to avoid using an old word in a new sense, and thus to prevent the certainty of misconception on the part of those around us."§

Then, again, we have the difficulty of denying the name of religion to certain faiths of China and Japan, like Buddhism, whose founder denied God, and Confucianism, which ignores him.

Professor Frazer—whose services to science in these investigations has just been acknowledged by the title of knighthood—defines religion as the "propitiation, or conciliation, of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life"‖—which is as good as any. For our part we prefer the definition of Reclus:—

> "'Religion is the feeling which falls upon man in the presence of the unknown.' Man fears and must fear the unknown, because the unknown may be dangerous and terrible, because the infinite is hidden in the unknown. Man personifies the Unknown; when his mind is strongly excited he cannot do otherwise. And that personification he seeks to propitiate."¶

* Cited by Max Müller, *Contemporary Review*, May, 1878.
† Ratzel, *History of Mankind*, vol. i., p. 41.
‡ D. G. Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 47.
§ Guyau, *The Non-Religion of the Future*, p. 2.
‖ Cited by Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 47.
¶ Cited by Leuba, *Psychological Origin of Religion*, p. 2.
** J. R. Seeley, *Natural Religion* (1882), p. 74.

* Leuba, *Psychological Origin of Religion*, pp. 92-3.
† J. M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, pp. 52-3.
‡ *Pagan Christs*, p. 52.
§ Charles Bradlaugh, *The Freethinkers' Text-Book*, p, 198.
‖ Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (second edition), vol. i., p. 96.
¶ Elie Reclus, "Ethnography," *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

That is, man fears the unknown cause of the terrifying phenomena of nature—such as the storm, the earthquake, the thunderbolt, etc.; and fashions this unknown cause in the likeness of a man; like himself, only more powerful. This origin of religion, says Professor Leuba, is "widely held." And he further remarks:—

> "'Fear begets gods,' said Lucretius. Hume concluded that 'the first ideas of religion arose.....from a concern with regard to the events of life and fears which actuate the human mind.' Among psychologists, Ribot, for instance, affirms that 'the religious sentiment is composed first of all of the emotion of fear in its different degrees, from profound terror to vague uneasiness, due to faith in an unknown, mysterious, impalpable Power.'* The fear-theory is well supported by two classes of interdependent facts observed, we are told, in every uncivilised people: (1) Evil spirits are the first to attain a certain degree of definiteness; (2) man enters into definite relations first with these evil spirits."†

Dr. Barr Mitchell, the archæologist, also observes: It is—

> "this timorous state of mind, in respect to the unexpected and unknown, so characteristic of the ordinary savage, which lies at the bottom of the religious as well as of the superstitious sentiments. This is admitted in the scriptural expression, 'the fear of God,' which all theologians and religionists recognise as the essence of piety."‡

The same writer also remarks that is a mere waste of time to attempt to define the difference between religion and superstition, seeing—

> "that there is only a difference of degree between the belief of the savage in the possession by distinct personal spirits, both good and bad, of terrestrial objects and the heavenly bodies, and that of the educated European in the universe possessed and governed by a good personal spirit, with a subordinate region in the possession and rule of a wicked spiritual being."

And instead of regarding religion as standing opposed to superstition, it would be more accurate to regard them as both opposed to the rational interpretations of science, which form the true antithesis to—

> "all the superstitions, whether existing in their original baldness among savages, and in the nurseries and lower ranks of cultured society, or among educated people, wrapped up in the traditional verbiage and sterile conventionalisms which still pervade the teaching of our schools and colleges."§

In fact, "religion" is one of the most ambiguous words in the English language. It has ten times more meanings than a cat is said to have lives. It is a significant fact that none of the great writers—since Hume—who have done most to solve the purely natural origin of supernatural ideas have used the word religion in the titles of their books. Lubbock's works are *The Origin of Civilisation* and *Prehistoric Times;* Herbert Spencer's, *The Principles of Sociology;* Dr. Tylor's, *Primitive Culture;* Professor Frazer's, *The Golden Bough.* Mr. J. H. King, who has written one of the best works on the subject, entitles his book *The Supernatural: Its Origin, Nature, and Evolution.* The term "supernatural" is a much better word than either religion or superstition, and the use of it would save an enormous amount of unprofitable wrangling and waste of time.

In reading the many works dealing with the origin of supernatural ideas, we have noticed a tendency to attribute the origin of these ideas to the same causes all over the world. We do not believe this to be the case. Man is governed by his environment, and the environment of the African Negro is very different from that of the Eskimo of the Polar regions, which in turn differs from that of the Australian Blackfellow, the North American Indian, or the Polynesian. We do not believe that all those tribes who have evolved the idea of a God did so by way of ancestor-worship, as Herbert Spencer states; although it is demonstrable that some, perhaps the majority of them, have done so.

W. MANN.

(*To be continued.*)

* Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 309.
† Leuba, *The Psychological Origin of Religion*, pp. 81-2.
‡ Barr Mitchell, *Dates and Data*, pp. 25-6.
§ Barr Mitchell, *Dates and Data*, p. 24.

An Easy Trade to Follow.

WHAT to do with our boys? is a question that naturally appeals to parents, although the answers given are not usually very helpful. Most of them leave out of sight the party chiefly concerned—the boy. Parents are advised to put their boys to this or that profession, as though it were just a question of a boy going into any department, drawing top salary, and reaching a position of distinction. It really depends upon the boy. If he is shrewd and methodical and far-seeing, he might do well in a commercial career. If he is of an acute, observant type, he might do well as a lawyer. Or he might have other qualities that would fit him for a scientist or a writer. It all depends on the boy. But if he is neither astute enough for commerce, logical enough for the law, smart enough for journalism, nor patient and persevering enough for science; if, on the positive side, he possesses a fair presence, glibness of speech, confidence in himself, and, while not manifesting ability in any direction in particular, shows a fondness for managing the universe in general, then it would seem safe advice to say, make a clergyman of him. There are few professions that suit such a character so well, and none that would suit him better.

Over a generation ago, George Eliot wrote of the evangelical preacher:—

> "Given a man with moderate intellect, a moral standard not higher than the average, some rhetorical affluence, a great glibness of speech, what is the career in which, without the aid of birth or money, he may most easily attain power and reputation in English society? Where is the Goshen of mediocrity in which a smattering of science and learning will pass for profound instruction, where platitudes will be accepted as wisdom, bigoted narrowness as holy zeal, unctuous egotism as God-given piety? Let such a man become an evangelical preacher; he will then find it possible to reconcile small ability with great ambition, superficial knowledge with the prestige of erudition, a middling *morale* with a high reputation for sanctity."

Nothing has occurred since the above was written to weaken the force of the characterisation. The pulpit still remains the place in which mediocrity may easily achieve distinction. Deficiencies that would be fatal elsewhere oppress but little there. Qualities that would be of small service, or positive disservice, out of the pulpit, are of advantage in it. A training, of a sort, is of course necessary. But once through with that, all is plain sailing. There is no need to keep oneself abreast of new facts, or to be ready to revise one's opinions in the light of new knowledge. For the clergyman, everything is arranged for him—his beliefs, his prayers, his postures. He need be under no bondage to so commonplace a thing as facts. On the contrary, it is better to treat them with a lofty disdain; to be most certain where proof is impossible, and to talk most when one knows least. All that is essential is to acquire the knack of pouring a deluge of words over a desert of ideas, and to confuse by a display of sheer verbosity. Given these things, and it is the easiest thing in the world for a clergyman to acquire a reputation. He may pose as a "mystic," simply because his ideas are misty. He may pass as a a daring thinker on the strength of questioning such absurd stories as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. And he may gain credit as a social reformer by mouthing vague and useless generalisations concerning the working classes. One need only bear in mind the reputations gained by men like Gipsy Smith, Dr. Horton, R. J. Campbell, or the Bishop of London. None of them would ever have been heard of out of the pulpit. They are heard of in it

because the pulpit is, as George Eliot said, the Goshen of mediocrity.

Here is another passage from George Eliot that is as true now as when it was first written. The clergyman

> "has an immense advantage over all public speakers. The platform orator is subject to the criticism of groans and hisses. Counsel for the plaintiff expects the retort of counsel for the defendant. Even the scientific or literary lecturer, if he is dull or incompetent, may see the best part of his audience slip out one by one. But the preacher is completely master of the situation; no one may hiss, no one may depart. Like the writer of imaginary conversations, he may put what imbecilities he pleases into the mouths of his antagonists, and swell in triumph when he has refuted them. He may riot in gratuitous assertions, confident that no man will contradict him; he may exercise perfect free-will in logic, and insert illustrative experiences; he may give an evangelical edition of history with the inconvenient facts omitted; all this he may do certain that those of his hearers who are not sympathising are not listening."

Here, then, is a profession for which almost anyone may qualify. Short of downright imbecility, lack of intelligence is no serious obstacle. Men have been expelled from churches for thinking too much, but never for not thinking enough. And modest as the requirements of the Churches have been in the past, they are likely to make the test of intellect still less severe in the future. A little over two centuries ago there were still great men in the Churches. Life was simpler, less sophisticated; and the gulf between scientific teaching and religious doctrine less obvious. But life broadened and deepened, and men of ability turned their energies elsewhere. The Churches were left with what could be got, and had to be thankful for even that. Mediocrity in the secular world thus became genius in the Church, because the stronger and better minds could no longer rest content with its teachings. To ask for more was both dangerous and hopeless. It would, indeed, be an eye-opener to many if they had drawn up for them a list of the men of ability—men like Darwin, Froude, Stephen, and others—who were *intended* for the Church, but whose strength of intellect compelled them to remain outside.

The profession of a clergyman has this great recommendation: bad times are reduced to a minimum. Of course, many of the clergy get but modest incomes, but all hope for more, and, in any case, it would be difficult to find many who are getting less as clergymen than they would be getting in any other occupation. Even if there should be a "slump" in the business, and the number of parsons turn out to be greater than there are churches to fill, the prospect is not so gloomy as it appears. There is the mission-field still open; there are some very comfortable jobs, both at home and abroad. The home secretaries are very well paid, and generally, abroad, the missionaries manage to lead a very comfortable life. If a man is a failure at home he can always go abroad to convert the heathen. All that is needful is the display of a lively imagination in sending home the reports.

Or, if one does not care to leave the country, there still remains the home mission-field. Here the sphere of operation is limitless. Christian society presents no lack of material for philanthropic efforts, and the method of working is so simple and so profitable. You rent a large house, partly furnish it for yourself, and label a room or two "offices." All your expenses of food, clothing, travelling, etc., are put down to the "Mission." And after living up to anything from £500 to a £1,000 a year, you are able to come before the world as a Christian philanthropist, and entitled to ask the Freethinker where *his* charitable institutions are situated? So long as something is given out of the funds you are safe. You are not obtaining money under—legally—false pretences. Of all professions that of a Christian philanthropist is the most profitable. It combines the maximum of profit with the minimum of risk. The capital is found by the public. The profit is taken by the promoters. A liberal use of religious phrases disarms all criticism—except such as may be offered by Freethinkers, and their comments are hardly likely to weigh heavily with the religious public.

Above all, and this is a consideration that should have considerable weight with the average Briton, the occupation of a clergyman will provide facilities such as no other profession furnishes for giving all one does a moral flavor. In politics, some amount of courtesy towards one's opponents is considered necessary. In business, one must keep one's word if one is to succeed. In science, regard for truth is imperative. From all these fetters the pulpit delivers one. One is not even expected to be friendly and courteous towards one's opponents. To be so renders one more or less "suspect." No one seriously blames a clergyman for regarding a Freethinker, or a member of an opposing sect, as one with whom social intercourse is not to be held. His narrowness of mind will be simply put down to religious zeal, and will be so far counted to him for righteousness. No one, again, expects a clergyman to be strictly truthful in his statements concerning other people—so long as these other people do not belong to his religious world. What outsider would trust a Protestant's account of Catholics, or a Catholic's account of Protestants? What amount of condemnation from the religious world have clergymen ever received for circulating their falsehoods concerning Paine, and Ingersoll, and Bradlaugh? The nature of these falsehoods have been exposed over and over again, but what clergyman has lost status for circulating them? I know of none, and should be surprised if anyone else does. Such conduct would not be tolerated in science or in general affairs. It is excused only in the world of religion. It is the pulpit that enables a man to gratify the miserable, petty vices of a misdirected human nature by throwing over them the cloak of zeal for religion and pietistic morality.

Of course, there are certain drawbacks to the clerical life. One can get nothing in this world without paying some kind of a price for it. And, as Lord Morley says in his excellent book *On Compromise*—a work that forms such a satire upon much of his own career:—

> "It is no light thing to have secured a livelihood on condition of going through life masked and gagged. To be compelled week after week, and year after year, to recite the symbols of ancient faith and lift up his voice in the echoes of old hopes, with the blighting thought in his soul that the faith is a lie, and the hope no more than the folly of the crowd, to read hundreds of times in a twelvemonth with solemn unction as the inspired word of the Supreme what to him are meaningless as the Abracadabras of the conjuror in a booth; to go on to the end of his days administering to simple folk holy rites of commemoration and solace, when he has in his mind at each phrase what dupes are these simple folk, and how wearisomely counterfeit their rites; and to know through all that this is really to be the one business of his prostituted life."

Truly, no light business this to one who takes the higher and better view of life. And it is a burden that, apparently, is borne with ease by many thousands of our fellow-countrymen.

C. COHEN.

Why Not Face the Facts?

THE inability or unwillingness of Christian ministers to see things as they are is simply amazing. It is doubtless the result of constantly wearing specially colored spectacles; and it is even possible that some verily believe that what they see through them is the truth—"the truth as it is in Jesus." Mr. R. J. Campbell has more than once publicly boasted of his superior knowledge of history, particularly the history of the Christian centuries. In the very last sermon which he preached prior to his regrettable illness, from which we wish him speedy and complete recovery, and which appears in the *Christian Com-*

monwealth for July 15, that claim is certainly belied. The object of this discourse is to enthrone Jesus as the King of mankind. In the effort to accomplish this tremendous task the preacher affects a wonderful originality. "There is a point here," he says, "to which, perhaps, your attention has never been directed before." We prick up our ears, and await the astounding revelation. Imagine our astonishment when the novel point turns out to be merely this:—

> "I mean that, humanly speaking, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth nineteen hundred years ago actually saved civilisation and gave humanity a new start. I do not think that this is generally realised either by Christians or non-Christians."

We can assure the reverend gentleman that such a statement is not realised by non-Christians, solely because there is no truth in it. The "point" gloried in because of its unique originality is a wholly lying point. Christianity neither saved civilisation nor gave humanity a new start, and this we are prepared to demonstrate to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced person.

Let us look for a moment at the picture of Paganism painted by Mr. Campbell. "There was no real vision anywhere, life had lost point and purpose; the bottom seemed to have dropped out of existence." Now listen to the following words of wisdom from the *Thoughts* of Marcus Aurelius:—

> "First, do nothing at random or without a purpose. Second, let that purpose have no goal save the good of the community" (p. 117).
>
> "'Do little and be happy,' quoth the sage. But is it not better to do the things that are needful, whatsoever and howsoever the laws of our being, as living creatures and by nature members of one community, prescribe? For this resolve brings with it not merely the happiness of well-doing, but that of little-doing. For the vast majority of our deeds and words are aught but necessary. Eliminate these, and how much toil and trouble will vanish with them. Hence, on every occasion, let us ask ourselves, 'Is this one of the needless things?' remembering, at the same time, that it is not enough to eliminate the idle in action, but that we must purge our thoughts as thoroughly; for so only can we prevent the motiveless in deed from following in their train" (p. 27).

We might quote innumerable passages, equally relevant, from Seneca, Epictetus, and others, but we confine ourselves to Marcus Aurelius because Mr. Campbell singles him out as one of the great Stoic teachers who "were so filled with foreboding about the general tendency of things that all their thoughts were tinged with sadness and gloom." We affirm that this illustrious man did not tinge his thoughts with sadness and gloom, but dwelt serene in a centre of confident tranquillity, cherishing faith in the resources of his own nature and in those of his fellow-beings. He lived "as on a mountain," and exhorted all others to do the same. He lacked passion, but peace was his in great abundance. By the way, Mr. Campbell very naïvely gives his case away when, after alluding to the "sombre picture" of Roman life under the Antonines, furnished by Professor Samuel Dill, he observes that it is "a picture in many ways resembling the present civilised society," after two thousand years of "Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now, what did Jesus do? In his usual vague manner the preacher expatiates emotionally upon the transcendental blessings which his advent conferred upon the world. Among these are, a radiant vision of God piercing human life with a force and intensity never before known, the impartation of something worth living and dying for, the linking of the human and Divine. This is sentimentalism of the very worst type. "All would have been lost but for Jesus," exclaims the City Temple oracle, in the very teeth of the protesting facts. He must have read Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* very carelessly to have the temerity to claim it in support of his view. If he will reperuse that valuable work he will see that the trend of things in the Roman Empire from the year A.D. 70 was towards political and moral betterment, and that the author speaks of a Pagan period of "unexampled peace and prosperity, a period of upright and benevolent administration and of high public virtue." Renan tells us that during the whole of the first Antonine's reign not a drop of Roman blood, nor a drop of the blood of foreigners was shed; and he was in power for twenty-three years. Now, what happened after Christ began to don the imperial purple? Was an all round improvement initiated? The first Christian Emperor was Constantine the Great. His conversion was at best a very doubtful transaction. He embraced Christianity without completely renouncing Paganism, though he transformed the former into the religion of the State. Well, what was done to save civilisation under him? Nothing. One of the first fruits of the new order was the legalising of intolerance. Paganism received its death-knell, and the death threatened was to be by no means a natural one. Constantine himself set the example in the actual destruction of Pagan statues. He pursued a policy of bitter persecution towards Jews and heretics, and ordered the destruction of the books of the Arians immediately after the triumph of Athanasius at the Council of Nicæa; and yet, just before his death, he received baptism at the hands of an Arian bishop, which, according to Athanasius, was no baptism at all. In addition to all this, it must be recorded that Constantine was a heartless Christian criminal. On his conscience lay the burden of the murder of a son, a nephew, and a wife; and as he neared the end the dread of something after death began to grip him. What did he do? Like a madman he rushed about in all directions in search of some consolation. First of all he applied to the college of fifteen Pagan priests devoted to the services of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus, who calmly informed him that for such dark deeds their religious ritual knew no expiation. Then he turned to philosophy with the same heart-breaking result. At last he came across an Egyptian magician, a ladies' man about the imperial court, who comforted him with the assurance that in the Christian Church there was a special provision for purification from all crimes, however great. This magician was a Spanish bishop, Hosius by name, and this is what he said: "There are no sins so great but that in Christianity they may find forgiveness." Whether it was Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, or Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, who absolved the Emperor, is immaterial, the all-important point being that he *was* absolved, that his conscience became insensible under the influence of the most pernicious drug ever concocted. How long all this occurred before his decease we have no means of ascertaining. When seized with his last illness it is related that he suspected that he had been poisoned, and that he handed to the Bishop of Nicomedia a will which, on opening and discovering its contents, he placed for security in the dead Emperor's hand, where it lay till Constantius arrived and read his father's dying instructions. What followed was the massacre of six of the surviving imperial family. That is the manner in which civilisation was saved and humanity given a new start.

Then the Roman Empire gradually drifted into black chaos and red ruin. The Dark Ages set in, civilisation languished, morals coarsened, and all sorts of corruption reigned supreme. For nearly eight hundred years Christendom was held as in a vice by the evils from which it seemed utterly incapable of extricating itself. Several centuries were consumed in acrimonious theological controversies, during which thousands of lives were lost. From Constantine onwards the love of truth steadily declined, and by the tenth century, according to Dean Milman, "chastity was so rare at Rome as to be called an angelic virtue." Lecky tells us that in the sixth century "all classes seem to have been almost equally tainted with vice," the two queens Fredegonde and Brunehaut being conspicuous for their ferocity, and for the number and atrocity of their crimes. Lecky proceeds thus:—

> "We read of a Bishop named Cautinus, who had to be carried, when intoxicated, by four men from the

table, who, upon the refusal of one of his priests to surrender some private property, deliberately ordered that priest to be buried alive, and who, when the victim, escaping by a happy chance from the sepulchre in which he had been immured, revealed the crime, received no greater punishment than a censure. The worst sovereigns found flatterers or agents in ecclesiastics. Fredegonde deputed two clerks to murder Childebert, and another clerk to murder Brunehaut; she caused a Bishop of Rouen to be assassinated at the altar—a Bishop and an Archdeacon being her accomplices; and she found in another Bishop, named Ægidius, one of her most devoted instruments and friends" (*History of European Morals*, vol. ii., pp. 236 7).

Baronius, a Catholic, and Milman, a Protestant, no less than Gibbon the Sceptic, make it abundantly evident that the Christian Church has been the perpetrator and abettor of multitudes of the worst crimes on record. It has often been, as Mr. Campbell tells us, "the one live thing," and it lived almost alone to perform acts of persecution, suppression, execution, and to wage bloody war against all of whom, for whatever reason, it disapproved.

J. T. LLOYD.

Tess of the Woods.

THE evening was cool and quiet. A pleasant breeze played with the leaves, and from the music that lingered in rustling cadences rose the songs of birds as from a murmuring accompaniment. Overhead, through the traceries of foliage, the soft cloud-shades of summer nights were stealing the brilliancy from the blue of the sky and mellowing their appropriation. The white shafts of sunlight, alabaster columns that sloped to the swaying roof, and seemed to support it more powerfully than the tree trunks themselves, had disappeared; and around the trees were gathering, in solemn silence, the weird shadows that give the woods their grave charm, and wave invisible magic wands over human sentiment.

Religious romanticists have no difficulty, at these times, in picturing their dream God; nor is it a task for them to feel his activities in the sensuous appeals of Nature. Surely there is something more than mere material forces at work. Surely all this loveliness is not the essence, the blind result of blind circumstance. There is some spirit, some soul, something incomprehensibly divine in this. It can only emanate from God, they say. There is something behind the beauty of a star, within the loveliness of the woodland at nightfall, beyond the intense life-incipience of the pale, cold dawn. Naturalism cannot give us any satisfactory elucidation, we are told; God alone can make it clear.

Freethinkers, however, have no trouble in understanding the influence of the sensuous upon minds inoculated with the modern religious interpretations of natural phenomena; but, when reason has burned the curtain of Deism, it is sometimes hard to realise the thickness of that veil around the minds of others. For absurdities are not so few that we need to be abnormally acute of vision to observe them. The laughter of inanimate things is not so secret that we need to be particularly keen of ear to hear it. The merriment of speechless nature is not so dumb that we require genius to portray it for us. All around us there are happenings that render the claims of Religion absurd. Nature laughs continually at man's dreams of Deity. Anywhere, everywhere the assertions of Religion can only be entertained if the eyes and ears are fast closed to the facts of life; and it is, amongst other things, because Deism can envelop contradictions, denials, and absurdities in aweful solemnity, and force the mind to genuflexion, that it is, mentally, a grave social danger.

Just as I entered the wood a cat leapt from a grass thicket to a bough, seized an unsuspecting thrush, and dropped. The crush of teeth on bones made a tragic epilogue to a song of joy and liberty.

The other birds sang on unheedingly, to the murmuring accompaniment of leaf music. The beauty was still as sensuously delightful, not a whit dulled by the sudden ending of a lithesome life in its midst. The clouds still trailed their white fleecy draperies across the deepening blue of the skies. One poor, happy bird had ceased to sing. One hungry cat had, after the exercise of perhaps unimaginable patience, obtained a much-needed meal.

With nature so is it with Humanity, despite all the religions in the world, despite Gods, and Christs, and Holy Ghosts.

Somehow my mind kept convoluting the little commonplace tragedy, and when I lay down, after a bit, on a bank behind a sturdy oak, to watch the color changes between its many-tinted leaves, I wondered how it was anyone could even attempt to harmonise the tragedies of nature and humanity with the popular ideas of Deity.

Voices, coming indistinctly from the distance, broke upon my wonderment. Soon I could hear the words.

"We're far enough away now. Let's sit here," said a girl.

"All right," replied the coarser voice of her companion; and from the intonation I judged he was annoyed.

"See here, Mary!" he blurted out after a short silence, "it was all a lark. You enjoyed it as much as me; and you're as much to blame as me, too. If I egged you on, you egged me on; and there the matter ends."

"But it doesn't end there at all, Will. Can't you understand that the serious side is just beginning, now that I'm beginning to understand. Besides, things are being said at home; and if it goes on I won't be able to stand it. Something's got to be done. You'll marry me, Will, won't you? Oh! you must! You must! I can't bear it all myself. I can't! You must help me, Will. I know I'm as much to blame as you; and you've told me so often."

"That's just it, Mary. You're as much to blame as me; but that's no reason for me marrying you. In fact, it's a jolly good reason why I shouldn't. What's more, I don't want to. I'm not going to bury myself yet, for you or anyone else."

"But it's harder for me, Will, much harder, and I'm ——"

"Maybe it is; but if you do enjoy a lark, and it turns out bad, you've to bear the brunt of it. You knew, as well as I did, what might happen; and if you're fool enough, well, you've just jolly well got to suffer it out."

"I know it was all a lark," sobbed the girl after a pause in the conversation. "But I was so happy at the time that I might have been sound asleep, for I didn't know what I was doing."

"You tell that to the horse marines, Mary," he said with a harsh laugh.

"You can afford to marry me, Will; you've a big enough wage; and everything will be better and easier."

"For you, not for me; but I'm not going to. I've asked some of the chaps about it, and they're of the same mind. If you suffer because of some fun, you've just got to suffer," he said, with a hard, stubborn ring in his voice. It was like the crunch of bones.

The girl wept bitterly for a while; but her grief seemed not to affect him in the least. Then he said roughly, "Come on! I'm fed up with this anyhow."

They rose, and Tess of the Woods returned on the homeward path with her unmarried husband.

My mind went back to an old literary sweetheart of mine, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, and the sadness of her life seemed to become enwoven in the gloom of the drowsy wood. I loved her, and lived with her again. My sympathies rushed out anew to warm themselves against her wronged heart. The black flag of sorrow was entangled in the dark tree-foliage over Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Tess of the Woods, and myself. Our three lives were inter-

linked in some mysterious way. The hearts throbbed together, and the minds were striving against the despair that robs the Deity of its value. Again I felt the strange, weird vibration of my being, the feeling that is the echo of genius, the response of sensitiveness to the call of the master mind. Again, Hardy was touching the chords of my life; and, for a moment, the ordinary individual that is myself was drawn into the sacred circle.

The moment passed; the echo of genius sighed, and faded into silence; the nerves resumed their commonplaceness; but the old thought shone out afresh in my brain, as it did, in similar circumstances, when I first read the book—whatever Hardy may have meant to imply, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, to me, is a glorious indictment of Deism, an immortal monument against the President of the Immortals, who, we are told, sported with Tess to satiation, tortured her, murdered her, and flung her beautiful body into the ugly mire of his own making. It is a magnificent denial of Deity.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Acid Drops

The head of Jesus Christ is alleged to have appeared to the congregation of a small mission hall at Llanelly. To the eyes of some it was crowned with thorns, but the preacher saw nothing of the kind, from which we see how *objective* it was. It was equally true, no doubt, that "many unbelievers fell on their knees." They must have been got there for the purpose. We suggest that J. C. should repeat this miracle at Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral.

A few wills from recent newspapers. Rev. Leonard Edmund Shelford, Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral, left £5,469. Rev. C. E. B. Bell, of Chelford, Cheshire, left £1,419. Rev. Richard Pringle, of Stowford Rectory, Devon, left £4,591. Rev. Robert Alexander, Queen Anne-street, Dunfermline, left £3,123. Rev. George McGuffie, Blair Lodge, Stirling, left £11,334. Poor clergy!

There are at least 10,000 lepers in Russia. No wonder! It is the most pious country in Europe.

Sir George Turner, who is a specialist on the subject of leprosy, says there are about a hundred lepers in this country, only two of whom are women. Defenders of the Design Argument will explain, perhaps, this chivalry on the part of Providence.

The *Church Times* is strongly of opinion that the offer to bury Mr. Chamberlain in Westminster Abbey ought never to have been made, as a service such as would have accompanied the interment ought not to be performed over one who has never accepted the Christian faith. We are not without sympathy for the *Church Times* view, and we wish that all Christians would carry out the principle of refusing to read a Christian service over those who did not belong to them while living. Still, here is another aspect to the matter. Westminster Abbey is a national building, and if the nation decides on honoring a man by placing him there, it is almost impertinence for a Christian to object. There is more than one Freethinker in the Abbey already, and it is, after all, only a question of time for the English people to imitate the French people, and give their national heroes a civic funeral, leaving the sects to do as they please in the matter.

Rev. Conrad Noel writes exultingly in the *New Weekly* of what he calls "The Catholic Recovery"—that is, the growth of altar service, and the revival of a number of the cruder forms of superstition. We fancy that what he takes as signs of recovery are really symptoms of decay. It means that, as the stronger intellects leave the Churches, the less rational ones begin to exert power, and superstitions that were kept under find an opportunity for expression. The best brains of the country drift away from the Churches, and this is a chance for the "weaker brethren" to do as they please. Personally, we expect to see a still greater development along the lines indicated by Mr. Noel. And then will come the settlement of the final question—whether the control of civilisation is to be finally with the thoroughly rationalised portion of society, or is civilisation to undergo another eclipse such as occurred with the establishment of Christianity?

The *New Witness* for July 16 is a special military number, and the editor leads off by remarking that "all mankind has ever felt that arms are the ultimate test of a nation. And all mankind has been right." The sentiment seems to us incomplete. It should also be pointed out that the lower in the scale of civilisation the more profound is the conviction. Nations that are uncivilised see nothing wrong in the rule of the physically stronger, and nations that are only partly civilised see nothing very regrettable about it. With increased civilisation and culture, the value of the test is questioned. Then people begin to realise that the test of physical fighting is no more decisive as to the value of a nation than it is decisive as to the value of an individual. Indeed, if it comes to fighting as the test of fitness, there are plenty of animals that will beat man hollow, and humanity will have to vacate the premier position in the animal world. The truth is that Mr. Cecil Chesterton is writing rubbish — simple, unadulterated rubbish.

What Mr. Chesterton is probably muddled about is the fact that the readiness to *struggle* is one of the tests of a high vitality, national or individual. But that does not mean of necessity an appeal to arms. All social life involves struggle, as does all intercourse between nations. But it is only on the lower stages of culture that this readiness to struggle takes the form of an appeal to brute force—an appeal that means, not the survival of the best man, but only the survival of the strongest animal. In higher stages of culture we have the same repulsions and attractions working themselves out in a class of ideas, principles, ideals. The combative element is still there, still active, but it expresses itself in a worthier fashion. Mr. Chesterton thinks only of the lower stage, and evidently finds it difficult to conceive anything higher.

Mr. Chesterton says that if anyone wants an example of what the military spirit can do when it is still alive in a nation, we should turn to Ireland, where, in a few months, two armies have been raised. Well, what then? Is anyone insane enough to imagine that these two armies will settle the Irish question? Suppose these armies were let loose, and fought until one beat the other. Would that settle the Irish question? It would only be the Irish problem over again, with either the North or the South as the top dog. The problem in Ireland is not the raising of armies, but getting all the population to live at peace. And this cannot be done by an appeal to arms, but by an appeal to reason. Mr. Chesterton might reflect that even now nations only appeal to arms when reason fails, and the appeal to force does not mean that it is admirable; it only proves that men are not yet civilised enough to be guided by reason. That we all recognise as an unfortunate truth. But one is not paving the way for better things by a glorification of the brute, even though the brute be restrained a little by the rules of "civilised" warfare, and appears in the trappings of the modern soldier.

The insistent sea-serpent has made its welcome reappearance—in the columns of the press; the Nonconformist *Daily News* being in the front. Yet the sea-serpent is but a poor thing compared with Jonah's whale, who had a bed-sittingroom in its "tum-tum."

In a conversation recently with a veteran evangelist, the old preacher mentioned that Northampton was a stubborn place, for there were so many Freethinkers. He attributed this to the number of shoemakers, who are engaged in a sedentary occupation. "They have plenty of time to discuss things," he added, reflectively, "but I've always been too busy a man to think."

With one eye on the bonnets in their churches, the clergy are beginning to think there may be something said for the political equality of men and women, and the House of Convocation is favoring the voting of women. Yet according to the Word of God woman is but a side issue.

A sporting contemporary, describing a recent boxing encounter, informed its readers that one of the combatants was like a Greek "god." The resemblance was closer, we imagine, when the "god" had his nose broken, like the others in the museums. The defeated champion, presumably, was "a man of sorrows."

Mr. Thomas Tyler, speaking at the half-yearly meeting of the Southend Trades Council, said the local Education

Committee was an affront to working people. The members of the Committee were chosen from the Anglican and Nonconformist Churches, with two Roman Catholics "thrown in as a make-weight. When they inquired the reason they found it due to the fact that the religious people could not trust each other." A palpable hit!

What a change there is in children's books. A generation ago all publications for juveniles were palpably pietistic, but this is no longer the case. In the *Childrens' Magazine* for July there is an article on Henri Bergson, and it is stated that "many people think that in the nineteenth century the wisest man, the philosopher with the widest vision and the clearest eye for guiding men onwards, was Herbert Spencer. He taught us that all things change from age to age in an orderly way, and this great, eternal process of change he called evolution, a word now famous." It is a pity that the same clarity of thought is not shown in publications for adults.

The *Evening News* and the *Daily Mail* are both screaming hysterically because the opposition press will not pay much attention to their Civil War Scare, and the former journal is quite delirious concerning "the hush-up press." Both papers have hushed up Freethought affairs for years, and it is good to find the engineers blown up with their own gunpowder.

The question of the Sunday theatre has been debated in *T. P.'s Weekly*, and among the latest contributors is the Rev. Stewart Headlam, who says "there is nothing wrong in seeing such acting, or acting yourself." The Rev. A. J. Waldron thinks differently, and wishes "Sunday more divinely human," whatever that may mean. Most people will have no difficulty in choosing between these two very opposite ministers.

As we expected, the Government has decided that the promised Education Bill will not be proceeded with. The immediate reason is want of time, but we imagine that behind this lies the conviction of inability to get a Bill through the House such as will satisfy the Government's supporters. A Bill that would satisfy them would most probably have to reckon with the hostility of the Irish party; it would, naturally, have against it a solid Conservative vote; and when to this is added the advocates of Secular Education and some of the Liberal M.P.'s, the Government might easily experience yet another defeat on its educational proposals. Naturally, the Nonconformists are exasperated, and are beginning to be suspicious of their having been misled, and threatening a "revolt." Well, they can only revolt by putting the Conservatives in, and that will certainly not get them what they desire. For our part, we quite welcome the Government pronouncement. It brings us a step nearer the day when even politicians will recognise that a straightforward policy of Secular Education is the only plan to end the sectarian strife once and for all.

"Viator," of the *Church Times*, wields an exceedingly facile pen, and his articles are always interesting, if not instructive. Indeed, the ease with which he writes often tempts him to write superficially, if not flippantly. For example, in the issue of the *Church Times* for July 10, he has a letter on "Podister," the Freethinker. This is a deplorably sarcastic contribution, and must be pronounced essentially unfair. He seems to take "Podister" as a typical Freethinker, who, as here described, is by no means a desirable character. In reality, he is not a typical Freethinker. We agree with "Viator" when he says that to call the personage he depicts a Freethinker "would be a grotesque perversion of language." Look at him. He has "an insular mind," so restricted that it is not capable of enlargement. He never "postulates a cause outside his own experience for an effect within his experience"; he is not God, nor much like God. He cannot appreciate the writings of Robert Browning, nor the book of Job. He honestly detests Mr. Chesterton, and God or Nature has withheld from him the faculty of imagination.

It is needless to observe that the above description is a grotesque caricature. We know intimately many hundreds of avowed Freethinkers, but "Podister" is not amongst them; nor have we conversed with anyone who has met him. We do not deny his existence, nor the possibility that "Viator" is acquainted with him. All that we aver is that he is not by any means a typical Freethinker, though it pleases this ready writer so to delineate him. Most of the Freethinkers we know are zealous students of science and history, as well as ardent lovers of literature. Browning is one of their favorite poets, and they revel in the Drama of Job. To them the whole Bible, regarded as a merely human document, is one of the most interesting and illuminating books in the world. So far are they from detesting Mr. Chesterton that they derive much entertainment and some profit from his fantastic and paradoxical writings. We beg to remind "Viator" that he, too, is not God, and knows no more about God than we do, which is NOTHING. We wish to remind him, further, that he cannot render any signal service to his own cause by putting on superior airs, and talking down to people he either deliberately or ignorantly misrepresents.

During the recent visit of the fleet to Southend-on-Sea a banner bore the pious legend, "God bless the Union." A Cockney visitor, glancing at the motto, said, "We don't get religious over our blooming workhouses."

It was reported in the press that Grigori Rasputin, "the Czar's favorite monk," had been stabbed by a woman, and the act was attributed to the old, old reason of the holy man treading the primrose path of dalliance. From later reports it appears the monk is still alive; and, if he can persuade his followers that it is his second time on earth, his fortune should be made ten times over.

According to the revivalists, it is only Freethinkers who commit suicide. A further proof to the contrary is found in the death of Miss Muriel Steward, daughter of Canon Steward, rector of Boyton, who shot herself with a rifle.

In a White Book on St. Helena it is stated that there were seven cases of flogging during 1913, one for a conviction under the Juvenile Smoking Ordinance. It is appropriate that a place in which boys who smoke are flogged should be named after a Christian saint.

"The war of pamphlets," so named by the *Church Times*, now being waged within the borders of the Established Church, is really becoming highly entertaining to disinterested witnesses. The warriors are high-placed clerics, from Bishops to Canons, and theological Professors; and it is perfectly amazing with what sublime ease they slay one another. Bishop Gore and Professor Bethune-Baker originated the warfare, but they were speedily put to death by Dr. Sanday and Professor Gwatkin. Then two fresh warriors, Dr. Scott Holland and Dean Strong, entered the field, and together gave his quietus to Dr. Sanday. And the end is not yet. The man in the street may ask, "What are they fighting about so fiercely?" but no one can tell him, nor do the warriors themselves know. There is not one unbiassed critic amongst them, not one who has the courage to be logical. In reality, their quarrel is over mere *shadows*, even Dr. Sanday's *criticism* being but shadow-criticism.

Dean Strong very properly says that if the story of the Resurrection could be decisively shown to be false, the affirmation of it by the Church in the Creed could not save it, and a ruinous blow would thereby be dealt at the authority of the Church as a teacher. Curiously enough, the *Church Times* admits that the *details* of the proofs are missing, and says: "We accept the Creeds because they come to us with the authority and guarantee of the Church; we do not regard them simply as deductions from Scriptures." What is this but a falling back with a vengeance upon the infallibility of the Church, which is the most unsubstantial of bubbles?

Why does the Rev. Dr. Orchard, of Enfield, persist in misrepresenting the teaching of eminent men of science? In the *Christian World Pulpit* for July 15, he asserts that commonsense revolts from materialistic conclusions concerning mental activities. This is at once a false and foolish statement, seeing that some of the sanest men living are Materialists. It is perfectly true that Huxley repudiated Materialism as a philosophy, but it is equally true that he described psychical processes in terms of Materialism, which proves that his philosophy was by no means a deduction from scientific facts. Possibly this partially explains his inability to become a whole-hearted advocate of Darwinism, as well as his ardent admiration of David Hume.

Dr. Orchard maintains that "distinguished psychologists, like William James in America and McDougall in England, have been compelled by their own psychical studies still to employ the term 'soul' for the organ of consciousness, the controlling power, the inmost self whose presence and operation they have to admit." Will the reverend gentleman give chapter and verse wherein Professor McDougall is

compelled to employ the term "soul" in the manner described? On p. 16 of his *Psychology*, published two years ago, this "distinguished psychologist" says:—

> "It is no longer possible to define psychology as the science of the soul, for the notion of the soul is a speculative hypothesis, one much too vague and uncertain to be made the essential notion in the definition of a large province of natural science."

The book contains much more to the same effect. What does Dr. Orchard say to this?

Our Nonconformist contemporary, the *Daily News*, had a headline recently, "Streets Paved with Gold." It did not refer to heaven, but to the charges to be made for motor-'buses using public roads.

At a Salvation Army meeting at the seaside a stoker was the speaker. If he preached on "blazes," it ought not to have ended in smoke.

"The Church is at best a schoolmaster," says the Rev. Hugh Chapman, of the Savoy Chapel. If so, the teacher is weak in mathematics, for the dogma of the Trinity in Unity is a puzzle in arithmetic. Jonah's "whale" and Noah's ark should *settle* the question of the Church's zoology.

An entertaining note was introduced in the discussion on "The Sunday Theatre" in *T.P.'s Weekly*, by Mr. R. H. Fisher, Secretary of the North Liverpool Y.M.C.A., who wrote, "Man was told what to do with it [Sunday] by Him who gave it." May we remind Brother Fisher that the commandment relates to the Sabbath, and not Sunday; and that "Him" includes two gods and a ghost.

The famous negro educationalist, Dr. Booker Washington, is to visit Europe early next year, and will be welcomed by the Free Church Congress, which will be held at Leicester. In the advertisements of the approaching visit, Dr. Washington is described by Mr. Carnegie as "a Joshua and a Moses combined." What with? Japan black?

Amelie Rives, the American novelist, says that she loves England "because of the soft voices of the people." The lady has never heard our famous Christian Evidence lecturers, who shout the leaves off the trees in the parks, and frighten the park-keepers by dropping their h's.

The Primrose League, founded partly to commemorate a Jewish statesman, has for one of its objects the maintenance of the Christian religion. At Norton Fitzwarren recently the sports at a League meeting included clay-pigeon shooting, weight-guessing competitions, and skittling for a live pig. Remembering the great statesman, the promoters might have left out the last item.

According to the *Christian Globe*, the Rev. Stephen Swift, an evangelist, is "working for God." That fact should be sufficient to keep the Great White Throne in its place a little longer.

The authorities of the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Leeds brought an action against a local printer, named Stembridge, claiming an injunction to restrain him from disturbing them and the worshipers by the use of his machinery. Mr. Justice Warrington found for the printer. The Chapter House should not have been built in such a busy part of a city like Leeds. Peace and quiet could not reasonably be expected there. And the clergy cannot hope to rule the roost all around them as they used to do.

Mr. George R. Sims sometimes delights his readers with flashes of his old humor. Writing on the Sunday theatre question in *T. P.'s Weekly*, he says, "The Sunday theatre proper is only a question of time. The Sunday theatre improper we have had with us for some years past." Well said, Dagonet!

"Tell the children quite frankly," says the *Christian Commonwealth*, in a preliminary talk on the Bible, "that we have here a collection of legends and traditions of a great race who got nearer to God than anyone else in those days." But is this dealing frankly with the children? "Those days" can only mean the date of the Old Testament writings, and where is the evidence that the Jewish people were—even in the religious sense—"nearer to God" than many others? There is no such evidence. The Biblical God is as vengeful, as local, and as crude as the gods of other people, and in some respects falls below the higher levels attained by India, and, as we now know, in Greece, Babylon, and Egypt. The *C. W.* is simply advising that a comparatively safe falsehood may be told children, instead of the usual one that is decidedly dangerous. The proper thing to tell the children is that the Bible contains a collection of religious legends, such as the early history of every people supplies, and of value only so far as they illustrate the modes of thought current at the time they were written. That would be dealing honestly with the children. But what the Christian teacher wants is to impress the children with the notion that in some peculiar way the Bible is superior to, and different from, all other religious writings. And that cannot be done without taking advantage of their ignorance and helplessness.

Another writer, Mr. A. Burrell, M.A., in the *Educational Record*, complains that nowadays "Young England neither knows nor reads nor respects nor finds interest" in the Bible. He complains, moreover, that there is a "conspiracy of silence" in "all books on history, geography, psychology, and school method, in regard to this book. The Bible seems to be a book which must not be referred to, even distantly." We are not alive to the existence of any such conspiracy. On the contrary, the Bible receives far more than its share of attention in non-religious literature, and very much more praise than it deserves. If Mr. Burrell is merely referring to text-books on history, geography, etc., and complaining that they do not mention the Bible, one need simply inquire, Why should they? It is not the business of writers on these subjects to go out of their way to advertise the fetish-book of the Christian world. If the Bible were essential to the study of any of the subjects named by Mr. Burrell, it could not fail to get mentioned. If it is not mentioned, we may safely conclude that it is not essential. This is one of those instances that prove the logic of fact to be stronger than the logic of theory.

The Rev. A. D. Belden, of Westcliff-on-Sea, calls Calvary "one of the hills of God's joy." Is this a cruel misnomer, or is it a dark reflection on the character of God? How can the hill upon which was committed the foulest crime in all history be yet "one of the hills of God's joy"? Besides, that dark deed, that horrible murder of the only begotten Son of the Most High, occurred in fulfilment of the eternal decree of the Father himself. If he can rejoice in contemplation of what transpired upon that hill, he is indeed an Almighty Monster, in whose existence it is highest wisdom not to believe.

Mr. A. R. Hope Moncrieff, better known as "Ascott R Hope," has written an entertaining *Book About Authors*, in which he has some hard things to say of religious companies, "which, trading on a capital of subscriptions," have made their godliness a gain in the market, without displaying due consideration to the authors they employ. This is a further proof that religion covers a multitude of shortcomings.

The Rev. H. G. Houseman, of St. Peter's Church, Staines, has invited worshipers to attend in white boating flannels. If this sort of thing extends, church parades in England will resemble those in the South Sea Islands.

A clerical correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* says the Church has "an incomparable liturgy," but it is recited by the clergy in a language "not understood of the people." We should imagine that the Athanasian Creed was "not understood" by the clergy either.

Humanitarian Christians are objecting to the hymn "There is a fountain filled with blood." They are not sufficiently numerous, however, to stop the hœmorrhage.

At Southend-on-Sea they sell sweetstuff "rock" of varying lengths. A Cockney visitor, purchasing a very long piece, said to the shopkeeper, "'Ere y'ar, guv'nor, give us the rock of ages."

"Weak in the head, though perhaps strong in the body," was Mr. Harry Lawson's description of the Post Office Department. The remark would apply equally to the Christian Churches.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £177 16s. 6d. Received since :—Six Atheists (Liverpool), 13s.; T. S. (Wimbledon), 3s.; P. & J. Partridge, 10s.; R. Taylor, 5s.; J. Garrett, 10s.

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

B. C.—We cannot see anything worth dealing with in the Vicar of Clifton's sermon on "Rationalism," except a few passages, which are all quotations.

G. HARVEY.—The geographical dispute between Landor and Roosevelt is not for our intervention. The libel on Thomas Paine, of course, is quite another matter.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings. The third article on "Laws Against Religious Liberty" was not published; partly on account of Mr. Foote's illness and partly because the Stewart case was *not* taken to the Court of Appeal. The third article cannot be written, as intended, until a more favorable occasion occurs.

SIX ATHEISTS (Liverpool).—Your and your friends' appreciation is welcome.

A. POWELL.—We have made use of your old friend's letter again.

JOHN LATHAM (S. Africa).—We should like to hear from you again.

ANDREW MILLAR.—To do justice to a certain point in your letter we put off dealing with it for another week. The verses shall appear.

W. H. HICKS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

J. ANETTE.—See paragraph. Thanks.

CAPE COLONY.—Glad to hear you are trying to promote our circulation in your part of the world. It may be said that the *Freethinker* goes everywhere, though it is not read by everybody.

R. POPPER.—(1) Bradlaugh must have referred to Tithes somewhere in all those volumes of his paper, but we cannot give you a precise reference. (2) We did not agree with the late Edwin Johnson as to the chronology of the Christian faith and the Christian scriptures. (3) We agree that "many people would buy the *Freethinker* regularly if they only knew of its existence." The problem will have to be dealt with somehow.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We will write you very shortly on the matter.

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 HAVE resolved not to be hurried, and not to begin printing my long-intended address to the Freethought party in the dog days. A very old and valued friend writes to me almost querulously. He is so disappointed at the delay. I promised to make a certain statement at the Conference, and I did not—and now I don't make it in the *Freethinker*—and so on. Begging my old friend's pardon,—I did make a statement at the Conference on the subject of future reorganisation. He was not able to be there to hear it. There was a discreet report of it in the paper. That will have to do till I am prepared to go further. For the rest, that subject will have to take its proper place in the contemplated address.

I am really under no obligation to anybody in these matters. I have not contracted to do anything in particular. I have said that I have some very important things to say to the Freethought party. At least I consider them so. But I have also said that there is no absolute urgency in point of time.

There was a time when I could get up at any moment and talk, or sit down at any moment and write. But I never scamped a bit of work, and I don't intend to do so now. Whatever I speak or write, it shall be the best of me.

I may begin next week as likely as not, but I am under no pledge. Everything must depend on the weather, and how I feel, and the exigencies of the paper.

Moreover there seems something like the promise of another "blasphemy" case in London, and if things take a certain turn I shall be busy enough, in all conscience.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Some of the most interesting things we ever read came from the pens of non-professional writers. Common soldiers, for instance, have sent home letters from the field of battle that for vivid description of real facts,—the pathos of suffering that happened casually and was noticed in the natural course of things,—the irresistible comedy of the incongruities of tragic experience,—and the unartificial sense of the weary weight of all this unintelligible world,—throw the best war-correspondence of your Russells and Forbess into the shade. Somehow or other it is in Shakespeare, the greatest of the great, who includes everything, like Nature herself, and in Shakespeare alone among the modern poets, that one finds this very quality. He is not so much literature as life. Tennyson's noble ballad, the "Revenge," is vitiated—where it *is* vitiated—by this artificiality, this exaggeration, in short, this cant. But look at Shakespeare's picture of the ship-boy in that wonderful praise of sleep; one never begins to understand how wonderful it is until one has read it dozens of times. That picture was not laboriously painted, it was mentally photographed with one flash of heated imagination. The very thing is there. Shakespeare saw it. He was not a "literary gent." His was an art, to use his own language, that vied with great creative nature. Of course there is only one Shakespeare, but the pure naturalness of the spontaneously able, if unpractised pen—with unperverted feeling and intelligence behind it—which we meet with unexpectedly now and then in utterly unknown men and women—suggests to us that we have fallen upon a final proof of the Master's all-inclusive genius.

There was an English captain who went ashore with some of his men after the tremendous earthquake at Messina some years ago. On the top of several ruined buildings flung pell-mell together, people were waiting to be rescued. How many, or how much hurt, it was impossible to say, but women were in the number, and apparently some children. The sturdy captain flung up the rope himself, which was to be made fast by amateurs at the top. The whole thing might break away while the first rope-climber was in mid-air. But some cool strong person had to go up and superintend the lowering of those dangerously situated people. The captain tried the rope with a tug, and then turned to one of his men, and said "Now, Smith." That was all; simply "Now, Smith." And Smith said nothing, but just went. He might easily meet death on the way. But death may be met on any way, if you come to think of it. So Smith went. He had his captain's order. That was good enough for him. The course of a true man was to do his duty and chance the rest. And it seems to us that "Now, Smith" was one of the most eloquent speeches we ever heard of. Napoleon's under the Great Pyramid, Nelson's at Trafalgar, were hardly as heroic. The captain knows that two words are all that is necessary. It is inconceivable that Smith should disobey his captain's order; besides, Smith's a good fellow, and isn't the man to leave women and children in deadly peril without trying to save them. "Now, Smith."

Every now and then we receive a letter from which we should like to quote a good bit that most of our readers would relish, but it very often slips through, either from want of time or want of space. We have the opportunity just now, however, of quoting some excellent and interesting passages (never meant for publicity) from a letter written to our friend Mr. A. Powell by an old friend—the same that we mentioned some months ago. The writer, in thanking

Mr. Powell for recent copies of the *Freethinker*, took occasion to pen some criticisms and reminiscences. He appears to have know the Freethought party a long while, and at one time rather intimately.

Referring to the case of Mrs. Besant, Mr. Powell's correspondent says :—

> "The slashing editorial 'appreciation' of Mrs. Besant's very erratic career reminds me that I was present at her first appearance in London as a Freethought lecturer; it was at South Place Chapel, Finsbury—C. Watts in the chair: subject 'Civil and Religious Liberty.' All quite satisfactory, both in matter and manner. What a contrast to the present Mrs. Besant, with her many wild ideas and her theatrical make-up!"

Another incident of the long-ago was John Stuart Mill's candidature for Westminster and the part played in it by Woman Suffrage :—

> "I was present at one of his meetings. At the conclusion of his address a woman suddenly appeared on the platform, and made a passionate appeal to the audience to vote for him, because he was in favor of 'Votes for Women.' It was Mrs. Harriet Law, for some time a Freethought lecturer."

Mill lost the seat for Westminster at the next election, and the ordinary public sighed with satisfaction to see the book-writer go out and the bookseller go in. The oratory of neither counted for much in the result. "As a speaker," this correspondent says, "he was rather disappointing—an insignificant trifle as applied to the brilliant scholar, writer, and Freethinker, John Stuart Mill."

A last extract from the letter of Mr. Powell's friend's letter pays a merited compliment to Mr. Palmer's scientific articles in the *Freethinker* :—

> "Mr. Palmer's ably written Fauna and Flora of the British Isles ought to encourage readers to take up the interesting study. The subject is a very big one to grasp in all its many bearings."

Finally, in pointing out what he rightly concludes to be a misprint, he remarks that "the *Freethinker* is so carefully edited, and nearly always so carefully 'read.'"

A lady, writing from British Guiana, wants to know if the author of the Bible has answered our *Bible Romances* yet. Not that we know of. He is too late now. The battle is practically over.

Mr. Cohen has left home for a holiday in Cornwall. He will be away three weeks. We hope he will have a good time and pick up a lot of health. We might refer him to one of Wordsworth's poems, but we daresay the sunshine and the Atlantic air will compete successfully against the company of books—for a while.

"Have We Free Will?" is the heading of a recent notice of Mr. Cohen's *Determinism or Free Will?* in the *Birmingham Gazette* :—

> "Sir Oliver Lodge explains the troubles of man by referring them to Free Will, but, if we may credit Mr. Chapman Cohen, mankind has no Free Will worth naming; could not have; the thing, he argues, is impossible. His shilling book, entitled *Determinism or Free Will?* issued by the Walter Scott Publishing Co., apparently begins at the beginning of the subject, and ably and moderately pursues it to the end, in nine chapters of which one of the most interesting is devoted to a statement of the question. 'Beliefs,' we are told, 'do not usually die with the conditions that gave them birth. Society always has on hand a plentiful stock of beliefs, that are, like so many intellectual vagrants, without visible means of support. If a belief is in possession its ejection is the most difficult of operations. Possession is here not merely nine points of the law, it is often all the law that is acknowledged.' The book furnishes a concise and complete statement of the case against Free Will, concerning which Dr. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, addressed a congress of Unitarians the other day. Whatever may be the reader's opinion at the close, it will be admitted that Mr. Cohen's book is a masterpiece in its way, by reason of its conciseness and fine literary style."

All this is true enough, but one fact should be added. Mr. Cohen's valuable and well-written little book is "issued by the Secular Society, Ltd." That is to say, it was financed by that Society—both as to the publishers and the author. And all the advertisements and announcements in the *Freethinker*—amongst whose readers the bulk of the book's public lie—have been given gratuitously. We took as much interest in the book as if it were our own; perhaps more so. Which is the way amongst good soldiers. For the pens of the *Freethinker* men are swords fighting the battle of their convictions.

The Partnerships of Plants and Animals.

THROUGHOUT the domain of organic Nature, individualism, in the strict sense of the term, is frankly impossible. No floral or faunal structure lives, or can live, alone, and many and varied are the associations of organic forms for selfish or for mutual benefit and aid. Among these innumerable vital associations almost every conceivable aspect is displayed. The dependence of flowers upon insects, and of insects upon flowers, is a biological truism. Lowly plants, such as algæ, are epizoic on animals, as, for example, those that live among the hairs of sloths. Internal and external parasites infest the bodies and structures of all animals and plants, usually to their detriment or demoralisation. Mosses, lichens, fungi, ferns, orchids, and many other organisms are epiphytic on various higher botanical growths.

The phenomena, however, with which we are about to deal are much more remarkable than any of these. Those organic associations which are covered by the term "Symbiosis" are truly among the most extraordinary phenomena which modern science has made known to men. In these cases, the organic connections lead to the advantage of each organism concerned in the partnership, and the close interdependence which characterises these unions is positively startling in its complexity.

The powers of adaptation which all progressive organisms possess appear almost limitless. And when any adaptation is favorable to the organism's well-being, it is strengthened by use and bequeathed through heredity; and that important factor in organic evolution, Natural Selection, is certain to promote its further development.

Symbiosis, or the association of separate organisms for mutual advantage, was first discovered by two philosophical botanists, Schwendener and Anton de Bary. But these organic unions are not confined to the vegetable kingdom. Not only do they exist between different plants, but they also occur between plants and animals, and even between separate species of animals. These mutual benefit associations are to be found in the simplest as well as in the most complicated states, as the succeeding examples will abundantly prove.

Naturalists were long aware of the close union which exists between hermit-crabs and sea-anemones, before any special attention was paid to the phenomenon. But now that the subject has been thoroughly investigated, another chapter has been added to life's romance. It is now known that several species of hermit-crab usually carry

> "a large sea-anemone about with them on the mollusc shell which they use as a protecting-house; indeed, two or three of these beautiful many-tentacled polyps are often attached to them, and this is not at all a matter of chance, but depends upon instinct on the part of the animals; they have the feeling of belonging to each other. If the sea-anemone be taken away from the hermit-crab and put in a distant part of the aquarium, the crab seeks about till he finds it, then seizes it with his claws and sets it on its house again.....The sea-anemone, on its part, calmly submits to the crab's manipulations—a fact surprising to anyone who is aware of the anemone's ordinarily extreme sensitiveness to contact, and knows how it immediately draws itself together on any attempt to detach it from the ground, and will often let itself be torn to pieces rather than give way."*

The wonderful manner in which the habits of the two creatures have been modified for their joint benefit is plainly evidenced by the following well-ascertained facts. Eisig, a most capable observer, and one of our leading authorities on organic partnerships, has propounded the theory that the bond of union which subsists between the anemone and the crab was evolved through the agency of Natural Selection. That the association of the two organisms is mutually advantageous has been proved by

* Professor A. Weismann, *Evolution Theory*, vol. i., p. 162.

Eisig himself. The benefit derived from the partnership by the polyp is sufficiently obvious, as it thereby secures the advantages of locomotion, it is to some extent protected, and it participates in the hermit-crab's meals. The real difficulty was to discover the benefits conferred upon the crustacean host by the presence of its anemone guests; but a simple observation of Eisig's at the Naples Zoological Station solved the problem completely. Eisig witnessed an encounter between an octopus and its intended prey. The octopus assailed a hermit-crab, and strove to drag it from its shell; and the assault would have proved successful but for the timely intervention of the crustacean's partners. The contest was speedily terminated by the circumstance that no sooner was the attack made than the anemone spread its stinging threads over the arm with which the octupus was striving to secure its victim, when it at once relaxed its hold and hurriedly withdrew. The threads, or *acontia*, of the sea-anemone are well stored with stinging-cells, which evidently cause sufficient smarting to compel a hungry octopus to abandon his crustacean repast. Thus we see that the partnership of the anemone and the crab may be of vital importance to the latter organism. The uneasiness always manifested by the crustacean when deprived of its attendant polyps needs no further explanation; in a state of nature their absence may soon prove fatal to the crab. And it is of interest to observe that the stinging organs of the anemone reach their fullest development in those species which dwell on the shells tenanted by the hermit-crabs, while in some of the solitary anemones these acontia scarcely exist at all.

Remarkable as the foregoing phenomena are, they are quite simple in comparison with another example which Weismann sets forth. In this instance the structural modifications undergone to meet the pressing necessities of life are wonderfully complex. In the Bay of Naples a very common hermit-crab dwells in the sea at a depth of about 100 feet. Its purloined mollusc shell frequently bears a small polyp on its outer side, which forms colonies composed of numerous individuals. These individual polyps have developed several distinct functions. Some are feeding creatures; others attend to the reproductive department; a third kind serve as guardians, inasmuch as they have evolved hard spines, within which the tender polyps withdraw when the waves dash roughly on the colony. These, then, minister to the well-being of the polyp group; but a fourth group of polyps has been developed which takes the form of stinging-threads, but among these mouths and tentacles are entirely absent. These aggressive polyps render no direct service to their own colony; their office is to protect the hermit-crab from the onslaught of their various enemies. From their restricted arrangement on the margin of the shell within which the crab shelters itself, it may be readily realised that they are powerless to protect their own species in moments of danger. From a position just above that from which the limbs of the hermit-crab protrude,

> "these defensive polyps stand in close array, sometimes spirally contracted, sometimes hanging loosely down over the hermit-crab like a fringe. Their function, like that of the acontia of Atinæ [sea-anemones], is to defend the crab when an enemy tries to follow it within the shelter of its domicile. This can be easily demonstrated by drawing out the hermit-crab from the Gasteropod shell and, when the colony has settled down again, seizing the shell with the forceps and drawing it slowly through the water. The water-stream which then flows upon the shell mimics the attack of an enemy, and immediately all the defensive polyps, as at a given signal, strike from above downwards, and repeat this three or four times; they are scaring off the supposed enemy."

As the preceding quotation from Weismann's great work proves, from the partnership between a crustacean and a colony of hydroid polyps has been built up a special set of organs whose sole function is the protection of the crab from injury. Of course, in guard ng their host from dangerous foes, the polyps indirectly benefit themselves, as they always appear to receive their share of his food. The association is, therefore, one of mutual advantage, which has been promoted and perfected in the struggle for existence. It is highly probable that even so involved an instance of animal partnership has been gradually evolved out of what was originally a casual connection. Many polyp colonies attach themselves to empty sea-shells, which merely stand and wait as resting-places for such settlers. Beyond their utility as points of attachment, the shells supply no further advantage. But when polyps established themselves on mollusc shells that were used as houses by moving crustacea, other phenomena naturally arose. Consequently, in the course of ages, the never-ceasing play of the incident forced upon the crab and its colonial guests slowly brought into being the beautiful and harmonious adaptations we have endeavored to describe.

The well-known instance of the association of ants with aphides—those pestilent plant-lice which prove such a plague to the gardener—may also be regarded as symbiotic. Instead of devouring the aphides, the ants wander among them on a rose-bush or other feeding plant, and gently stroke them with their antennæ until they void their excrement, which the ants suck up with infinite relish. Nor does the partnership end here. Various species of these highly intelligent insects carry aphides into their nests, and keep them there in much the same manner as we tend our milking-cows.

A curious organic partnership exists between yellow sea-anemones found on the coral islands of Batavia and small gaily colored fishes. These fishes flourish among the forests of sea-anemones, and while within these sanctuaries the fish are practically immune to the attacks of their various enemies. These phenomena have been carefully observed in the aquarium. When provided with its anemone partners, the fish

> "swims blithely about among the tentacles, and the sea-anemone does not sting it; for there has been a modification on its part as well as on that of the fish. The advantage it gains from the fish is that the latter brings large morsels of food—in the aquarium, pieces of meat—into the anemone's mouth. In doing so it tears away fibres for itself, and, even if the Actinia has swallowed pieces too quickly, the fish pulls them half out of the gullet again, and only relinquishes them to be consumed by its partner when it has satisfied its own appetite."

In the foregoing case, as in the others, the animal union must have been the result of a quite accidental association of the two organisms in the first instance. That the anemone does not now use its stinging organs against its finny partner cannot be held to prove that it did not do so originally. But the originally truculent attitude of the anemone—and all aggressive acts are more or less the outcome of irritability—would become softened and subdued as it gradually associated the presence of the fish with the prospect of a meal. This consideration is strengthened by the researches of Plate, who has discovered several other cases of a similar character among the organisms of the Red Sea. In one of these a little fish lives alongside an anemone, which assails it with its stings; but the fish is apparently immune to these attacks, which it treats with the utmost unconcern. Again, another fish passes its life unharmed in the presence of the powerful poison "secreted by sea-urchins of the genus Diadema from the points of their spines among which those fishes live." These last examples are not true cases of symbiosis, but they powerfully illustrate the processes involved in the evolution of organic partnerships.

A most astonishing instance of symbiosis, in which the two partners are plants and animals, was established by the researches of Belt, Fritz Müller, and Schimper. In the forests of tropical America are candelabra trees, species of the genus Cecropia, so named because their bare branches spread out like candelabra, and produce small groups of leaves at their extreme ends only. These singular leaves are menaced by the formidable leaf-cutting ants, who pile up foliage in their nests, upon the decaying

matter of which fungi—for which these ants have an intense fondness—quickly grow. These ants are so numerous and destructive that they are terrible enemies to the tropical vegetation. Now, the candelabra tree defends itself from these marauders through its amicable relationship with ants of another species that live in its hollow stem and feed on its sap. Placed here and there on the tree's stem are tiny pits, through which the female ant can easily pierce her way into the hollow interior.

T. F. PALMER.

(*To be continued.*)

Science and Theology.

I HAVE always been interested in calling attention to the difference between science and theology: Science limits its activities to the visible; theology is always coquetting with the invisible. There can be no science where there is no light; and there can be no theology *where there is light*. When a mine explodes and we are in the dark as to how the thing happened, we call it an accident. The word accident, or chance, represents not our knowledge but our ignorance. Not knowing the cause of the explosion we invent the word chance to explain it, but as soon as we discover by study and research the cause which blew up the mine then we cease to explain it by calling it an accident. The word God, like the word chance, represents our ignorance. When we do not know who made this or who made that we say, God made it. When we cannot answer a question we say, "God knows," which really means that nobody knows. The words "God" and "chance" are the frontiers or the boundaries of human knowledge. Beyond the line of knowledge lies the unknown, and that is chance, accident—God!

By the help of science the boundary lines are being constantly extended—that is to say, the territory allowed to God and chance is being encroached upon steadily. As our knowledge increases the word chance and God are less frequently used. When everybody was uninformed and there was no science, chance and God were very much more in evidence, but as science extends its empire these symbols of the times of our ignorance slowly slip out of our vocabulary. Once upon a time we could not explain the weather without a reference to the Deity, but now we rarely use his name to account for the weather. Few preachers pray for rain or cold now. Science has explained to us the laws which govern the atmospheric movements.

It is this increasing illumination which alarms the theologian. The progress of knowledge compels him to look for some spot in the universe still dark—some cave, some thick bush, which he may still regard as the dwelling-place of the Unknown. He guards with zeal and jealousy every new darkness until advancing science compels him to seek a newer darkness. In vain he warns science from his latest retreat; in vain he calls it "holy ground"; in vain he invokes anathema, and hurls epithets at science. Slowly but surely the rising sun of knowledge compels him to move again. Science has made a tramp of the theologian. As each dark place becomes lighted up the theologian packs up his effects to move to the next darkness.

—M. M. MANGASARIAN.

Christian Apologetics.

X.—THOMAS COOPER (No. 2).

IN his fourth chapter on "the Verity" of the Gospel miracles our "lecturer on Christianity," Thomas Cooper, reopens the discussion by saying:—

> "It is a remarkable fact that the earliest foes of Christianity did not question the reality of the miracles of Christ. In the second century, Celsus, a physician, wrote a book against Christianity; but we learn from Origen, who replied to his treatise, that Celsus threw no discredit on the fact of Christ's miracles. In the third century, Porphyry, a Platonic philosopher, wrote a book against Christianity; but the fragments of his work, preserved by Eusebius and Jerome, show that he did not deny the reality of Christ's miracles. In the fourth century, the Emperor Julian wrote a book against Christianity: his reasonings are preserved by Cyril; but neither did he call the miracles in question."

This statement is correct; not one of the opponents named did actually question the *performance* of the Gospel miracles. And the reasons for this have been already stated. In the age in which these opponents lived, the working of miracles was believed to be possible either by magic or by the aid of invisible demons. In that age, too, it was impossible to investigate the alleged performance of miracles so many years before. The opponents were not in a position to deny that those wonders had been wrought, as recorded; but all three asserted that they had *not* been worked by the power of God. Our lecturer admits the latter fact; but he says: "If anyone were to tell us that Christ performed His miracles by magic or the agency of demons, in our day, some of us might be inclined to give the reply, Tell that to the Marines." I really cannot see the force of this observation; for no unbeliever "in our day" lives in a period of such dense ignorance and mental darkness as prevailed in the days of the opponents named. Mr. Cooper next turns his attention to a book which, he says, "is deemed by some to be the most complete and triumphant refutation of the truth of Christianity ever published"—which book is entitled *Supernatural Religion*. He says:—

> "The anonymous author of this book maintains that the first followers of Christ undoubtedly shared, with their contemporaries, the prevalent belief in magic, the common slavery to superstition—and that, therefore, their low, ignorant, and grovelling character renders their recital of Christ's miracles unworthy of the regard and belief of people living in this enlightened nineteenth century."

I have no space here to question the partial statement respecting "the most complete and triumphant refutation of the truth of Christianity"; but assuming it to be correct, I reproduce our lecturer's reply to the charge. This is—

> "to remind this anonymous author that the elevated character of the miracles attributed to the Savior, and, still more, Christ's own elevated character, remove these records entirely out of the region of ignorant, low, unreasoning superstition.....If the evangelists were poor, low, credulous, and unreasoning creatures, how is it that they soar above all other writers, in drawing a portrait of such moral perfection, beauty, and dignity, as that of their Master?"

"This difficulty," our lecturer says, "has been so nobly expressed and presented by Prebendary Row," that he quotes two pages of those "nobly expressed" words, and then tacitly assumes that the contention of the author of *Supernatural Religion* has been refuted.

Now, as to the "elevated character" of the miracles attributed to the Savior, all that need be said is—that they are miracles of healing, suggested to the primitive Gospel-maker by the following passage:—

> Isaiah xxxv. 4—6.—"Behold your God will come with vengeance.....he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

This is metaphorical language, indicating the joy of Hebrew captives at returning to Jerusalem (see verse 10), but was understood by the primitive Gospel-makers literally; hence the narration of miracles of healing. It is one of the two passages to which Jesus is represented as appealing in proof of his messiahship (Matt. xi. 4—6); the other, relating to the preaching of the Gospel, is quoted in Luke iv. 16—21. It is almost needless to say that neither of the two passages had the smallest reference to Jesus.

Next, as to the four evangelists being "credulous and unreasoning creatures." In the first place, then, the fact that all four Gospel-writers have repre-

sented Jesus Christ as fulfilling Old Testament "prophecies," which had no reference to him *at all*, proves that they were either very ignorant and unreasoning men, or that they deliberately perpetrated a series of frauds; they *must* have been one or the other.

In the next place, these evangelists all believed—as did the common people—that epilepsy, madness, and many other infirmities were caused by demoniacal possession; and they have represented their Savior as casting out the "evil spirits" and restoring the demoniacs to perfect health. They also describe Jesus as speaking to the demons as real beings, and as giving his disciples "authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out." Moreover, "the unclean spirits" in many cases "fell down before him, and cried saying, Thou art the Son of God" (Mark iii. 11). Knowing, as we do, that this belief of the apostolic age was a delusion shared by all the evangelists, there is not the shadow of a doubt that "their records of Christ's miracles" *are* "unworthy of the regard and belief of people of the enlightened nineteenth century."

If we require further evidence of the unreasoning credulity of the Gospel-writers, we need only turn to their accounts of the following fictions: the angel Gabriel and Mary the virgin, the priest Zachariah and the angel, Joseph the carpenter and his dreams, the Magi and the star, the "heavenly host" singing "peace on earth," the baptism of Jesus with its dove and voice from heaven, the encounter between Jesus and the Devil, the transfiguration of Jesus in the presence of the resurrected Moses and Elijah, the turning of water into wine, the angel at the pool of Bethesda, the raising of Lazarus, besides many other examples. It should further be stated that all the Gospel wonders were simply matters of belief; no evidence has ever been produced for the occurrence of any of them.

I come now to the "elevated character" and "moral perfection, beauty, and dignity" of the Savior, as portrayed in the Gospels. And here I must say that there is no such portrait of Jesus to be found in the Gospels. The alleged "elevation of character" and "moral perfection" are simply assumed or read into the narratives; the Jesus of the Gospels is a very ordinary personage indeed. It would take many pages to go into this subject fully: here I can only find space for a brief reference to a few salient points.

1. The Christian Savior, according to the Gospels, was an unmarried Jew who wandered about the country, for a year or more, without following any trade or occupation, and having no ostensible means of livelihood. He was accompanied by twelve disciples, besides a number of women who "ministered unto him of their substance" (Luke viii. 2, 3; Mark xv. 40, 41). Apart from the last-named contributions towards his support, this Savior and his disciples were dependent for food and lodging upon the few well-to-do people in the places he visited. When, for a short time, he sent his disciples out to preach, he commanded them to take neither money nor changes of raiment with them, and promised to punish the people of every city who did not receive them favorably (Matt. x. 5—15). Where, I ask, does the "elevated character" or the "moral perfection" come in here? Is the doing no work and living on the liberality of others a sign of elevation of character?

2. In all three Synoptics it is recorded that, upon one occasion, the mother and brethren of Jesus desired to speak with him, but could not come near him on account of the press. Did Jesus, when informed of their presence, make his way to the edge of the crowd and welcome them? Certainly not; his character was of far too elevated a nature to permit him to descend to such a commonplace action. Instead of which, he looked round upon the multitude and said: "Who is my mother and my brethren? .....Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark iii. 31—35). Comment upon the "moral perfection" of such a teacher is unnecessary.

3. In Luke ix. 59—62 it is recorded:—

> "And Jesus said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead.....And another said unto him, I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Here the "elevation" of character ascribed to the Savior lacks simple common sense; a more suitable word to describe his action would be "stupidity" or "wrong-headedness."

4. Upon one occasion, when Jesus was asked to dine in the house of a Pharisee, that Savior took advantage of the invitation to inveigh against the Pharisees as a sect, and then launched out in a style peculiarly his own in condemning their alleged shortcomings—"Woe unto you Pharisees," etc. (Luke xi. 37—44). If this kind of conduct towards a host by one treated as an honored guest be a mark of "elevation of character," then no one can deny that the Gospel Jesus possessed it in abundance. The same "moral perfection" is still more beautifully shown in Matt. xxiii.—the whole chapter being one long denunciation of the alleged hypocrisy of the "scribes and Pharisees." In this chapter the "elevated character of the Savior" can be plainly perceived by exalted expressions like the following: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites"—"Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" Christian advocates tell us that the evil doings ascribed to the "scribes and Pharisees" in this chapter were true; but this statement is a slander unsupported by evidence of any kind. As a fair specimen of the Pharisees of the apostolic age we may take the historian Josephus.

5. In two of the Gospels Jesus is represented as saying to men skilled in the interpretation of the Jewish Law:—

> "Woe unto you lawyers! for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. So ye are witnesses and consent unto the works of your fathers. .....Therefore also said the wisdom of God.....the blood of *all the prophets*, which was *shed from the foundation of the world* may be required of *this* generation.....Yea, it *shall* be required of this generation" (Luke xi. 47—51).

This is truly a most edifying example of the "moral perfection" of the Savior, as well as of his high sense of justice.

Here I must pause, though I have not noticed half the passages I had selected as clearly proving the arbitrary, capricious, or irrational character of the Christian Savior, who, furthermore, reposed implicit faith in all the stories recorded in the Old Testament—Jonah and the whale—the Genesis account of creation—Cain and Abel—the Deluge—the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven—Lot's wife a pillar of salt—Moses the author of the Pentateuch, and David of the Psalms—the historicity of the book of Daniel, etc. This Savior, like the evangelists, believed in demoniacal possession, and though he had no knowledge of the cause of *any* disease, essayed to cure every kind by merely speaking the word. He also believed that the god Yahweh fed the ravens, took care of the sparrows, counted the hairs of people's heads, and appointed guardian angels for little children. He taught that it was a blessing to be poor or meek, but a great calamity to be rich; that no rich man could go to heaven unless he gave all his goods to the poor, and left himself penniless; that one should allow oneself to be robbed or plundered rather than resist or prosecute the despoiler; and so on, and so forth.

We are asked to believe that the amazing ignorance, wrong-headedness, and credulity which characterise both the sayings and doings of the Christian Savior, are of such an elevated nature, and exhibit such moral perfection, that no one of the present day can ever hope to equal, much less to surpass.

The rest of Mr. Cooper's book I leave to the next.

ABRACADABRA.

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 Mathias-road, Stoke Newington): Monday, July 27, at 8.30, Business Meeting —Nomination of Chairmen, etc.

OUTDOOR.

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 6, Mr. Davidson, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.30, Mrs. Rosetti, a Lecture. Derby-road, Ponders End (opposite "Two Brewers"): Wednesday, July 29, at 7.30, W. Davidson, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley-road): J. W. Marshall, 11.30, "Who Made God?" 7.30, "The Free Pardon."

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

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

THE SECULAR SOCIETY
(LIMITED)

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office—2 NEWCASTLE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire by ballot) each year, but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

The Society's solicitors are Messrs. Harper and Battcock, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—"I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £—— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy."

Friends of the Society who have remembered it in their wills, or who intend to do so, should formally notify the Secretary of the fact, or send a private intimation to the Chairman, who will (if desired) treat it as strictly confidential. This is not necessary, but it is advisable, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid, and their contents have to be established by competent testimony.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President: G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary: MISS E M. VANCE, 2 Newcastle-st. London, E.C.

Principles and Objects.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalise morality; to promote peace; to dignify labor; to extend material well-being; and to realise the self-government of the people.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

"I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects."

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation.....

Dated this.....*day of*.....*190*.....

This Declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

Immediate Practical Objects.

The Legitimation of Bequests to Secular or other Freethought Societies, for the maintenance and propagation of heterodox opinions on matters of religion, on the same conditions as apply to Christian or Theistic churches or organisations.

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The Disestablishment and Disendowment of the State Churches in England, Scotland, and Wales.

The Abolition of all Religious Teaching and Bible Reading in Schools, or other educational establishments supported by the State.

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The Abrogation of all laws interfering with the free use of Sunday for the purpose of culture and recreation; and the Sunday opening of State and Municipal Museums, Libraries, and Art Galleries.

A Reform of the Marriage Laws, especially to secure equal justice for husband and wife, and a reasonable liberty and facility of divorce.

The Equalisation of the legal status of men and women, so that all rights may be independent of sexual distinctions.

The Protection of children from all forms of violence, and from the greed of those who would make a profit out of their premature labor.

The Abolition of all hereditary distinctions and privileges, fostering a spirit antagonistic to justice and human brotherhood.

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