

THE Freethinker

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*Into the winter's gray delight,
Into the summer's golden dream,
Holy and high and impartial,
Death, the mother of Life,
Mingles all men for ever.*

—W. E. HENLEY.

Freedom of Thought.

PROFESSOR BURY'S little *History of Freedom of Thought* has seriously annoyed the Christian world. His offence has been, apparently, that he not only put in a plea for freedom of thought—he was not content with pointing out in an amiably vague manner how often it has been curtailed or denied—but he plainly indicated that Christianity had been the arch-offender in this direction. Had he been content with placing the Roman Church in the pillory, Protestants would not have complained. Had he even blamed Protestants for what some people foolishly call *unchristian* intolerance—as though any genuine Christianity could be tolerant—he might have been forgiven. But he managed to make it fairly clear that the Christian religion itself was intolerant, that its control of the world meant a set-back to the freedom that existed before it appeared, that there was, indeed, a deeply seated antagonism between the Christian faith in all its forms and freedom of thought. And that was unforgivable. Consequently, as he could not be ignored, he has been denounced. It is still far from common for public men in England to speak out plainly with regard to Christianity, and when one does so, Christians resent it. There is no telling where such an example may end. Other public men may be tempted; and if they all were to say what they think, the outlook for the Churches would be black indeed.

The latest reply to Professor Bury occurs in the July issue of the *British Review*, and is by Mr. J. G. Vance. He says that Professor Bury has written a "preposterous" *History of Freedom of Thought*, and so he sets out to supply a corrective. Minds of an unrefined and misshapen calibre," he tells us, rejoice in sharp contrasts, and in this case it is supplied by placing freedom of thought in one category and Christianity in another. But this, according to Mr. Vance, is quite wrong. He does not face the position that, as a matter of fact, Christianity always has been in opposition to freedom of thought, and so general and so universal a fact certainly calls for some explanation. He thinks you may get to the heart of the matter by settling the question, "What does or what can freedom of thought mean?" And so you might if the question were properly handled. Mr. Vance's plan is to argue that it is a shibboleth in theory, a fiction in actual life. It does not exist, unless one means by it freedom from reason.

Presumably, says Mr. Vance, freedom of thought,—

"is supposed to offer some parallel to freedom of the will, which simply implies that the stimuli presented to the will as motives are not, of themselves, necessarily sufficient to force the will to act. Pursuing the

analogy, we should be led to believe that thought is free in the sense that no stimulus is sufficient to force us to think or to reason in a particular way; that we can pick and choose, think or reason as we will, just as we select the alternative of our preference in free-will acts."

Of course, it is quite natural that one who does believe in such a psychological absurdity as the "will" picking and choosing between motives, and still remaining uninfluenced by all, should credit others with believing that "we" can think and arrive at conclusions without allowing the conditions of our thinking to play a determining part. Still, it is quite wrong. When the Freethinker speaks of freedom of thought, he means freedom of thought, neither more nor less. He does not mean the absence of determining conditions; he does not mean that he can reason and draw conclusions irrespective of the facts presented, or the influence of training, capacity, and environment. He knows quite well that all these things have their share in determining his thinking, and that between them and his conclusions there exists a relation of cause and effect. Mr. Vance writes that "by freedom in inference we mean the breaking away from the fixed laws of reasoning." On the contrary, by freedom in inference the Freethinker means allowing reason to proceed along its natural lines of determination. You cannot escape the laws of reasoning in any case. They would not be "laws" if you could. But you can allow these laws to express themselves in a legitimate or an illegitimate manner.

What, then, is the legitimate meaning of freedom of thought? One might reply by asking another question—What is meant by "freedom" when applied to any natural force? A force in nature may act in freedom, or it may operate under control. In the first case, can we properly say that it operates at random, or, as Mr. Vance says of inference, that it breaks away from the fixed laws of that particular force? Certainly not. By operating in freedom, we mean that it follows the conditions of its own being, and is not coerced, or deflected, by the operation of other forces. In the second instance where a force is not free, we do not mean that the "laws" of that particular force have ceased to operate: that would be a sheer impossibility. But it operates under coercion. It is deflected from the course it would have pursued because another influence has been brought to bear upon it. The result is not a breaking away from "fixed laws," but a product which represents the "laws" of that particular force, *plus* the "laws" of the other force or forces acting upon it.

Now, exactly the same principle holds good of thought. Whether free or unfree, there are always certain fixed laws that are in operation. If I say that I will not walk half a dozen times the length of my garden because I do not care for the exercise, there is an orderly sequence of ideas running through my mind. If I say that I will not do so because my neighbor is leaning over the wall, armed with a revolver, and threatens to shoot me if I come out, there is also an orderly sequence of ideas in my mind. Yet in the one case I should call my decision a "free" one; in the other case everyone would agree that my decision was not free. Consequently, what the Freethinker means by freedom of thought, or its absence, is this: our thought is free when it

is allowed to move from premises to conclusions so determined that it can follow the "laws" of its being. It is not free when the conclusion reached is brought about by outside pressure that is deliberately applied with the intention of inducing bias. It is not the absence of "law," but the absence of coercion, that makes for thought freedom, as it makes for bodily freedom.

If Mr. Vance had considered the subject from this point of view, his article would never have been written, and he would have been saved the trouble of elaborating what should have been obvious to a schoolboy. It is quite true that the "rationalist possesses no privilege or power, no insight or method, no secret mysteries concerning truth or knowledge, which are not known to the Christian." Quite so; and, on the other hand, the Christian possesses no privilege or power, or insight or method, that is not known to the Rationalist. But it is not true that the thought of the Christian is "free" as is that of the Freethinker. His conclusions are determined by facts or considerations that do not belong to the subject before him. His mind is deflected from its true course by the operation of a bias that has been created with the deliberate intention of preventing him seeing the facts in their true light. As Mr. Vance says, the professor of dogma and the lecturer on physics all follow the same laws; but in the one case the laws of reasoning are operating free from restraint, in the other they operate under coercion. Certainly, also, many Christians yield to none in the vigor of their thinking; it is not, however, the vigor of the thinking, but its accuracy, that is of primary importance.

Mr. Vance appeals to history; let me follow suit. What stood in the way of the acceptance of the Copernican astronomy? The facts were there alike for all. Many, however, declined to look at the facts; others who did look failed to perceive their significance. To-day there is no alteration in the facts, and a schoolboy is able to appreciate the reasoning on which the Copernican system is based. Whence the difference in the situation? It lies wholly here. Those who declined to examine the facts did so because their religious training made them afraid to do so. Either they feared they might be led to doubt the teachings of the Church, or the establishment of a bias through religion closed their minds to all processes of proof in other directions. In either case the thought was not free. It still worked under the determination of all incident conditions, but amongst those conditions was the distorting and extraneous one of Church pressure and religious teaching.

At a much later date we have the same principle illustrated in the opposition to the doctrine of Evolution. The essential conditions here were the facts of animal life and the human mind. Any conclusion reached through the interplay of these two factors—whether favorable or unfavorable to Evolution—would have been "free." But between these two essential factors Christianity introduced another, and a non-essential one. It told people that it was wrong to draw certain inferences from the facts presented, because to do so would be to reach a conclusion contrary to religious teaching. And it is the plainest of truths that multitudes of people were prevented fairly facing the facts by the religious bias thus introduced. Under these conditions, the mind operated under the clear influence of bias. It was exactly like a gambler playing with loaded dice. The dice never cease to illustrate the laws of gravity, but their manufacture forces a manifestation of gravity in a special direction.

There lies in the nature of the case, says Mr. Vance, "no reason why a Christian scholar or student should not conduct a thoroughly scientific or dispassionate inquiry into any question of philosophy or natural science." On the contrary, there are dozens of reasons why he should not do so. The average Christian brings to the study of a whole host of problems a mind that is already biased in favor of a conclusion that will be agreeable to his religion.

If he is genuinely orthodox, he is already convinced that his own salvation, and the salvation of others, depends upon certain teachings being accepted as true. And human nature being what it is, there is set up an almost irresistible tendency to ignore things that should not be ignored, and to reject conclusions for no better reason than that they conflict with established prejudices. To conduct a "dispassionate inquiry" on anything that has a direct bearing on his religion, a Christian must overcome the bias of his whole training. He must forget that he is a Christian; and the man who can forget that in theory soon becomes one in fact.

C. COHEN.

Palpable Absurdities.

A BRILLIANT new preacher is said to have suddenly arisen in the Nonconformist world, whose praises are being loudly sung these weeks in the religious press. Mr. Nathaniel Micklem is a distinguished graduate of Oxford, and it is confidently predicted that he "will take his place among the great preachers of England." Great preachers are few and far between; but whenever one appears he has no lack of followers. It is the gifted man, the born speaker, not Jesus Christ, who draws crowds to church or chapel. Mr. Micklem seems to possess all the requisites of a popular pulpiteer. But we are more concerned with his teaching than with his qualifications for gaining the ears of the public; and in order to ascertain what his interpretation of Christianity is we only need to consult a sermon which he recently delivered at Dr. Horton's church, entitled "Grace, Faith, Salvation," and which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for July 22. Having perused this discourse with special care, we are prepared to deal with it from the point of view of criticism. He is described as having a style peculiarly his own, and "a quite distinctive outlook." Indeed, we are informed that "the stars in their courses have fought to give him an early and wide reputation." In our estimation, his distinction lies in the specially heavy emphasis which he lays upon the most irrational and absurd aspects of the Christian Gospel. Founding his address upon St. Paul's words, "By grace have ye been saved through faith," he states that by "grace" is meant "the sheer goodness of God." "Sheer" is a splendid and most audacious adjective, signifying pure, bright, unmixed, absolute, downright, utter, and might very properly have been used by the preacher as an intensive expletive; and we naturally ask, Where does this sheer goodness of God show itself? Taking the existing conditions, as well as the history, of the world into consideration, we are face to face with the inevitable conclusion that, if there be a God, he is utterly devoid either of goodness or of power. If he has "sheer goodness," he must be cursed with sheer impotence. Dare Mr. Micklem aver that even Christendom can be regarded as a credit to a God of "sheer goodness"? It is easy enough to weave pretty parables about the loving Father extending the warmest of welcomes to the returning prodigal; but staring us in the face all the time are the hard, frightful facts of life, which bear absolutely no witness to "the sheer goodness of God." If the Gospel story is true, Mr. Micklem's statement of it sets the facts in the very worst light possible. Here are his words:—

"The grace of God by which, according to St. Paul, we are saved is the sheer goodness of God, and that is of course a very central point for Christian theology—that in the first instance we are not saved by our love to God but by his love to us; not by our striving after him but by his yearning after us; not by the closeness with which we may succeed in clinging to him but because he cleaves to us more closely than a brother. A writer said, 'Oh Love that will not let me go,—that is the grace of God in the New Testament.'"

We frankly admit that the above definition of grace is a legitimate inference from St. Paul's teach-

ing. Many modern preachers declare that God can do nothing in the absence of faith, saying that unbelief is the only sin that damns the soul, and their declaration is fully justified by the Epistle to the Hebrews. "If you are lost," the impenitent sinner is warned, "it is your own fault. The moment you believe in Christ you shall be delivered from all condemnation." But that is not the Pauline Gospel. The verse, part of which Mr. Micklem utilised as his text, reads thus:—

"By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8).

Thus salvation is wholly God's gift. Faith is also a Divine gift. In Eph. vi. 23, St. Paul says: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." It is, indeed, beyond dispute that Mr. Micklem only puts his own emphasis on a purely Pauline doctrine, which emphasis, however, brings into full relief its inherent absurdity.

At this point we drop upon a fatal contradiction in Mr. Micklem's sermon. He seems to forget that he has just assured us that we are not saved by our clinging to God but by his cleaving to us, and proceeds thus:—

"It is only as we give ourselves to God, that God is able to give himself to us, and this life, which I must call a supernatural life, which is the life of salvation, of deliverance from self, can only be given to us as we are willing to receive it, as we make that utter surrender of our own wills to God."

This fundamental contradiction, into which most preachers fall, reveals to us the essential irrationality of the Gospel message. On the one hand, we have infinite, omnipotent love yearning after a lost race, and clinging to it with a closeness unspeakably more tenacious than that of any brother; and on the other, man's finite and weak personality successfully resisting or gladly yielding to the Divine drawing at will. In other words, God's omnipotence has to bow and bend to man's feeble will. Jesus, the Savior of the world, says: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him" (John vi. 44). The loving Heavenly Father, the Sovereign of the Universe, doing "according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth," sadly confesses: "But I can draw no man unless he actively wishes to be drawn." Where and how the Holy Ghost comes in, it is not at all clear; but here are two Divine Beings, brimming over with tender compassion, both willing and able to save the lost, if the lost would only be good enough to allow themselves to be saved. Instead of "the sheer goodness of God," what we have here is the sheerest nonsense talked about, and usually in the name of, a being who never expresses either approval or disapproval, either praise or blame; that is, a being who has never intimated, either directly or indirectly, that he exists.

"God has never spoken, or in any way shown himself," cried the Freethinker. "O yes he has," answered the Christian; "he has spoken to me." "What did he say to you?" "He told me that my sins were all forgiven, and that a fully furnished mansion is waiting for me in the skies." As Mr. Micklem was speaking about God's great personal love and ability to save he said he knew that there were men and women in Dr. Horton's church who were anxious to get up and say in the loudest voice, "I know he can do it; he did it for me." The preacher said that this was a fact that he could not get away from; but we positively object to its being spoken of as a fact. We are convinced that such an assertion is founded on a pure hallucination, just as the experiences of a dream are. We offer no objection to the statement that the sense of being lost, as well as the sense of being saved, is a thing to which we cannot attain in our natural state. It implies a condition of abnormality to which people must be artificially worked up. Religious experiences and exercises represent the extraordinary behavior of abnormal men and women. The so-called spiritual life, which Mr.

Micklem is impelled to characterise as "a supernatural life," is dream-life, a life which depends entirely upon the possession of certain supernatural ideas and beliefs, in the absence of which it is never experienced. We prefer to think of it as *anti-natural*. God, like King Arthur, is a being on whom you can lay hold only by faith. It is impossible to know, you can only imagine, him. Sin is an imaginary transgression of the imaginary laws of this imaginary Deity, and salvation is a purely imaginary deliverance from the consequences of an imaginary offence. Hence, religion is an affair of the emotions when under the dominion of a misguided fancy, and Mr. Micklem cannot prove that it is anything better. Instead of attacking such an impossible task, he chooses to rant about the mighty things Christ has done for our Western civilisation. Well, then, what has Christ done for Europe? *He has converted it into an armed camp.* He has put class against class, party against party, Catholic against Protestant, and Protestant against Catholic. Most of our worries, troubles, misunderstandings, wranglings, and warfare have their origin in religion. If Christ has done anything at all in Europe he must be held directly responsible for all these evils. We have no patience with a man who wildly asserts that "a great number of people in England who say that they owe nothing to Christ, that they can get on without him, have been saved by Christ already," or "that in a degree he has already saved those who deny his name." Does the reverend gentleman number Atheists among the ransomed of the Lord? Are Rationalists heirs to an immortality in the reality of which they do not believe? Does Christ manufacture blasphemers against his own cause whom his avowed disciples take pleasure in casting into prisons and variously tormenting? Does not Mr. Micklem realise how perfectly idiotic such a claim really is?

After all, this "born preacher, with a style of his own and a quite distinctive outlook," belongs to the same general school as all his brethren, a fact abundantly illustrated by the following statement: "There is all the difference in the world between a gentleman and a Christian." That is the finest sentence ever composed, and the truest. We will commit it to memory and repeat it daily. A gentleman is not a Christian, neither is a Christian a gentleman: there is all the difference in the world between the two. Gentlemen, whom Christ has already saved, are not in consequence Christians, and though saved by Christ himself are not saved "in the Christian sense." Verily Christ is an extraordinary Savior. Gentlemen are "members of the highest civilisation," and possess "a spiritual philosophy, a high morality, kindly hearts, and elegant manners." And Christians are not gentlemen: there is all the difference in the world between the two types. We prefer gentlemen, but *minus* "a spiritual philosophy."

J. T. LLOYD.

"The Ultimate Goal."

IT is the habit of many modern thinkers to base systems of philosophic idealism upon effective catch-phrases which will not bear even the slightest investigation. I have chosen for my title one of the most prevalent of these catch-phrases—"The Ultimate Goal." The necessity for such a phrase springs, I imagine, from what Mr. Chesterton has termed "fear of the present," for it is obvious that an "ultimate goal" is part and parcel of a problematical future of which we can know nothing, and panders to our modern dislike of facing the uncomfortable truths with which we are in immediate contact.

Where, either in the realm of philosophy, sociology, science, or theology, is to be found an adequate, definite, final, and satisfactory conception of "the ultimate goal"? Does not science with philosophy deny the possibility of such a concept? Has not theology become reactionary by reiterating to the contrary?

What universal truth has been evolved from the agonies of the human mind throughout the ages? Something certain and beyond dispute. What has modern philosophy, modern science, and modern theology to offer the seeker after truth to-day that is thus substantially and self-evidently divine? What particular or unique truth has our civilisation evolved that is of indisputable value to us in our search for "the ultimate goal"? The philosopher, the scientist, and the theologian is, to-day, basing his conception of human existence upon the generally accepted theory of evolution. But, apart from the fact that evolution explains nothing in an ultimate sense, is there anything satisfactory about the theory of evolution? Assuredly not; for we have learned that evolution involves devolution—retrogression as well as progress. Further, we have learned that these two lines—the upward and the downward—are infinite; so that man, whose existence in time is finite (as far as we know) cannot possibly discover, with any certainty, exactly where he is. A man who cannot ascertain exactly where he is cannot be in a favorable position to determine exactly where he desires to go.

Evolution may be a true conception of the working method of life: devolution also—but upon which track, the upward or downward, are we moving? and what is "the ultimate goal"?

"The ultimate goal" of the idealist is the complete happiness of all mankind. The idealist will therefore ask himself, "Is the world nearer the complete happiness of all mankind to-day than it was fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, or ten years ago?" He will believe, quite consistently, that if evolution be the true theory, and, furthermore, if a noble and altruistic idealism is a part of the purpose of evolution, mankind must be nearer the idealist's hope to-day than it was last week. But, in order to answer this question satisfactorily—that is, in order to justify his attitude towards life—the idealist must decide exactly what he means by "the complete happiness of all mankind." He must define "happiness." What constituted man's "happiness" in the past? What constitutes man's "happiness" in the present? He may, of course, generalise about "happiness." He may maintain, for example, that a large number of people feel completely happy in a picture palace while watching an old gentleman being pushed into a tub of whitewash. But ask these individuals, as they filter out, whether they were "completely happy," and you will instantly be mistaken for a lunatic. These people are not "happy" in an idealistic sense; they are merely complacent spectators, acquiescing in life as they find it, and indulging in no abstract problems as to "the ultimate goal" at all. Whether they are evolving or devolving, or whether they are static (which M. Bergson will not allow you to believe), it is impossible for you to decide. In any case, they themselves are neutral to the problem. Their "ultimate goal" is inconceived and inconceivable; they are dimly conscious human atoms manifested in eternity—existing and competing with each other for the material means of subsistence. You may, with the aid of a powerful imagination, endow them with a conscious spirituality which they do not possess; you may see them as a million of divine creations, spoiled by the superficial life-values which their civilisation has forced upon them; false values which can have no intelligent connection with what you feel to be the mystic reality which quickens them; the reality which is the cause of their being. You may raise their limitations into the greatness of the infinite which admits of no limitations; the infinity which absolves finite things by absorbing and annihilating them; but in the present moment, and in terms of the individual, you must remain dumb—"The Ultimate Goal!"

What has been "the ultimate goal" of the Church? Based upon the teaching of Christ, its "ultimate goal" would have been "life." It would have endeavored to bring life more abundantly. What has the Church accomplished in this direc-

tion? Can a thing which brings life more abundantly perish itself of impotence and sterility? If ever a human institution had an "ultimate goal," assuredly it was the Church. Every individual was travelling direct either to absolute eternal happiness or to absolute eternal unhappiness. But where have these two intellectual abstractions landed humanity? Is life more abundant? Can it be possible that the obstinate conservatism of the human race is a subconscious protest against the futility of progress? Glance back into the written history of the human race, and you must acknowledge that in relation to the average life of man, as an individual, the whole "process of evolution" has failed. It has not justified itself in the eyes of those idealists which it has produced. What might conceivably have been progress in the infinity of time which preceded Christ was, in reality, no progress at all. Christ came condemning the process of evolution which had produced him. And whether this view be entirely pessimistic or not, there can be no refutation of its foundation in truth, for the *known* past can, with some certainty, be compared with the known present; and, moreover, in an ultimate sense, for every idealist conceives an "ultimate goal" which can never be "ultimate," nor even contemporary with his desire. The idealist with his "ultimate goal" mocks divinely at a process which has produced his dream, and, at the same time, made it impossible of universal realisation.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

The Origin of Supernatural Ideas.—II.

(Continued from p. 466.)

"Man judges of the unseen by the seen, and his natural curiosity compels him, when he feels certain sensations the sources of which are hidden from him, to seek for some cause to which they may be referred,—one, it may be, which he has already seen associated with like effects, but if not, one which he considers to be sufficient to produce them."—WAKE, *Chapters on Man* (1868), p. 27.

"To say mystery is to say fear. Man, like the animals, fears the unknown, even though a kind of fascination draw him towards the object of his terror, that he may learn to give himself some account of it. This two-fold feeling unquestionably lies at the root of religion; and, in this connection, the Latin poet might well say that fear was the first creator of the gods: 'Primus in orbe deos fecit timor.'"—COUNT GOBLET D'ALVIELLA, *Origin and Growth of the Conception of God* (1891), p. 68.

"Fear of inanimate nature is the foundation of superstition, and the heroic efforts of a few to overthrow it have led the world into the path of science."—LESTER WARD, *Dynamic Sociology*, vol. i., p. 687.

"Almighty Fear the Fiend—God."—SHELLEY, *Revolt of Islam*.

"Terror-generated piety."—WINWOOD READE, *Martyrdom of Man*, p. 432.

How did man acquire the ideas of the supernatural which we find so widely spread to-day? Were they revealed to mankind by some God, from some far-away heaven in the depths of space? Or did some crafty priests invent these ideas, in order to control mankind, and hold them in bondage to the terrors of the unknown?

Science dismisses both explanations. Science knows nothing of any God or heaven; and has no need of the hypothesis of fraud, or craft, to explain the origin of these ideas. Science shows that the ideas of the supernatural had as natural an origin as arithmetic or music.

Jesus Christ, in the Gospels, said that we should judge a tree by its fruit. If we judge the supernatural by this standard, and if these ideas of the supernatural were revealed by a spiritual being, or beings, then we maintain that this spiritual being, or beings, are cruel, malignant, and bloodthirsty monsters, who, instead of deserving our adoration and gratitude, should receive our maledictions and curses.

As man has evolved from the animal world—and still bears the marks of his parentage in his body and mind—it is reasonable to expect to find the

germs of all his qualities—moral, intellectual, and religious—in the animal world to which he belongs; and there are no lack of facts to support this idea. Carl Vogt says:—

"The germ at least of a belief in some mysterious higher power exists also in animals. The dog is evidently afraid of spectres, quite as much as the Breton or the Basque; every out-of-the-way phenomenon not explained to it by its nose renders even the most courageous dog a coward. I knew a grove which the peasants firmly believe to be haunted by a fiery spectre, and prove it by the alleged fact that dogs which have passed the night in it will not re-enter it. It is in the fear of the apparently supernatural which is the germ of religious ideas; and this fear is developed in a high degree in our domestic animals, the dog and the horse. The germ of these ideas, as well as of others allied with it, being by man developed into a system, becomes a faith. Mathematics has just as much claim, as this belief in the supernatural, to be considered an exclusive, fundamental quality of man. No animal knows mathematics, geometry; but there are animals which can count, though only up to a few ciphers, and this is the germ of the whole edifice which man has erected, and by means of which he has measured the celestial spaces. In the same way, the animal has no faith, but it fears something unknown—the fear of God—from which man has developed his religion."*

As Professor Chantepie de la Saussaye rightly observes, "The relations between a master and his dog are religious; and many other animals must certainly regard the mysterious and often hostile strength of man as a god-like power."†

Charles Darwin noted this sense of the mysterious in animals, by the behavior of his own dog, when lying on the lawn one hot day:—

"At a little distance a slight breeze occasionally moved an open parasol, which would have been wholly disregarded by the dog had anyone stood near it. As it was, every time the parasol slightly moved, the dog growled fiercely and barked. He must, I think, have reasoned to himself in a rapid and unconscious manner, that movement without any apparent cause indicated the presence of some strange living agent, and that no stranger had a right to be on his territory."‡

Professor Romanes was led to make several experiments by reading this instance given by Darwin. His dog, a remarkably intelligent Skye terrier, sometimes amused himself with dry bones, by tossing them in the air, or to a distance, to give them the appearance of life, so he could enjoy worrying them. One day, Romanes tied a long, fine thread to a bone and gave it to the dog to play with. After he had tossed it about a short time, and it had fallen to a distance, the dog following after it, Romanes gently drew it away by means of the invisible thread:—

"Instantly his whole demeanor changed. The bone which he had previously pretended to be alive now began to look as if it were really alive, and his astonishment knew no bounds. He first approached it with nervous caution, as Mr. Spencer describes (in the case of a dog hurt by a cane with which he was playing); but as the slow receding motion continued, and he became quite certain that the movement could not be accounted for by any residuum of force which he had communicated, his astonishment developed into dread, and he ran to conceal himself under some article of furniture, there to behold at a distance the 'uncanny' spectacle of a dry bone coming to life. Now, in this and in all my other experiments I have no doubt that the behavior of the terrier arose from his *sense of the mysterious*, for he was of a highly pugnacious disposition, and never hesitated to fight any animal of any size or ferocity; but apparent symptoms of spontaneity in an inanimate object which he knew so well, gave rise to feelings of awe and horror, which quite enervated him."

And concludes that the dog "must have felt the same oppressive and alarming sense of the mysterious which uncultured persons feel under similar circumstances."§

Still more apposite is another case which the same writer also relates, as follows:—

"I had a setter dog which was greatly afraid of thunder. One day a number of apples were being shot upon the wooden floor of an apple-room, and, as each bag of apples was shot, it produced through the rest of the house a noise resembling that of distant thunder. My dog became terror stricken at the sound; but as soon as I brought him to the apple-room, and showed him the true *cause* of the noise, he became again buoyant and cheerful as usual."*

Here we see fear of the unknown giving way to ease and satisfaction when a natural explanation of the cause has been arrived at.

Thompson tells us that "A dog chasing a raven fled with astonishment as the bird faced it and uttered the words it had been taught."† As Letourneau has remarked:—

"If we could read the brain of the superior animals, we should undoubtedly find there a rudimentary mythology. Many mammalia, dogs for instance, have, like man, dreams and hallucinations; they can connect certain facts with their real or imaginary causes. We do not want more evidence than this to arrive at the puerile conceptions of primitive mythology. There is no essential difference in a mental point of view between the African negro who worships the crocodile, and who will probably eat him afterwards, and the dog fawning at the foot of his master and licking the hand that has beaten him."‡

What difference is there between the horse who shies at a white object in the hedge, at night, and the rustic who takes the same object to be a bogle or a ghost? Lindsay observes:—

"Bartlett speaks of a sense of mystery or mysterious dread in certain animals, inmates of the London Zoological Gardens. In many animals, in short, under certain circumstances, awe or dread of the unseen, unknown, untried, unheard, readily gives birth not only to a feeling of mystery, but, as is pointed out in another chapter, to genuine *delusion*."§

And he further remarks that "Thunder occasionally causes panic in menagerie animals" (vol. ii., p. 189).

As Professor Leuba well remarks:—

"A dog will beg from a man; he will not beg from a ham suspended out of his reach. Towards animals and men, animal behavior is similar to that of men when dealing with invisible anthropopathic beings..... The feelings and emotions which appear in a dog's intercourse with his master are of the same species, if not of the same variety, as those felt by a man when he deals with his fellow-men and with superhuman beings."||

And he points out that the most significant difference between men and animals is not to be found in the manner in which they interpret certain striking natural phenomena, but in the inability of animals to *fix* the interpretation they have arrived at, by communicating it, by means of signs or language to their kind. He observes:—

"Without the advantage conferred by speech, upon even the lowest savages, to hold, clarify, keep alive, and bring to fruition impressions of this evanescent nature, I do not see how a stable belief in animism could have been established. The decisive rôle played by language appears forcibly when one considers the part it takes in introducing dream experiences into waking life. The baffling evanescence of dreams caught sight of on awakening is familiar to everyone. Unless one succeeds in putting them in linguistic form, they are soon completely lost; verbal expression makes them part and parcel of our mental possessions. The mental differences between man and the higher animals to which the presence of Magic and Religion is to be referred, are not in themselves startling, however considerable their consequences may have been. Psychological analysis leaves absolutely no standing ground to those who insist upon interpreting the advent of Religion as the manifestation of essentially new kinds of powers, of the birth of a 'spiritual life,' for instance. We hope to have made clear that the use of this term

* Carl Vogt, *Lectures on Man*, p. 229.

† Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, p. 14.

‡ Darwin, *Descent of Man* (1881), p. 59.

§ Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Animals*, p. 157.

* Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Man*, p. 59.

† Thompson, *Passions of Animals*, p. 124.

‡ Letourneau, *Sociology*, p. 275.

§ Lindsay, *Mind in Animals*, vol. i., p. 223.

|| J. H. Leuba, *The Psychological Origin of Religion*, pp. 17-18.

in this connection constitutes a misrepresentation of the facts."*

Religion is not a divinely bestowed gift from heaven, but has developed naturally from very low beginnings. Animals, says Lindsay, suffer from "spectral delusions," and he cites Fleming, who writes of a rabid dog:—

"It appeared as if haunted by some horrid phantom. At times it would seem to be watching the movements of something on the floor, and would dart suddenly forth and bite at the vacant air as if pursuing something against which it had an enmity. In another case the dog would throw itself against the wall yelling furiously, as if there were a noise on the other side."†

Romanes gives a similar case, described by Pierquin, of an ape who suffered a sunstroke, "and afterwards used to become terror-struck by delusions of some kind; she used to snap at imaginary objects, and acted as if she had been watching and catching at insects on the wing."‡

Lindsay also points out that animals dream; for instance, the dog sometimes moves his paws and tail, sniffs and growls, during the progress of his dream; and dreams have played an important part in the origin of religion. And so have delusions, for that matter.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

King George's reason for calling eight men together, with the Speaker of the House of Commons as chairman, to discuss the Irish question with a view to finding a practical settlement that all parties might agree upon, is not a matter for investigation in the *Freethinker*. But, unless the last clause of his speech on receiving them at Buckingham Palace, was sheer blarney, he could hardly have been very hopeful of the result. These were his Majesty's words:—

"Your responsibilities are, indeed, great. The time is short. You will, I know, employ it to the fullest advantage and be patient, earnest, and conciliatory, in view of the magnitude of the interests at stake. I pray that God in His infinite wisdom may guide your deliberations so that they may result in the joy of peace and honorable settlement."

Any well practised journalist could make mincemeat of these sentences in five minutes. It is presumable, therefore, that they are his Majesty's own composition. And from that point of view they are invested with a certain pathos.

His Majesty may believe in Prayer and Providence as available agencies in human affairs, even when they are in the critical stage where Home Rule stands, but in that case why call in God to help man when you are really calling in men to help God? If prayer could settle the matter the King might stop at home and do the business himself—unless "God" is hard of hearing just now, so that it takes eight men (including the Royal Commission) or nine men (including the Chairman) or ten men (including the King) to make an adequate impression on the divine tympanum. It might be objected that the Deity's answer to the King's prayer on behalf of the nation, or the nation's prayer on behalf of itself, might be difficult to ascertain. But the objection is not insuperable. The Archbishop of Canterbury could keep the key of a holy ballot-box, which could be opened in the presence of trustworthy witnesses, and the Lord's vote would decide the question at issue. It would save a lot of time and trouble in the House of Commons. "Aye's" and "No's" would not have to tramp through the lobbies and be counted by tellers. They could all sit still and "wait upon the Lord." Or, for that matter, there need be no parliament at all. The whole thing could be worked mechanically like a Buddhist prayer-wheel.

"God's" wisdom would have to be more than infinite (the Hibernicism may be pardoned on the Irish question) to guide the deliberations of eight politicians of at least four different parties. Ingersoll well said that some people expected the Deity to do sheer impossibilities. "I heard a man this very day," he said, "ask God to give Congress wisdom." A mental wink of this kind must have passed

between those nine men when the King came, as it were, to the "Let us pray."

By the way, did King George forget that a professional, well-paid supplicator had asked "God's" blessing on the Home Rule Bill discussions every day it had "come up" in the House of Commons? Did his Majesty think that a more private prayer might be more efficacious?

Tennyson's praise of "honest doubt" in "In Memoriam" was excusable. That was a long time ago and Christians not only believed then, but took it for granted, like the rising and the setting of the sun, that whoever differed from them *must* be wicked. It was a step forward, in its way, when Tennyson sang:—

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

But that a Bishop should go about nowadays presenting this sentimentalism as if it were quite a recent discovery, proclaims him a fool of the first water. "Ninny" is the only word applicable to such a person. Plain "ninny" without any adjective whatever. And who will be surprised to learn that this "ninny" is the Bishop of London? It is doubtful if any other Bishop is capable of such flatulent imbecility.

"Honest doubt," if we may vary the metaphor, was a useful stepping-stone. But here is the Bishop of London sitting upon it sixty years afterwards—and with his face still toward the past. Everybody with even a tincture of psychology knows by this time that there is no "honest doubt" because there is no "dishonest doubt." Doubt is doubt. And there is an end of it. Doubt is a purely intellectual process and will not bear a moral adjective. Yet the Bishop of London actually goes about telling his fellow Churchmen that allowance must be made for doubters as some of them are honest, when, as far as they are doubters, they are *all* honest. We repeat that there cannot be a dishonest doubter. But there may be a foolish Bishop. That's certain. "Bishop" bears *any* adjective—rogue as easily as fool.

What unfathomable nonsense theological authors do write about religion. In their case is abundantly illustrated the unspeakable harm that has accrued from subordinating the reason to the vague faculty of intuition. The Rev. J. Cobu has just published a five shilling book, entitled *Vital Problems of Religion*, the main themes of which are the spirituality of Nature, the freedom of personality, and the element of will, progress, and aspiration in the processes of the Universe. Now, all these are pure assumptions insusceptible of verification. Nature presents herself to us as anything but spiritual, and it can be demonstrated that personality is subject to the unbreakable law of causation, while progress and aspiration are relative terms, of which Nature as a whole knows nothing. We know that Mr. Cobu rejects the dogmas of the Catholic Church, but he introduces peculiar dogmas of his own, and to us the latter are quite as unacceptable and irrational as the former.

Rev. John Birch-Reynardson, of Canley Rectory, Lincs, left £177,796. His housekeeper was in the will for £150 a year, his butler £200 a year, and his cook to £150. Fancy! What would Jesus (or Judas) have thought of those figures? The possession of the hundreds, let alone the thousands, would have made them feel like millionaires.

The Rev. Dinsdale Young, President of the Wesleyan Conference, stated, in his address from the chair at Leeds, that "while there was much to cause them deep concern, there was also much to hearten them, especially in the fact that the masses of the people were not averse to the great message of the Christian evangel when it was intelligently and sympathetically interpreted to them." Is not Mr. Young fully aware that the "masses of the people" never hear that "great message"? It has lost all interest for them because they do not regard it as true. Mr. Young is fortunate enough to have a crowded church; but all the people who attend places of worship form but a handful in comparison with the population. The truth is that in Great Britain, as well as on the Continent, Christianity is perceptibly dying, and its officials are losing caste.

Mr. Young is an orthodox theologian, and he was certainly right and "carried the Conference with him when he declared that a non-theological Church was a non-intelligent Church, and soon became a mere ethical establishment, a purveyor of entertainments, or, worst of all, a political caucus." The President is thoroughly consistent in

* Leuba, *The Psychological Origin of Religion*, pp. 37-38.

† Lindsay, *Mind in Animals*, vol. ii., p. 104.

‡ Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Animals*, p. 150.

his rigid adherence to the dogmatic positions so ably defended by his fathers. The Bible, we know, is entirely discredited, and theology undoubtedly doomed; but a Christian minister, who decries theology and criticises the Bible, sails under false colors, and is despicable in the extreme. That such hypocrites are possible proves that Christianity is far gone in consumption.

Miss Vance advises us that our "old opponent, the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale, is dead." We had but one public debate with him more than thirty years ago, and he always avoided another. He rested his reputation on a faked report of that debate, which we always repudiated. He used to advertise it as "The Great Debate." It was nothing like a verbatim report, and it contained about three times as much of his speeches as of our own. At the same time, according to his own assertions, he won a victory in "The Great Debate" over a thoroughly incompetent adversary. For some years Mr. Woffendale lived retired from the pulpit, and presumably on a pension. Speak no ill of the dead, the proverb says. Well, we will not. We merely say that he was a typical Christian Evidence speaker. Those who know what that is will understand. Those who do not would want more explanation than we have time to give now.

Commenting on the discussion going on between Bishop Gore, Dr. Sanday, Dr. Strong, and others, as to whether the New Testament story of the Ascension is to be accepted as a fact or not, the *Christian World* quotes the following from the late "J. B." as giving a common-sense view of miracles:—

"Belief in them was easy because it coincided with a certain phase, not then outgrown, of the human development. Every religion, every history of the early world, produced them, and for the reason that it was the nature of the mind, at its then stage, to produce them. They grew in this soil as naturally as wheat grows to-day in a Midland shire. But a stage was reached when the production ceased. And that not because the outside world had changed. *The change was in mind and thoughts.*"

We fully endorse this; it is, indeed, only what we have been saying ourselves over and over again for many years. All the same, it is a very dangerous argument for a Christian to use. It deposes all supernatural occurrences from the realm of objective fact to that of subjective delusion. The outside world is to-day what it always was. That is, the outside world always was as it is to-day. People no more walked on the water, held intercourse with the Devil, miraculously increased the supply of food, turned water into wine, or rose from the dead, than they do these things to-day. That is, they never occurred. If we could resurrect a crowd of Judæan peasants, and place them in the centre of London to-day, we could have all the old miracles over to-day. If you could have filled Judæa with a modern population two thousand years ago, the Christian religion would never have been heard of. That is the logic of the *Christian World's* sane view of the situation.

Great Thoughts is a professedly pious paper. No doubt its beliefs are absolutely right, but it might cultivate carefulness in other respects. Last week it quoted Tom Hood as singing: "It is not women you're wearing out, but human creatures' lives." This is a huge joke. Hood, of course, wrote *linen*. It was precisely *women* that the sweaters of those poor shirtmakers were wearing out.

The last of the prophets, Old Moore, has issued his forecasts for 1915, and, apparently, the next year is to be a stock-size one, for the prophecies are very humdrum, the most exciting features being an influenza outbreak, strikes, accidents, and the customary rows in Russia. One thing we are thankful for, our penny prophet is far sanner than "St. John" with his "Revelation."

The *Times* is always bright and up-to-date. In the last issue of the Literary Supplement, two columns are devoted to "The Religion of Cicero." Perhaps the editor considered the old boy's theological views better than much of the religious hogwash of the day.

Five people were struck by lightning at a Sunday-school treat at Lyminge, near Hythe, Kent. If that had been a Secularists' Excursion there would have been a moral—quite a long one.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton has been protesting in characteristic fashion against the proposal to cut children's hair, and he says "All institutions should be judged and damned by whether they have fitted the normal flesh and spirit." This

is a hard saying, for Mr. Chesterton's Church upholds celibacy for men and women, and every priest has a flies' skating rink on his head.

Men of God are proverbially false prophets. How many times have they fixed the exact day and hour on which the world would surely come to an end! Very vividly some of us remember the awful dread we experienced on the day appointed by Dr. Cumming, the famous Scottish divine, for the final catastrophe, and how thankful we felt next morning that it hadn't come off, though vaguely believing that, if it had, it would have meant our translation to the Glory Land. By the time Prophet Baxter, of the *Christian Herald* fame, appeared on the scene, and repeatedly fixed dates for the collapse of the Universe, we had become so hardened that we paid no heed whatever to his false predictions. The curious thing about Baxter was that he was neither humiliated nor daunted by the continuous falsification of his own prophecies. No sooner was one date discredited than he as confidently appointed another. Many, alas, believed in him as long as he lived, but no one does so now. The old world has a wonderful knack of thoroughly exposing all false prophets. Time puts everybody in his right place.

And yet false prophets still flourish, and are brazen-faced as ever. On January 29, 1913, the *North Mail* reported an address delivered the previous evening at Newcastle-on-Tyne by the Rev. J. B. Meyer, in the course of which this loquacious man of God said:—

"There is going to be a great revival in England. I know it is coming before many months are gone, and our nets will be so full of fish that they will burst."

That was a year and five months ago, and the great revival still delays its coming. There is no sign of its advent, though the President of the Wesleyan Conference says that it is of all things the one of which the Churches stand in greatest need.

The Mundesley Conference, founded and presided over by Dr. Campbell Morgan, is a theological orgy indulged in once a year. It furnishes a splendid opportunity for certain men of God and their followers to go an annual religious spree; and they go on it with a vengeance. Every day for a week or more is filled to overflowing with lectures, sermons, prayers, hymns, and when the evening arrives the majority of the people are emotionally so elevated that they scarcely know who or where they are. And how vile the stuff is that they imbibe, and how pernicious its effect upon them. The ostensible object of the Conference is to deepen the spiritual life of all who attend it, and to strengthen their loyalty to Jesus Christ, with the result that most of them lose whatever sense of justice and fairplay they may once have had. One of the commonest notes sounded at all such gatherings is, that Jesus came in the very nick of time, when the world was rapidly lapsing into utter chaos and ruin, and that immediately he began to lay the foundations of a new and nobler order than that which was passing away. As all impartial students of history well know, that contention is utterly false, and no one can advance it without deliberately and culpably ignoring facts that cannot honestly be set aside.

At the last meeting, just concluded, of the Mundesley Conference, the Rev. W. Souper, M.A., Presbyterian minister at Clapham, delivered a lecture on "Christ and the Scriptures in the Life and Thought of To-day," in which occurred the following wild assertion, namely, that from Christ's time there had been progress, marked by three features, a new ethic, a new standard, and a new life. This is a hoary-headed old lie which has been nailed to the counter a thousand times; but it is repeated to-day as unblushingly as ever, and we are determined, every time we meet it, to confront it with the truth. The truth, in brief, is that for many centuries after Christ became supreme in the Roman Empire, there was no progress at all, but a steady and lamentable intellectual and moral retrogression. If we compare the Pagan emperors with their Christian successors, we shall find that, whilst out of thirty of the former only eight or nine were bad, the overwhelming majority of the latter were cruel, corrupt, and unprincipled. Christians bid us think of Nero, with his silly vanity and unmentionable vices and crimes; but we reply that Nero had his redeeming qualities, to which our opponents seldom, if ever, allude. Among his good points mark this, that he appointed a judge to listen to the complaints of slaves, and to punish masters found guilty of ill-treating them. In return, we invite Christians to bear in mind that Constantine, the first Christian emperor, was directly responsible for the murder of a brother-in-law, a nephew, a son, and a wife; that Constantine marched to the throne knee-deep in the blood of uncles and cousins; that Valentinian I.

kept two bears near his chamber, and amused himself by having them fed with human flesh, and that he got rid of his wife in order to marry a beautiful woman; that Valentinian III. murdered Aetius with his friends, and ravished the wife of Maximus. But why continue a tale to which there is no end, and which Mr. Souper may find told by believing as well as by unbelieving historians? Is he not aware that popes and emperors alike were ambitious and tyrannical, loving wealth and power more than everything else? Has he forgotten that Baronius, Dean Milman, Gibbon, Lecky, and many others, pronounce the tenth Christian century the lowest and most degraded period in all history? As a matter of plain fact, Christ introduced no new ethic, no new standard, and no new life. What came into the world in his name was intolerance, persecution, insane exclusiveness, the glorification of eternity at the expense of the crucifixion of time, the enthronement of an imaginary God at the cost of depreciating real Man; and from this reversion of the order of Nature we are suffering to this day.

A wealthy trinity have been staying at the Carlton Hotel, comprising citizens Vanderbilt, Wanamaker, and Gould, of the U.S.A., and their wealth is said to total £25,000,000. That beats the famous firm of Jehovah, Son, and Co., the managing director of which was sold for thirty shillings and afterwards "hanged."

A silver "apostle spoon" was sold recently at Christie's salerooms for £70. If it had been used by the Ever-Blessed Wielder of the Jack-Plane at the Last Supper, it could hardly have fetched more money. But, maybe, he used his sacred fingers.

A discussion in the press concerning the employment of dogs, as on the continent, reminds us of a delightful story of Sidney Smith, to whom it was suggested that Landseer, the great animal artist, should paint his portrait. The witty parson quoted Scripture in his reply, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?"

"People of Two Worlds" is a startling title to an article in a daily paper. Another false alarm! Not a word about a post-mortem existence, only an American's view of Eastern Europeans.

The Buckingham Territorials have taken to singing on route marches, and the *Daily Chronicle* reminds us that "The Watch on the Rhine" was warbled during the Franco-German War. That does not exhaust the list, for the sacred strains of "Come Where the Booze is Cheaper" have been heard in English lanes.

In a review of a book, *Florence Nightingale to Her Nurses*, the *Times* Literary Supplement says "the Agnostic nurse may be as good as the religious nurse, but she is not likely to be better; and she is not unlikely to be the least bit too business-like." The curious thing is that Florence Nightingale herself was heterodox—and there's the rub!

"In the past there was no hatred so intense as that of beauty scorned. But in our day there is a wilder and more savage enemy than any woman. It is the hatred of money when it is attacked." So says the *Daily Sketch*. Freethinkers know this only too well, for they are always attacking people who earn thousands of pounds for teaching lies.

Sir Horace Plunkett, one of the most distinguished of present-day Irishmen, in announcing his conversion to Home Rule, gives many reasons for the change. Amongst them he notes the fallacy of the old idea that Home Rule would mean Rome Rule. His view of this matter is very much like our own:—

"Such cases of intolerance as are cited are usually found—if true—to have a social or political and not a religious basis. Considering both the example of other countries and the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, I anticipate that under Home Rule the people will retain their faith and the Catholic Church all its legitimate influence. But Catholic laymen throughout Ireland will be led by their new political duties to draw distinctions between the ecclesiastical and political spheres which they do not at present recognise. They will thus gradually relieve the priesthood of a class of responsibilities from which all the more judicious priests will be very glad to escape."

The last sentence may sound somewhat ironical, but with that exception we regard Sir Horace Plunkett's opinion on this point as practically unassailable. Ireland, under Home Rule, would be a new Ireland. The patriotic sentiment would cease to be allied to the Catholic sentiment. They

would often be opposed to each other, as they have been in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium. And history shows that the patriotic sentiment always triumphs eventually. Protestantism won where the secular power was with it. The same may be said of Catholicism; and the division effected at the time of the Reformation has never been seriously disturbed since.

The *Church Times* asserts that "Mediæval nations never forgot that the Catholic religion was extra-national and universal." Of course they never forgot it, because they had been forced to believe it at the point of the sword, and knew that, if they denied it, or acted as if they did not believe it, they would be persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and, possibly, put to death. The dogma of the universality of Christianity has been the supreme curse of the West, and would become, if Christians had their way, the supreme curse of the East. One comfort that we have is that Christianity is less universal in Europe to-day than it has been since the doleful days of Theodosius the Great.

A Sunday Defence Council for London is to be formed, apparently with the Bishop of London at its head. Defending the Sunday means preventing other people from making any other use of the day than the Bishop and his ecclesiastical friends please. The cheek of these people! It is evident from his lordship's preparatory speech that he would shut all the Sunday Picture Shows in London if he could. He is mistaken, though, if he fancies that closing them would fill the Church Syndicate Shows. Totally different publics are involved.

Fifty-three children were killed or injured in a tramway smash at Westport, Conn., U.S.A., the little ones being members of a Sunday-school excursion. Providence is as hard-hearted as in the good old Gospel days of the "slaughter of the innocents."

"A Crop of New Fiction" is a title used in a literary paper. For the dog-days, too! Isn't there enough fiction in "God's Holy Word" to fill the vacancy during August?

Mr. Bart Kennedy, writing in *T. P.'s Weekly*, says "the Golden Rule is at present but the most pious of pious opinions." Just so! And, like most pious things, it is hypocritical, for it is always the people who boast of loving their enemies who libel their neighbors—especially if the latter are Freethinkers.

Mr. G. H. Mair, in his recent book on *English Literature*, complains of the lack of appreciation of poetry, and asks who was the favorite after Edward Fitzgerald. "Not Swinburne certainly—partly because of a suspicion held of his moral and religious tenets." What pitfall is this? There was little, if any, difference between the theological opinions of either of these two great poets.

According to that delightful family periodical, the *Daily Telegraph*, polygamy "was, indeed, long recognised, more or less overtly, by the Christian Church." This may partially explain why the clergy run after the petticoats to-day.

"Joseph Chamberlain in America" runs a headline in a leading paper. Dear, dear! Another illusion gone. We thought that Unitarians went to the same post-mortem retreat as Freethinkers.

"Mrs. O'Rooney," said the Reverend Father McMurphy, "why do I never see Patrick at church now?" Mrs. O'Rooney shook her head sadly. "Is it anarchism?" "Worse than that, your reverence." "Is it atheism?" "Worse, your reverence." "What is it, then?" "Rheumatism."

Country Rector: "My boy, it is a sad thing your father never comes to church. I am afraid he doesn't fear God."

Boy: "Yes, he does, sir. He always takes his gun with him."

"Father," began the prodigal son, as he knelt at his parent's feet, "are you going to kill the calf?" "I ought to," the father replied, "but you are such a fool I'll forgive you this time."

Missionary: "And how did you like my predecessor, King Totem?" King Totem: "He was very nice—very nice, though just a little stringy."

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1914.—Previously acknowledged, £179 17s. 6d. Received since:—H. C., 5s.

WALTER STEWART.—There is no "serious blunder" about it. Matthew Arnold did call history "that Mississippi of falsehood." We cannot accept "many years ago" as an adequate reference to its having been quoted otherwise in the *Freethinker*.

W. MARSHALL.—We don't profess to give all, or anything like all, the Christian clergy who leave more money than is implied in "Blessed be ye poor." Thanks for your reference to one we had not noticed.

ROBERT BROWN.—Calling Protestants good citizens and Catholics lazy scoundrels is a short and easy way with Home Rule. The real truth is that the religion of either side is a pure accident—the result of birth and early training. You seem to think it all right for Protestants to govern Catholics, but all wrong for Catholics to govern Protestants. "A plague on both your houses!" After all, what was it we said? Simply this. We declined to discuss Home Rule as a political policy in these pages. We denied that Home Rule meant Rome Rule, and argued that those who opposed it on that ground were mistaken. A reply to this must consist of something more than mere abuse of Irish Catholics—as, for instance, that they "do nothing but lean against a wall and spit in the Liffey." Surely it is time that such vulgar bigotry were dead and buried—on both sides.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings. Will write you on the other matter.

G. H.—See paragraph. Thanks.

WALTER DAVIDSON.—Your lively letter has had to be summarised. We admire your courage and pertinacity and wish you all success.

JOHN RATCLIFF.—Your order is passed over to our shop manager and will be attended to.

H. C.—Sorry to hear of your losses. Hope to hear a better report soon.

C. MITCHELL (New Zealand).—Pleased to hear you found Mr. Scott Bennett so good a lecturer with so good an audience. Your report will be a good introduction if he pays the old country a visit. We note your statement that he paid us "a very graceful compliment." We are not so prudently modest as to pretend that such things are not agreeable.

JULIUS ALLMANN.—We can't trouble Mr. Cohen with your letter while he is holidaying. Besides, your question is an ancient one. And the answer is simple,—we were going to say obvious. Every living thing is wasted and repaired along the lines of its own nature. Your big toe keeps your big toe just as your brain keeps your brain. And you keep yourself just as London (say) keeps herself. But the change in both cases is gradual, and the organised old matter impresses its character upon the organised new matter as it enters into the general body. You are yourself, and London is London; but the London of to-day is not the London of twenty years ago, neither are you the Julius Allmann of twenty years ago. You think so, but you are mistaken; as you would find if you had our experience of comparing present memory with the written memory of years ago. Perhaps it is not memory at all, as a mental fact, which puzzles you. But memory is not a human mystery; it runs through all nature; it begins in form and develops in consciousness. And how does consciousness begin? Of this question, like all others, we know the *how* but not the *why*? There may be no why. Nature may require no explanation. We require it. And, as Shelley said, Human pride is skilful to invent most serious names to hide its ignorance.

FREDERIC WALSH.—Thanks for the *Saturday Review* article on Mr. Salt's revised *Life of James Thomson*. It is rather slapdash work, but it will help to draw attention to the worthy biography of a poet who will always need such advertisement, being "caviare to the general" by reason of his merits as well as his defects. By the way, Thomson's two "Sunday" poems are not biographical; they are poetry of observation, not experience. We had it from his own lips.

W. FRENCH.—The Middlesex County Council could not legally issue a seven days' licence for picture shows or any other public entertainment. Its action, therefore, against Sunday entertainments is also illegal. We hope the matter will be taken to the High Court. The "Sunday, Christmas Day, and Good Friday" humbugs, on the Bench as well as off, would certainly be taught a lesson.

R. OGILVIE.—We hope the Freethought meetings in Jail-square, Glasgow, will be properly supported. Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's little book, *Penalties Upon Opinion*, will supply you with what you require.

C. HELLER.—Robert Moreland has not, to our knowledge, written any such book as you suggest.

R. POPPER.—We don't think you have the least idea of the cost of a daily paper. "Saladin" has been dead some years. We spoke at his funeral.

T. RENNOLLS.—We don't understand it, and our readers would probably be no luckier.

L. M. HORSACK.—If reading one copy of the *Freethinker* makes you a more earnest Christian, you should buy a copy and read it weekly.

CLARA GUNNING.—You state that Mr. E. Baker, a Christian Evidence lecturer, was charged with using insulting language in

Hyde Park, but you don't state the result. Surely the magistrate didn't fine a Christian,—did he?

H. BRITTEN.—See paragraph. Thanks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote contemplates the resumption of lecturing in October, beginning in London and afterwards visiting Glasgow, Birmingham, etc.

Mr. Heaford's articles on the Balkan Atrocities have attracted attention abroad—as we see by an editorial reference in *L'Echo de Bulgarie*. We understand that they are to be translated officially and inserted in the principal journals of Sofia.

We have just received a welcome letter from Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, who is privately our very good friend, and publicly lecturer to the Independent Religious Society (Rationalist), Chicago, as well as the author of some well-known books, including a Secular Catechism which has found its way (often by translations) all over the civilised world. We are very sorry to hear that Mr. Mangasarian, who congratulates us on our own recovery from serious illness, has been himself sick and had a sick son to nurse. ("Sick" is good Bible (that is, Tudor) English; it was taken over to America and has been kept there ever since.) We hope his health is thoroughly restored. He is looking forward to the possibility of meeting us in England this summer. It cannot be a greater pleasure to him than it will be to us.

The last number of the *Examiner* (Christchurch, New Zealand) to hand seems to imply that Mr. W. Collins is recovering from his bad breakdown, but the information on this point is neither extensive nor precise. Apparently travelling to regain health, Mr. Collins could not officiate at the funeral of an old friend and supporter, whose death is referred to in the *Examiner* as follows:—

"It is with very great regret that we record the death of another stalwart Rationalist—Mr. B. Burland, of Amberley, whose funeral took place at Linwood Cemetery on Monday, April the 13th last. For more than twenty years Mr. Burland had been connected with the New Zealand Rationalist Association, and was esteemed by its members for his consistency to Rational principles, as well as for his genial personality. By dint of hard work Mr. Burland had built up a substantial business at Amberley, but the cares of business in no wise diminished his enthusiasm for the Freethought with which he had in early manhood become associated as a member of the National Secular Society, England. He held Mr. Bradlaugh in reverence, and regarded Mr. Foote with high admiration as his worthy successor."

It is pleasant to find that Mr. Foote is held in worthy remembrance by Freethinkers at the antipodes.

Mr. W. H. Thresh replies to our reference to himself, though we can hardly see what *he* has to reply to. We said nothing against *him*, as he admits; quite the contrary. We objected to his being described as "a new speaker." We cannot see it is Mr. Thresh's right or duty to explain or defend other people.

The Edmonton Branch is starting a new N. S. S. Branch at Ponders End. The "End" is all right; it is pretty well the "End" of everything in the way of civilisation. But there is very little "pondering" about the place. The first Secular meeting seems to have had a stunning effect on the local orthodoxy; the second roused them up a bit; the third brought out the usual meekness of Christians who find

themselves "insulted" by opposition. The Secularists managed to take good care of themselves, and the disturbance was confined to "language" until the meeting was closing. Then the followers of the meek and lowly one "came on like an avalanche." Mr. Walter Davidson says, "the platform rose and fell like some trophy of battle, and straw hats were strewn on the ground like Highland bonnets at Culloden." One girl member of the Branch was brutally attacked by a male Christian and thrown to the ground, but Mr. Davidson rejoices that the said male Christian was immediately "crumpled up with one under the jaw." Mr. Davidson laughs at those who say that "the battle is over"—meaning that Christianity is *dead* if not *gone*. It may be so where they live, but not at Ponders End, and many other places; and if they want a job it can be found them, with plenty of work to do. Mr. Davidson's address is 131 Warwick-road, Edmonton. The Ponders End meetings are held on Wednesday evenings.

Rev. Dr. Linton Smith, vicar of St. Nicholas' Church, Blundellsands, has been preaching a series of sermons on "The Fools of the Old Testament." Another series on "The Rogues of the Old Testament" would be a desirable addendum. Meanwhile we may note the reverend gentleman's statement that "Many Agnostics and Atheists put Christians to shame by the exemplary lives they lead." Confession is said to be good for the soul. An improvement may be looked for, therefore, in the Christian character of that neighborhood. We quote from the *Crosby and Waterloo Herald*.

Mr. B. T. Hall, treasurer of the Ramsey Testimonial Fund, Club Union Buildings, Clerkenwell-road, E.C., sends us a Third List of Subscriptions since the Two Lists published in the *Freethinker* of June 7 and June 21. He says that any difficulty has arisen through our "accepting notification of amounts from other sources than" himself. This is precisely what we have not done. Lists sent to us, inserted or not inserted, have all been in the same handwriting, and ostensibly from Mr. Hall. We hope it will be straight sailing now. Mr. Hall informs us, and we are glad to learn it, that the total amount of the Fund to date (July 22) is £52 6s. 6d.

We take the following from the *Advertiser's Weekly* :—

"That the *Freethinker* notes that in a religious contemporary the advertisements include notices to the ruptured, toothless, paralytic, baldheaded, half-blind, flat-footed, and the cancerous and dyspeptic."

"That the lively little agnostic journal adds: 'We always thought Christians were on the down grade; we are sure of it now.'"

Now we shan't be long.

Opposition was offered to the prosecution of Mr. Frank Kennedy, a native of West Africa, for using "improper language" in a Freethought lecture at Clapham Common on Sunday afternoon, June 28. No doubt the language was not in the best of taste, but bad taste is not yet a crime; although it seems to be made one for the occasion when displayed by a Freethinker in the presence of a Christian—especially when a Christian gentleman with very acute "feelings" sits upon the Bench. Mr. Drummond, the magistrate at the South-Western Police-court, kept on saying that England was a free country; you may think what you like, but you must be careful what you say. If an expoliceman is listening and hears what would shock everybody at the little Bethel he attends, and your "improper" language is brought up before a Christian magistrate with still more sensitive ears, you might just as well have no freedom at all. Your adversaries decide your guilt. Mr. Kennedy was fined £5, which is the maximum fine under the Act, and 2s. costs. The amount was paid by his friends, who took up his case, and who consulted Mr. Foote as to the line of defence. Mr. Foote recommended that the solicitor for the defence should press for a prosecution for "blasphemy" rather than "improper language," for the language could not be considered improper, and would never be prosecuted as such, except in relation to religion. But it appears that London magistrates have been warned against this pitfall since the Boulter case. It will be remembered that Mr. Asquith was emphatic about no "blasphemy" prosecutions being conducted by the Government through the Treasury lately. Mr. Drummond wouldn't be caught by the "blasphemy" bait. He insisted on proceeding on the summons before him. And his sentence on Mr. Kennedy was perfectly vindictive. The Christian magistrate gave the Freethought speaker all the punishment he could, even though a first offender, for a crime which is really no crime at all. What happens is this. The upper dog makes it a crime on the

part of the under dog to bark. That is the "blasphemy," the "improper language," and all the rest of it, under these hypocritical acts and proceedings.

Mr. Le Maine, Mr. Saphin, Mr. Beale, Mr. Kennedy, and other speakers are "holding the fort" at Clapham Common on Sunday afternoons and evenings. Their policy is to repeat the words complained of, and challenge the Christians to continue playing the part of persecutors. There will be little use in this, however, if the Christians prefer to lie low; or if they cannot be driven into the common honesty of prosecuting "blasphemers" for "blasphemy." "Improper language" is the meanest of charges. It is worthy of savages who are also cowards.

The following letter from one of our readers is worth publishing :—

"Wadesmill, Ware, Herts, 28th July, 1914.

"Dear Sir,—Mr. Pawle, the prospective Liberal candidate for East Herts, is holding open-air meetings in the villages of the constituency, and at one of the meetings held last evening at the village of Wadesmill, I asked him what his attitude was regarding the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. He replied that he had not gone into the question, and did not think it an important one. I pointed out to him that this old law ought to be taken from the Statute Book, as it placed a barrier in the way of freedom of speech. He then said some people might think it was a matter of importance, but that he believed there was also a law still in existence which made it a crime, punishable by imprisonment, not to go to church. He felt sure that nobody wanted to say anything which would grate on the ears of other people.

"I thought this might be of some interest to you.—Yours sincerely, H. Y. BRITTON."

This "Liberal" gentleman thinks it a matter of "no importance" that men could once be burnt, and can now be imprisoned like common thieves, for "blasphemy"—that is, annoying their orthodox religious opponents. We don't know whether he thinks it of any importance that Jesus Christ was arrested for "blasphemy" and would have been stoned to death for it if the Roman authority had not interfered. Nothing seems to be of any importance to Mr. Pawle unless it affects him personally. Perhaps the truth is that the wrongs of men who are not numerous enough to decide the representation of East Herts at the next election are not worth troubling about at present. He has not "gone into the question," but Mr. Asquith has, and has also promised to give all the aid he can to a Bill for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Law. Pawle is one thing—Asquith is another; as might be expected.

EXORCISM.

The belief that the air is peopled by a variety of beings called angels, or demons, is very naturally associated with the idea that these essences can enter into the body of a human being, and produce therein a series of strange phenomena. When a man, previously quiet, and differing in no appreciable manner from other mortals, suddenly takes to preaching, prophesying, starving himself, and scolding other people, it is very natural for him to assume, and for other people to believe, that he is in reality divinely possessed; nor can the modern physician wonder at this, for his experience of insanity shows that many of its victims see visions of the Almighty, and hear utterances from his lips, which have no real existence. Such men have a profound belief that they are in reality that which their diseased brain leads them to suppose. Again, when either man or woman is affected with mania, and rages more like a wild beast than a human being, tearing into shreds every article of clothing which he or she possesses, not abstaining even from murdering others, injuring himself or herself, or yelling out day and night the most horrible blasphemies or obscenities, it is equally natural that the idea should prevail that the victim is possessed by an evil spirit. The former have been canonised as saints, the latter have been subjected to the most ingenious system of religious exorcism.—Dr. Thomas Inman.

It is astonishing how a conception of original sin or total depravity, which transforms God from an object of adoration and affection into a hideous and detestable being, could at any time, however barbarous, have been found acceptable, or how the casuistries by which people strive to modify its hardness could ever have been listened to with common patience.—Strauss.

Christian Apologetics.

XI.—THOMAS COOPER (NO. 3).

IN his fifth chapter on the "verity" of the Gospel miracles the great "lecturer on Christianity," Thomas Cooper, refers to the "Old English Freethinkers, as they are called," amongst whom are mentioned Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Thomas Hobbs, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Charles Blount, Toland, Anthony Collins, Thomas Woolston, Dr. Matthew Tindal, Dr. Morgan, and others, "many of whose books are now forgotten." To these he adds: the historian Gibbon, Dr. Middleton, Lord Bolingbroke, and David Hume. The "numerous and persevering attacks of these Freethinkers," he says, called forth a long list of replies from "Christian Ministers and Christian scholars," the most notable of whom he names and comments on. "These able and laborious men," he adds, "did not write in vain: English society lost its avowed sceptical tendency under the influence of their efforts." In his sixth chapter our "lecturer on Christianity" comes to Hume's *Essay on Miracles*, which, he says, "is held by sceptics to be the heaviest and most fatal blow ever dealt against Miracles by the hand of unbelief." He then quotes the following extract from that Essay:—

"A miracle is a violation of the laws of Nature and, as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. For, as there is no such uniform experience of the truth of human testimony, as there is of the uniformity of the laws of Nature, the one experience must always be stronger than the other; and no testimony therefore, can ever render a miracle probable."

This reasoning, as it stands, is unanswerable; but Hume, to illustrate his meaning, added:—

"Why is it more than probable that all men must die; that lead cannot of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be that these events are found agreeable to the laws of Nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or, in other words, a miracle to prevent them?"

There can thus be no mistaking what Hume meant by "experience"; but our lecturer pounces upon this word, and proceeds to found an argument upon it. He says:—

"The boasted 'argument' of Hume, as sceptics call it, is really no argument at all. Experience teaches us! But *what* experience? A miracle was contrary to David Hume's experience. But his experience was confined to what he saw, felt, touched, and so on. His experience was confined to his own life.....He had no experience of what occurred before he was born..... Yet he learned a good deal of what occurred before he was born. How? By human testimony. Past history to David Hume was what it is to us all—not experience, but testimony.....and so he failed, with all his acuteness, to see that his 'argument' was no argument at all."

This is Hume's argument blown to atoms, and all that remains is to gather up some of the fragments. A miracle, we are told, was only contrary to Hume's limited experience during the short period of his own life. His statements that all men must die, that lead cannot remain suspended in the air, that fire consumes, etc., were matters of testimony, not experience—or if the latter, only of his own experience. This is simply apologetic quibbling. The term "experience" may, of course, include *testimony*; but thousands of undoubted facts are believed and known, and are acted upon, without any special testimony. By "experience" is meant the ascertained results derived from repeated trials or experiments, by long-continued use or practice, or by a lifelong series of observations, made or carried out by the cleverest and most enlightened men of all nations, both of the present day and of preceding generations. A pupil coming to a public school has given to him, let us say, a text-book of Geography, containing facts connected with all parts of the earth;

an Atlas, giving the names and positions of thousands of places on the globe; and text-books of Ancient and Modern History, recording the principal events of the past. Are these to be thrown aside as untrustworthy because the scholar had never gone outside his own country, and had not lived in past ages? Are the eclipses, yearly predicted in our Almanacs, to be accepted as correct only by the few who are able to work out the astronomical calculations by which the results were reached? Are the facts stated in works on Physiology to be believed only by those who have themselves dissected the human body? In these and other matters—Geology, Sound, Light, Heat, physical phenomena, etc.—we do not depend on the testimony of any single individual; we act on the accumulated knowledge of the present day, derived in a large measure from past ages—in other words, on "experience."

As an example of "testimony," we find it stated in 2 Kings vi. 5 that the prophet Elisha caused an iron axe-head, which had fallen into the river Jordan, to rise to the surface and swim like a cork. Now, if we had the sworn testimony of an historical Elisha, and of all who are said to have been present, to the actual occurrence of this miracle, it would be far more probable that the prophet and his friends were mistaken, or even that they lied, than that the law of gravitation was violated. For men—even religious men, including clergymen—have been convicted of lying and deceit; but we have not one authenticated case of iron, or of any other substance whose specific gravity is greater than water, being found to swim. The explanation in the case of Elisha is that the story was fabricated after his time.

In commencing his seventh chapter our lecturer represents a sceptic among his imaginary audience as saying:—

"You seem to have forgotten, all along, that the Bible ascribes miracles to the Devil, as well as to God. Do you not perceive that this renders all you have said in defence of the verity of Christ's miracles utterly worthless?"

To this question Mr. Cooper replies that he was not surprised to find that the author of *Supernatural Religion* had "put this forth as one of his earliest and strongest arguments"; and then he quotes several paragraphs from that work, which conclude with the following:—

"Even if the reality of the Miracles could be substantiated, their value as evidence for the divine revelation is destroyed by the necessary admission that Miracles are not limited to one source; but that there are miracles Satanic which are to be disbelieved, as well as divine and evidential."

This "bold language," our lecturer says, he read "with sorrow, but without surprise," and he then refers to the reasonings on this subject of "the great Samuel Clarke," of Bishop Fleetwood, and of "other great divines." The "reasoner," however, whose "thinkings" seemed to him most sound was Hugh Farmer, who wrote "a little more than a hundred years" before his own time. Farmer's *Dissertation on Miracles* our lecturer considered far sounder than one written by Archbishop Trench, of his own day. According to Cooper and Farmer, "Miracles are the peculiar works of God.....Whether God works the miracles Himself alone, or whether He enables and commissions others to work them, there is equally a divine interposition." These two great thinkers flatly deny that miracles are represented in the Bible as wrought by the power of Satan. Says Mr. Cooper:—

"In the compass of 260 pages of rich scholarship and clear reasoning, Farmer disposes of all sorts of objections of a minor description, and then comes to the three crucial cases—The Magicians of Egypt, the Witch of Endor, and our Lord's Temptation in the wilderness."

How Farmer "disposed" of these is not stated; but Cooper disposes of two out of the three at once. "We will reserve," he says, "all discussion respecting Christ's temptation until we get farther on." Of the Witch of Endor he says: "She was an impostor, and therefore was affrighted when she saw Samuel,

who miraculously appeared to Saul—not by her power, but by God's own appointment."

The consideration of the Magicians of Egypt forms the subject of the eighth chapter, in which Mr. Cooper professes to look "fully and fairly at the scripture history of the Plagues of Egypt, and of the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage." It is almost needless to say that both these events are assumed to be historical. As to the Bible statement that the Magicians of Egypt, in the first two plagues, "did so with their enchantments," our lecturer asserts that this means that they "did so with their juggleries"; for, he says, "they were not assisted by Satanic power: all they did was to play the part of low, paltry dissemblers and jugglers." And in proof of this assertion he quotes the following extract from Sharpe's *History of Egypt* :—

"The magicians of Egypt, when they opposed Moses before Pharaoh, attempted to work whatever miracles he worked, and in some cases with apparent success. And at the present day their successors are still performing the same curious trick. The Egyptian juggler takes up in his hand the Naja, a small viper, and pressing a finger upon the nape of its neck, puts it into a catalepsy, which makes it motionless and stiff, like a rod; and when it regains its power of motion, the bystanders fancy that the magician's rod has been changed into a serpent."

Just so; and now we know how Moses and Aaron did the trick—or were supposed to have done it. For, assuming Sharpe's story to be true, no one can deny that Moses and Aaron, who had lived at least forty years in Egypt, would be able to do the trick quite as cleverly as Pharaoh's magicians. In concluding this portion of his "verity," Mr. Cooper says: "We have considered earnestly, and I trust conclusively, the unfoundedness of the aspersion that the Bible ascribes miracles to Satan as well as to God"—which statement, he assumes, ought to settle the matter. But in this he is mistaken. We have first to take into consideration passages like the following :—

Job ii. 6, 7.—"The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; only spare his life. So Satan went forth.....and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."

Rev. xii. 9.—"And the great Dragon was cast down, the old Serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world."

Rev. xii. 15.—"the Serpent cast out of his mouth water as a river after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream."

Rev. xiii. 4, 13.—"And they worshiped the Dragon which gave power unto the beast.....And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh the fire come down from heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. And he deceived them.....by the miracles which he had power to do."

Rev. xvi. 14—"for they are spirits of demons working miracles," etc.

2 Thess. ii. 9.—"he whose coming is according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders," etc.

2 Cor. xi. 14.—"for even Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."

Acts xvi. 16—18.—"a certain maid having a spirit of divination.....Paul said to the spirit, I charge theeto come out of her."

Matt. xxiv. 24—"There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

Luke xiii. 11, 16—"a woman which had a spirit of infirmity.....bowed together, and could in no way lift herself up.....whom Satan hath bound.....to these eighteen years."

Matt. ix. 32, 33.—"a dumb man possessed with a demon. And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spake."

From the foregoing, and many other passages, there can be no doubt that Satan and his army are represented as working miracles. In the last two examples the evil spirit within the woman had the power to keep her in a crouched position; in the second case the demon, by the exercise of his power, was able to prevent the man speaking: in each case the casting out of the "unclean spirit" restored the possessed persons to their normal condition. It should also be

stated that the Greek word *semeion*, translated "sign" in some of the foregoing passages, is used in describing miracles of Jesus in the Gospels (e.g., Luke xxiii. 8; John iv. 54; x. 41).

What, now, are we to say of "the unfoundedness of the aspersion that the Bible ascribes miracles to Satan as well as to God"? The passages here adduced were, of course, among those which Hugh Farmer "disposed of" in his 260 pages of "rich scholarship and clear reasoning." One paper more, and I have done with Thomas Cooper.

ABRACADABRA.

Bible Makers.—I.

EMERSON says that "the sacred books of each nation express for each the supreme result of their experience." This is undoubtedly true. By reference to the sacred writings of a people we can, to a very large extent, form a correct estimate of their intellectual and moral advancement. A Bible, in fact, should be the result of the joint labors of the best scientist, moralist, historian, poet, dramatist, and novelist of the time in which it is written.

Not that these eminent personages should collaborate to produce a book, as dramatic authors do, nowadays, a play—one supplying the plot, another the dialogue, and, in some instances, a third being called in to compose some music for a song or two for the low comedy artist to display the versatility of his talent, and in some degree to relieve the heavy character of the play; but each writer supplying, independent of the other, essays on those subjects with which he feels himself most conversant, sometimes venturing an opinion on matters upon which his knowledge is of the scantiest kind.

Moses, or whoever the author of the Pentateuch may have been, belonged to that class of versatile writers sometimes to be found on the staff of our daily journals, who feel themselves competent to write on all subjects in heaven above and earth beneath; who can, with ease, polish off an article to refute Darwin, turn Mill's logic inside out, expose its many weaknesses, and, as a light diversion, pulverise the arguments in the latest speech of Mr. Lloyd George into the most minute particles of rubbish it is possible to conceive, and with one whiff of journalistic wisdom scatter all that remains to the four winds of heaven. Accordingly, we find Moses figuring first as a scientist, then as an historian, then as a biographer; next, after bringing the children of Egypt safely through the Red Sea, as a poet; and lastly, as a great moral teacher.

Of course, it would be unreasonable to expect Moses to write ahead of the times in which he lived, whatever they were, unless, like the theologian, we credit him with being divinely inspired—a claim which, as far as I can judge, he never put forward on his own behalf.

When Moses, on his own responsibility, made Jahveh create the earth in six days, throw into the infinite expanse the sun, moon, and stars, and finally make man and woman after his own image, he merely reflected the current beliefs of the best informed persons of his time. Had he done more than this he would not have succeeded in pleasing the people for whom he wrote, and to be a successful man even in one's own day is no small task; it is indeed to gain a position after which many strive very ardently, but which few manage to attain. To be successful through the ages, to win the admiration of the people as they increase in wisdom and goodness, is given only to a few men of rare genius, whose works shed imperishable lustre upon the nation in which they are born, only that it may spread through various sources to all the peoples of the earth.

"Sufficient for the day is the success thereof" is the motto of most men of the world. A popular dramatist of my acquaintance, upon being spoken to by a friend, some time ago, upon the unending

character of his work, and asked why he did not consider the judgment posterity would pronounce upon it, caustically replied: "What do I care for posterity? Posterity does not pay me." And Moses and others among the Biblical writers regarded posterity with the same air of supercilious disregard, having seemingly much more care for the certain popularity of the hour than the enduring regard of subsequent generations. Not alone in his unscientific disquisitions did Moses show that he did not possess an idea above the common prevailing sentiments of the Jewish people, but he told them to act towards slaves and blasphemers in precisely the way we may fairly suppose they would have chosen to act when left to be guided by their own uncultivated feelings and judgment. He told them to buy slaves "of the heathen round about them," and to brutally ill-treat them if it pleased them so to do. He commanded them not to "suffer a witch to live" and to barbarously stone blasphemers to death.

Mahomet, in establishing a new religion, many years later, was equally careful in the Koran (chapter entitled "The Cow") to warn his followers of the fate of unbelievers, who, he said, would not believe, whether they were admonished or not.

In his poetical efforts Moses was singularly tame; he sang not the song of love or labor, but of strife and warfare; it lacked the true poetic ring. But if his poetry was bad, his history was worse. When he records the doings of the Israelites, even though he himself is Commander-in-chief, priest, and deliverer, he writes a comedy of errors which at last degenerates into the broadest of farce. His tragic seriousness is drily and unconsciously humorous; so much so that I can fancy the late Mr. Compton causing shouts of merriment over the solemn delivery of Moses' inimitably grotesque account of the plagues.

Even when he is describing such a sad and shameful occurrence as the Flood—a God-wrought crime unparalleled in the world for its vindictiveness and cruelty—he gives Noah the stupendous task of collecting all the animals prior to packing them as "close as herrings" in the ark, and the tragedy is unnecessarily delayed while this unspeakably comic business is enacted.

As to Moses' biographical sketches, they are sadly wanting in many important respects. He does not give us a particle of information concerning the earlier life of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, though we should be much better able to estimate their qualities if we knew how they were trained, who were their instructors and companions, and what were the social conditions by which they were surrounded. He gives us an account of such unimportant affairs as the quarrels of Abraham's and Lot's servants, of Jacob's dream, and the angel's acrobatic performances on the ladder; but of the career of the magnanimous Esau he supplies us only with the faintest possible outline.

As a writer of unconsciously grotesque and amusing narrative, Moses was, perhaps, the equal of any of the Biblical writers. Nothing can surpass in this respect the story of Balaam's visit to Balak on the talkative donkey, except, perhaps, the account of his own death and burial. But, taken altogether, in spite of its many imperfections of style and its ludicrous stories, its tales of vice and crime and bloodshed, the Pentateuch is exceedingly interesting reading, especially to the Freethinker, who, regarding the silly notion of Divine inspiration, is better able to estimate its true value as indicating the moral and intellectual advancement of a people who, though they plume themselves on being "the chosen people of God," have been the most unfortunate among the races of men.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Little Clarence: "Pa!" Mr. Callipers: "Eh!" Little Clarence: "Pa, does a woman preacher kiss the bride or the groom after marrying 'em?"

A MIRACLE DEFINED.

There's Mick M'Brierty, he has bothered the life out of ould Priest M'Guire for an explanation of how a miracle can be wrought; and he couldn't have come to a better hand, for it's his raverence that has got the larning, the logic, the metaphysics, the faith, and a big share of the practice that's necessary to distinguish between what's natural and what's supernatural. And, in troth, it's no child's play a clargyman has when he begins to chop up logic to a boy with a head on him like a hatter's block, and that doesn't know a B from a bull's fut; it's just another case of dropping your pearls in the pig market. But his raverence took a good, old-fashioned homely way of explaining to Mick; for you know there's a deal of people in the world whose feelings are more to be depended on than their judgments. So his raverence told Mick to stand up and step to the door, and, as he moved off, he gave him a tight lifter with the toe of his boot, asking him at the same time if he felt that! Mick turned round, with a lip on him like a motherless foal, and said, "Begorra! I rather think I do." "Well," said his raverence, "it would have been a miracle if you hadn't." So Mick's faith is confirmed, but he says he'll study no more at the seat of larning.

The squire's son had just been ordained, and on the following Sunday he was to take the morning service in his native village. He was a young man, and very nervous; however, he did his best, and returned to the vestry, having accomplished the service to his own satisfaction. "I think I got through the service without a mistake, John," he remarked to the old clerk, who was helping him off with his surplice. "It was first rate, Master Dick," said the old man, with enthusiasm; "I don't know as I ever heard it better done." After a pause he added: "But the old parson, he never gives us the evening service of a morning!"

One fine Sunday morning a tourist arrived at a kirk in Argyleshire, intending to enter for the English service as soon as the Gaelic was over. "Is the Gaelic service over?" he inquired of the beadle. "No; but it will not be very long." So the tourist strolled on into the churchyard, where the tombstones lay deep in the long grass. By-and-bye he was recalled by the shouts of the beadle, who stood at the door waving to him. "But is the Gaelic service over?" he asked once more. "Oh, ay! it will be over." "But I have not seen the congregation; which way did it go?" The beadle directed his attention to a solitary figure slowly wending his way up the hill, and said, "That's him."

A sky-pilot, seeing a carpenter at work, who boasted of his skill, said, "Do you think you could make me a devil?" "Why, yes," said the man. "Put up your foot; you want the least alteration of any man I ever saw."

Rev. Dr. Primrose: "This is the first time I've seen you in church in over a year, Sambo. I'm glad you have reformed this blessed Thanksgiving season."

Sambo: "Yis, sah, I'se feel thankful to de Lord that he didn't let dat spring-gun go off las' night."

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CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 6, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "Christianity, the Slave, and the Worker."

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Edmonton Green): 7.30, a Lecture. Derby-road, Ponders End (opposite "Two Brewers"): Wednesday, August 5, at 7.30, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley road): 11.30, Mr. Hope, "What is Religion?" 7.30, R. Miller, "Charles Bradlaugh's Fight in the House of Commons."

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

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