

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN ■ ■ EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

VOL. XLII.—No. 16

SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 1922

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Mr. Blatchford on the Soul.

Many years ago Mr. Robert Blatchford, then one of the leading English Socialists, made a strong attack on the Christian religion. One may assume, although I have no direct knowledge on the subject, that he saw the prospect of the Labour movement being captured by opportunist Christians, with the consequent destruction of whatever usefulness it might have, and so set out to counteract the danger. His attack contained nothing new, nothing that had not for many years been commonplaces in the Freethought world, but it was necessary. And as Mr. Blatchford wielded a very forceful pen, the elementary nature of his contribution to the assault on the master superstition of this country gave it a power over a certain class who might have remained untouched by more scholarly writings. His work did much good at the time. But Mr. Blatchford made the mistake of not realizing that if the attack on religion is to be completely successful it must be sustained. To bombard the enemy, and then retire, leaving him time and opportunity to recover from the assault, is bad policy. But persistence in attacking religion in this country is a very dangerous policy for a public man to pursue. Any publicist may be forgiven once for attacking religion provided that he does not again offend. If he does, it means that every effort will be made to squeeze him out; he will be cold-shouldered, or socially boycotted, and in other ways made to feel that English society raises not the slightest objection to a man's opinions on religion so long as he keeps them to himself. And ninety-nine out of a hundred public men remain silent or evasive wherever religion is brought on the board.

* * *

Mere Words.

So much for public men in general. I do not pretend that what I have said applies to Mr. Blatchford; but the fact is that since the delivery of his attack on Christianity he has, with a rare word now and again, remained silent on religion. And he has been silent while the Labour party in this country has been more or less "nobbled" by ex-local preachers, who have made many people, when listening to or reading their fatuous praise of Jesus Christ, or their eulogies of that mysterious thing, "true Christianity," feel like passengers during a rough Channel voyage. But in the

Sunday Chronicle of April 2—several copies of which have been sent me by readers of the *Freethinker*—he returns to the subject of religion in connection with the belief in a future life. And my first impression of Mr. Blatchford after reading his article is that he is the same to-day as he was when he wrote *Not Guilty* and *God and My Neighbour*. There is the same skimming of the surface of things, with no apparent perception that there is anything more than a surface; there is the same repetition of mere commonplaces, with all the air of a daring thinker voyaging across unknown seas. And he adds to this an even stronger vein of sentimentalism than he evinced in his younger days. Verbal slush is the common accompaniment of religious belief when there is no intellectual warranty for it, and there is more than the usual amount used when it is the subject of a future life that is under discussion. And in quite the orthodox religious way we find Mr. Blatchford telling his readers that the subject of a future life is more important than any other the human mind can study; it is the most princely promise ever made to man, it is a very comforting and inspiring belief, and "we are nearly all of us eager to believe it."

* * *

A Question of Evidence.

These things are stated with a Blatchfordian air of finality, and yet there is not one of them that is true, and there is not one the falsity of which half an hour's sustained and informed thinking would not prove to be false. It should be clear that the subject of a future life is not of paramount importance, since millions of men and women can get along quite well without it, and these men and women face life as boldly and discharge its duties as nobly as do those who believe in a life beyond the grave. How, then, can it be of paramount importance? Mr. Blatchford himself does not believe in a future life. Does he wish us to think that he would be a better man if he did believe in it? If not, how can he say that a belief is of paramount importance when one can get along without quite as well as with it? The importance of a thing is not shown by those who have it, but by those who are without it. Judging by the confirmed whisky drinker whisky is a very important ingredient of life. It is when we take the man who does not drink whisky, and study him, that we begin to appreciate the alleged importance of "Mountain Dew." A hundred people may say how important the belief in a future life is to them. But the one man who proves that he is as good without it as they are with it is conclusive rebutting evidence. It is quite as untrue to say that the hope of a future life "means more to us than any earthly dream of power, or wealth, or fame." It does not. All the terrors of hell and all the bribes of heaven which the Christian Church held before a people who believed that both hell and heaven were as real as London and Paris did not lead them to forsake the pursuit of wealth, or power, or fame. They simply used this belief to gain one or all of the three. It is the constant complaint of the churches that men and women pursue their aims as though immortality were not. They tell men and women that it is the most

important thing of all. And human nature yields assent in theory to that which, fortunately, it ignores in practice.

* * *

Matter and Materialism.

Mr. Blatchford's whole article moves on the mental level of the passages I have cited. Once upon a time, he says, he was a Materialist; and starting from that position he knew nothing of any other life than this, and so he "dogmatized." But less than a year ago he began to alter his view—not to believe in a future life, but to hope, and to realize possibilities. He says:—

The fact is, I have had to abandon my position. Materialism seemed to me an impregnable fortress so long as there remained a material foundation for it to stand on. But how can one hold to Materialism if there is no material. It seems to me that the division of the atom shook the materialist fabric dangerously. If the infinitesimal atom is divisible into millions of electrons, all of them in motion, there is no such thing as material substance. And, unless I am mistaken, the latest trend of science is towards belief that matter is motion. I have been driven out of my materialist philosophy and am now, in a manner of speaking, in the air—standing on nothing.

Now this is just an example of the danger of a man handling a philosophical question without possessing the necessary equipment. It may surprise Mr. Blatchford to learn that it is not at all certain that the atom is a myth, that is, if one may judge from the very recent experiments of Professor Rutherford; and, in any case—although this may astonish Mr. Blatchford still more—Materialism is in no wise dependent upon either the existence of the atom or the actuality of "matter." I quite agree that there is a common impression to the contrary, and even that some Materialists, in defending their case, seem to feel that they are called upon to champion a particular conception of matter and of the atom. But to anyone who understands the history of Materialism, from its origin in Greek philosophy down to our own day, and who realizes what it is that Materialism has always stood for, to argue as does Mr. Blatchford is to confess one's ignorance of what is the very essence of the materialistic position. Into that question I have no time to enter at present, it must suffice to say that what Materialism has always stood for is really Determinism, and in defence of that conception it took—as we are all bound to take—its working conception of the nature of the universe around us from contemporary science. And to argue that, because our conception of what is "matter" undergoes a change in the light of fuller knowledge, therefore Materialism is dead, is like arguing that there can be no such thing as light if our idea of the nature of light undergoes a change. Materialism is as soundly based as ever, it is Mr. Blatchford's misconception of what is Materialism that needs revising. He is left in the air because he has never been on solid ground. Those of us who took the trouble to understand Materialism feel quite safe.

* * *

More Confusion.

The curious nature of Mr. Blatchford's article affords it some protection from criticism because it is so full of vaguely phrased fallacies that it would take a volume to deal with them all. But I cannot forbear noticing a few. We are told that the amœba is the most elementary form of life, which it certainly is not. It, the amœba, is alive, "it moves, apparently it knows, and it has developed into man and woman." But it does nothing of the kind. The amœba lives and dies an amœba, and it is just one of the commonest of Christian evidence confusions to attribute to individual forms of life what is only true of the panorama of life taken as a whole, and then—ignoring that the

individual is all the time disappearing—argue from the perpetuation of the species that the individual must live for ever. Again, we have served up the very old conundrum as to what has become of the man we loved when he is dead? Thus:—

A minute ago he was alive; he was our joyous, witty, kindly comrade. Now he is not with us; that body lying there motionless and silent is not our friend; that human shape is incapable of sight, or speech, or emotion. What has become of the man we knew and loved? It is not that the dead man is a broken machine, something is gone.

So Mr. Blatchford puts his question and answers it. Something is gone. If that is so, the question is settled. If something is gone, then it must have gone somewhere. And if the something that has gone somewhere is really the friend we knew, then the question of a future life is settled. There can no longer be any doubt about it. Mr. Blatchford's professed ignorance is a sham. He knows there is a soul; he knows there is a future life; and he knows this because he knows that the body is not the man, something is gone. The only room for debate is the place, the postal address, so to speak. Mr. Blatchford gets the omelette out of the hat by the simple plan of putting it in beforehand.

* * *

The Meaning of Life.

And, after all, Mr. Blatchford is making a mystery where none need obtain. Quite clearly, the reason why he believes this joyous comrade to be dead is because the body before him no longer responds to his advances in the same manner that it has hitherto done. If you tickle him he no longer laughs, if you wound him he no longer grieves. To put the matter in technical language, the reaction of the organism to its environment is no longer what it was. What Mr. Blatchford really recognizes—what we all recognize—as the indisputable signs of what we call living beings, is a certain kind of reaction. And that, on a broad scale, is the only method we have of recognizing the individuality of anything, whether organic or inorganic. Mr. Blatchford does not know a thing to be alive because of something separate from the organism, but only in virtue of a series of reactions which result from the organism, and which are, in fact, what we mean by such a word as "organism." So that the right way to phrase the question is not in the frightfully crude form of "What has become of the man we knew and loved?" but "What has happened that the complex of reactions which we knew as our friend are no longer manifested?" And, substantially, that kind of alteration may occur without death taking place. That "joyous, witty, kindly comrade" may, by disease, or dissipation, or the passage of years become transformed into a gloomy, dull, miserable kind of a creature that bears no semblance at all to the man we knew. And what, then, has happened? Is the first one living somewhere else, and the second merely another "soul" that has taken possession of the body? I do not think that Mr. Blatchford will assume that to be the case. And yet he has here substantially the same problem. Mr. Blatchford says, with a sarcastic assumption of modesty, "Even I begin to think that perhaps I do not know all." That is seriously true of all of us, but we can take the pains to know a subject before writing on it. And it is a very grave fault in a writer to place such subjects before readers as the one with which Mr. Blatchford deals, and in the manner in which he deals with it, with the inevitable result of needlessly confusing the minds of his readers. Why not leave this empty verbiage of princely promises, and important hopes, etc., to the clergy? They can really do it much better than can Mr. Blatchford. They have been much longer at the game.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Does God Exist?

By God we understand the object of Christian belief and worship. He is the Supreme Being who sits on his throne and governs the universe, who does according to his will everywhere, and whose purposes never fail. Does such a Being really and objectively exist? If he does, the fact ought to be universally known, and there should be no data upon which it can be denied. If God exists and does according to his will both in heaven and on earth the result should be a faultless condition of things all round. Is such a result a reality? No one has the temerity to pretend that it is. Even the most ardent believers, when pressed, are forced to admit that appearances are strongly against their own belief in God, and it is their proud boast that they are able to believe *in spite of* appearances. By appearances they mean the facts of history; but they do not seem to realize that their admission is one of the most cogent arguments for Atheism. Many there are who stoutly maintain that the belief in God is instinctive and comes naturally to all; but here again appearances or the facts stand up in opposition. It is well-known to teachers that children have to learn to believe in God just as they have to learn the alphabet or the multiplication table, and some there are who cannot even be taught to believe in a Supreme Being. And yet we are assured that our destiny depends upon whether we believe in an infinite and omnipotent Governor of the world or not. The Rev. Harry Bisseker, M.A., Principal of Leys School, in a sermon published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of April 6, makes the following significant statement:—

One of the deepest needs of the human heart is for knowledge of God. It is not enough to hope about God. We want to be sure. Here we find ourselves in this beautiful but mysterious world. We cannot say where we come from, we have only dim ideas as to where we are going. Everything depends upon whether there is a God behind it all, and whether you and I really know him. There are men in the world to-night half hoping, half doubting, who would give every penny they possess if only they could be certain of God.

This is doubtless a fairly accurate characterization of the majority of those who habitually attend places of worship; but the preacher is evidently unaware of the fact that outside all churches there are thousands of healthy-minded and clean-living men and women who have never had the faintest glimmering of a God-idea in their minds, and that there are tens of thousands more who rejoice over their emancipation from the tyranny of superstitious beliefs, hopes and fears.

Principal Bisseker is certainly unjust to Browning. Preachers and theologians generally persist in regarding that magnetic man as one of the greatest Christian poets, whereas, as a matter of fact, he is not a Christian poet at all. He is a purely dramatic poet, expressing not necessarily his own views, but those of the various dramatic characters which he portrays. In this he differs fundamentally from Wordsworth and to some extent from Tennyson. Again and again, during his life, did he protest against the idea that he put himself into his books. Mrs. Sutherland Orr, one of his most intimate friends in his later years, informs us in her interesting *Life* of him, that personally he was an Agnostic. And yet Mr. Bisseker quotes the well-known sentence about the acknowledgement of God, accepted by the reason, solving all problems in the earth and out of it, as against Tennyson's famous line, "And faintly trust the larger hope," and then says: "The difference I think, not between the two men, but between their two statements, is this: Tennyson hoped, Browning knew."

The Principal asserts that "there are some men who

know God." The text is Psalm xlvi. 10: "Be still and know that I am God." The preacher lays hold of that word "still" and says:—

One of the chief hindrances to knowing God is the rush of human life. In this respect there is a striking contrast between East and West. In the East men take time to think. There is no haste or bustle in their lives. It is in no sense unnatural to them to sit by the hour quietly meditating. We in the West are always doing something. It is now our business, now our pleasure, a score of different activities always ready to our hand; no sooner one ended than the next begun. So we have no time to think. It is just there that our weakness lies. Do we ask why so many people are not sure of God? One reason is that they are never quiet.

That extract is scarcely complimentary to the Deity. It represents him as playing hide and seek with his children, or as saying to them, not "Seek and ye shall find," but "If you are very, very still I will make myself known to you" But Mr. Bisseker is wrong. There is far more real, vigorous thinking in the West than in the East. As a rule, Orientals are unreasoning visionaries, or wistful dreamers rather than solid and responsible thinkers, although the East has given birth to some of the grandest Secularists the world has ever seen, such as the Buddha and Confucius. The former spent years in deepest solitude, and there saw with the utmost clearness, not God, but the Golden Path of Life.

At this point Principal Bisseker pretends to become profoundly scientific, and certainly the argument he offers assumes an exceedingly plausible form. His point is that there is a close connection between knowledge and stillness, which he declares to be a fact of which there is "an explanation at once simple and strictly scientific." There is, he tells us, a psychological law "which declares that our power of attention is definitely limited in its range":—

We are all capable of attending to thousands and to tens of thousands of different objects, but this law says we cannot attend to them all at once. All we can do is to select between them. What happens when we have made our selection? So long as we are attending closely to the particular object or group of objects we have selected, we lose consciousness of all others. These other objects have not ceased to exist. They are as real as they were, but we ourselves have no immediate consciousness of them. We have no personal sense of their reality.

Such is the psychological law which the reverend gentleman lays down, and of its operation he furnishes two concrete illustrations. You are sitting on an easy chair in your study, while on the mantelpiece there is a clock audibly ticking, to which you listen with great interest. After a while you take down a book from one of the shelves in which you become, after a few minutes' reading, completely absorbed to the exclusion of all other objects. The clock is still ticking, but you no longer consciously hear it. The second illustration is not nearly so cogent. You have, or have had, a father; but suppose that on arriving at years of discretion, when you can realize what a father means, you resolve to ignore his existence altogether. You refuse to see him, hear from him, write to him, or have any communication whatever with him. Principal Bisseker is convinced that the result will inevitably be that your father will become altogether unreal to you. This illustration is a most unfortunate one, for no son can ever entirely forget his father, whose form he has seen, whose voice he has heard, and whose conduct of the home he has witnessed. Now here comes the application:—

Suppose a man allows no proper place in his consciousness and his attention to God. Then God will tend to become unreal to him. It does not mean that God does not exist. It does not mean that the

man is incapable of knowing him. It only means that this great scientific law of the mental life is at work.

This superficially ingenious and plausible argument is wholly fallacious. We do not blame the reverend gentleman, for he holds an official brief on behalf of God, and he fulfils his trust to the utmost of his ability. The trouble is that he has a thoroughly bad case, and a bad case cannot convincingly be shown to be a good one. Without a moment's hesitation we pronounce the Christian God a pure myth. Of course, any imaginary being may be made real enough in the consciousness of those who believe in him. There are moments in the lives of specially devout believers when God is intensely real and precious, when by meditating continuously on his portrait as drawn by orthodox divines they are exalted into a state of thrilling rapture. The joyousness of such an experience is simply inconceivable except to those who have had it, and to deny the reality of it would be the height of folly. The truth is, however, that the subjective reality of such an experience by no means proves, or even renders probable, the objective reality of God. The moment the belief in God begins to wane there is always a corresponding decline of religious experience. God is a sleeping partner, doing absolutely nothing. "We must attend to God," says Mr. Bisseker, "if we would hear his voice"; but God's voice has never been heard at all except by a vivid imagination. The masses have never heard it; and even in the past, when they were much more credulous than they are now, they only believed that he had a voice and spoke on the testimony of a small number of heaven's favourites, such as prophets, apostles, and popes, who assured them most solemnly that they had both heard it and understood the words spoken by it. To-day, the masses have lost even that belief, and in consequence they no longer throng the courts of Zion to hear what the Lord has spoken.

Is it not self-evident, therefore, that the life of supernatural religion depends wholly on the existence of a class of men, set apart from the rest of mankind and known popularly as men of God, and upon the holding of public assemblies, endless conferences and classes at which these elect of heaven undertake to interpret the alleged words, will, purposes and claims of their Lord and Master, who never speaks or acts except through them and those associated with them in the holy ministry? Has it not been repeatedly admitted that if religious instruction were discontinued in the day schools and all the churches were closed religion would immediately die out? The only rational inference from all the facts at our disposal is that God has no objective existence whatever, and, consequently, has never taken any part in human affairs. Mr. Bisseker urges us to give God a chance, and we reply that God has had his chance and completely neglected it. The only remedy is to give man his chance, for after all said and done, "MAN is the Master of Things."

J. T. LLOYD.

Jehovah's Dilemma.

JEHOVAH found a world in chaos laid.

It seemed some previous God had sojourned there—

For evidence there was—but had not stayed
To make complete the work, perchance elsewhere

Demands more pressing had the great one called;
The mess he'd left caused God to stand appalled,

He could not, though he tried, quite trace the plan
The previous one intended working out:

God said, "I'll finish now as I began,
I found a mess, I'll leave one, and clear out."

W. A. CROKER.

The Last of the Hot Gospellers.

The Church where you must not laugh is giving way to that older and greater Church to which I belong—the Church were the oftener you laugh the better.

—Bernard Shaw.

EVERY bishop, it seems, must have his biography more or less truthful; and there have been episcopal biographies which made their readers groan. Hence, it is not surprising that a leading light of Nonconformity should have "related himself to paper," and Dr. Robert F. Horton's *Autobiography* (Allen and Unwin) is amply justified. The Congregationalists represent the finest flower of British Nonconformity, and this autobiography throws a flood of light upon the mentality of one of its leading exponents. Moreover, it is the intimate record of a very full life, told with sincerity. Earnestness is its outstanding quality; and the wonder is that after so many years tilting at windmills this Free Church Don Quixote should retain his crusading spirit unabated.

Dr. Horton is the last of the "hot gospellers," but he has stronger affinities to Baldwin Brown and Newman Hall than to Spurgeon and Billy Sunday. Indeed, Spurgeon regarded Horton as one of the "Down Grade" heretics, but Spurgeon himself only represented a backwater of theological thought. The life-like portrait Dr. Horton has painted of himself emphasises more clearly than any mere sermons the outstanding differences between himself and the Boanerges of the Newington Tabernacle and the Playboy of the Western World. Dr. Horton has a passion for crying for the moon, and, according to his lights, has always set himself seriously to the solving of the social problems of the age. He has never hesitated to say frankly what he thinks, and, doing so, has offended widely. The most interesting quality of Dr. Horton's book is, however, not the prejudices of the author, but the light thrown on the religious and social life of our time.

Reared in a Nonconformist household, young Horton was eyed with some suspicion in his school-days. So slowly had English people travelled during the centuries towards freedom of thought. At Shrewsbury School he was appointed crier, which compelled the holder to end announcements with the pious adjuration, "God save the Queen, and down with Radicals." After this pleasing ordeal, Horton was removed to New College, Oxford. It will be news to many to learn that Dr. Horton rowed in the Oxford eight five years, consecutively. Still in his study hangs the oar which helped the boat up in 1887; and his section of the victorious vessel is now a cupboard to hold books.

Horton was fortunate in his acquaintances, and he watched the celebrities with critical eyes, and jotted down his impressions with determination. He quotes an amusing remark of Professor Bywater, who was an admirer of Plato: "When I was a child I was christened and vaccinated; neither of them took." The talented and ill-fated Oscar Wilde was also a student, and sat for his examination with Horton, who tells us that Wilde finished his papers half an hour before the other students. "By sheer ability," adds Horton, "he had reached a position which I had gained only by the concentrated labour of two years."

These recollections of his Oxford days have more than a passing interest. "Milner," he says, referring to the Union debates, "was the speaker of that time who made the greatest mark afterwards. Possessing a foreign accent, he never struck us as quite English, but his intellectual mastery was the prophecy of his famous career." Dr. Horton has some caustic comments on the intelligence of some of his colleagues. His predecessor and successor to the presidency of the

Oxford Union were the Earl of Portsmouth and Lord Midleton, and Horton says, frankly, "I found out the slender equipment with which the governing classes, by the weight of tradition could be carried to the highest places."

Horton decided to enter the ministry, as his father and grandfather had done. "I knew that in Dissent," he writes, "it is absolutely impossible to obtain a distinction which gives you any acknowledged place in the national life." This is a hard saying in a civilized country, for Horton belonged to the Congregationalists, one of the oldest, wealthiest, and most reputable of the Free Churches. What would Dr. Horton have said had he experienced the slings and arrows associated with Freethought?

Always a "whole-hogger," Horton announced his intention of declining the title of "reverend," and of discarding clerical dress, which he considered ridiculous. "I shall wear," he declared, with a plentiful lack of humour, "no clothes to distinguish me from my fellow Christians." The Oxford "barbarians" made rare fun of this outburst, and caricatured Horton soaring to the sky in a state of nature.

There are serious things in the book. Horton's first speech at the Oxford Union was in defence of the rights of Nonconformists to bury their own dead with their own rites. A Free Churchman had lost his wife, and when he brought her to the churchyard he found the place allotted was a rubbish heap. It was infamous things such as this which determined Horton to enter the Congregationalist ministry. Had it not been for these religious antagonisms he might have entered the ranks of the Government religion, and, to quote his own words, "even have risen to be a canon." And, as canons go, he would have been a good one.

Dr. Horton's indignation at the Church's conduct towards Nonconformists does him honour, but it must be remembered that the Church's attitude towards the working classes was equally objectionable. What sixteen centuries of the rule of the Bishops have done for the common people is written for all men to read in the Statute Book, and the record is enough to make any man ashamed of his own species. Small wonder that Joseph Arch, the first agricultural labourer who became a Member of Parliament, declared, after witnessing the treatment meted out to poor labourers who attended church, "If that's what goes on—never for me!"

The Torquemada strain in Dr. Horton showed itself in a different way, and chiefly in his abortive attempts to impose Puritanism on his fellow citizens. Once he determined to preach in support of a crusade against music-halls. "Then it occurred to me," he says, naively, "that I had never been to such a place." So he went, and found the performance decorous and commonplace. To his credit, however, Dr. Horton recast the notes of his sermon; but what a revelation of religious methods and prejudices!

Dr. Horton's personality could neither have grown nor thriven outside the British Isles. It is one of the oddest of blends, for it includes a good deal of Paul Pry, a touch of Pecksniff, and a great amount of Sunday-school teacher. In the bad old days of monarchy it was a law with all good citizens that "the king could do no wrong." This adage Dr. Horton has applied to himself. He magnanimously denounces all those who dare to utter a word that might not profit the boys and girls of that conventicle he himself adorns. Dr. Horton's theology, however liberal it may be called, has not yet reached the altitude of Freethought, nor can it ever do so until it ceases to be theology and becomes simple Secularism. For any purpose connected with the real purpose of life and the welfare of the people, the Christian religion might as well be buried—as it will be when the people see the truth.

MIMNERMUS.

Darwin Forty Years After.

DARWIN died on April 19, 1882. We look across this stretch of forty years with varied recollections. The controversy which centred round the new theory, on the one side of a purely scientific nature, stirred the intellectual life too deep to pass with the straws on the surface of the time-current. For there were outstanding personalities in England's world of science and letters then. Spencer, Tyndall, Huxley, Tennyson and Browning were with us. Clifford, Clerk Maxwell, Carlyle and George Eliot had not long quitted the scene. On the other side of the conflict the Faith had for half a century been "reconciling" Genesis and geology, and was still staggering under its cart-load of replies to Colenso. It now confronted a more formidable advance than ever, an advance upon its very citadel. There was no need to ask what would come next. In "the gospel of dirt" and "the slime theory" the epithets that served the cause followed in the natural wake of the spirit which greeted the geologists of a few decades earlier. They were but the nineteenth century's counterpart to the reception accorded to the astronomy of Galileo.

In 1882 religion and science was a live issue. The vital doctrines of Christianity—Creation, Fall, Redemption—were still vital, and they were comfortably entrenched behind the forces that always gather round tradition. The Mosaic record was one, but only one, division of the main body of these forces. For the flock of souls within the fold there was no need yet for fine-spun distinctions between the fundamental and the inessential. There never is when the Wacces and the Wilberforces of orthodoxy hold the ramparts of the religious conscience. For popular Freethought, too, these were days of pulsing stir and action. Bradlaugh and Foote were carrying the message to "the man in the street" and paying the inevitable penalty, as Carlile and Hetherington had done before them. The *Freethinker* was a year old, with a stormy period just ahead of it.

The tributes to the great naturalist by Huxley and Romanes in the memorial notices in *Nature*, and those written for the centenary essays, *Darwin and Modern Science* (1909), edited by Professor A. C. Seward, are well known. I have before me a number of others which show how the news of Darwin's death was received on the Continent. Perhaps a few are worth reproducing. The first is from Professor Mantegazza, founder of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence:—

A stout branch has been broken off the immortal tree of science. Darwin is dead. But he has kindled a light on the high summit of human thought. That light will burn for ever and illumine the far horizons which our children, and our children's children, are some day to greet.

Dr. Otto Zacharias, of Hirschberg, who knew Darwin personally, said that Nature had again claimed as her own "one of her most loyal disciples, one of her most gifted sons, only after centuries, it may be, to give us another worthy to fill his place." The Vienna *Allgemeine Zeitung* declared that humanity had experienced a loss which thrust political matters into the background. "Our century is Darwin's century. We can now suffer no greater loss. We do not possess a second Darwin."

As recently as 1881 Dr. T. Lauder Brunton, whose scientific attainments were worthy of respect, wrote that he could "see no discrepancy between the first chapter of Genesis and the doctrine of evolution." When we recall that in 1879 a geologist of acknowledged eminence, J. D. Dana, quoted approvingly Guyot's statement that there "can be no real conflict" between Genesis and geology, we are in no wise

amazed at the attitude of the host of special pleaders in the apologetic field. Where their principles are in jeopardy they ought to be easily convinced.

It is not a big indictment against any man that he was wrong in this or that view. But there is an enduring lesson in all this sorry record of "reconciliation." It is the demoralizing influence of orthodox religious beliefs. Whether rooted in creed and dogma or appealing to the sway of emotion, to say nothing of vested interests, which are not confined to the economic sphere, all such beliefs give rise to contemptible misgiving lest new ideas may threaten their existence. In spirit a large section of the community is still only a short distance from those days. Evolution "explains" nothing, this theory is "exploded," that "discredited." Big authorities—Weismann, Bateson, and others—are quoted as making "admissions," and the impression is conveyed that, because there is a divergence of view concerning particular factors, the evidence for the fact of evolution is unsatisfactory. In vain, I presume, one might point out that the later editions of the *Origin of Species*, compared with the earlier, show how Darwin himself modified his views on the influence to be assigned to different factors in organic development. Does any Christian apologist now believe that biologists have gone back to the hypothesis of a special creation of species, or that they resort to the old "explanations" of rudimentary organs? If so, what becomes of the host of reconcilers who found evolution an additional pillar of support for the faith? Canon Farrar's memorial sermon in Westminster Abbey is not yet quite forgotten. The Rev. George Henslow, who in March, 1872, lectured on the design argument in "Mr. Bradlaugh's Hall of Science," in his *Theory of Evolution of Living Things* (1873), is at special pains to press this view upon his clerical brethren. "God's scheme for man's existence" collapses "if the great law of evolution be suppressed." But in humanity's age-long struggle to lop off the withered limbs of superstition, an array of names on one side or the other does not count for much. A divine faith can afford to dispense with the ordinary mortal's conception of intellectual honesty. This statement is not open to serious dispute by anyone abreast of the facts. The new theories of physicists, the investigator's recognition of the gaps in his scientific knowledge, and the spiritualism of prominent intellectuals, have all been acclaimed by a certain school of religious thought—not on the ground that they contributed something of value in the search for truth, but because they "proved the bankruptcy of materialism."

We are assured that this is an age of science. If we except the technical applications of science, only in a strictly limited degree do the characteristics of the age bear out this assurance. Last month's American files announce that the teaching of evolution has been forbidden in the universities in the State of Kentucky. This, no doubt, is the "pragmatically" ideal argument for silencing infidelity. Our own "captains of the host" are content to proclaim solemnly week after week, in a thousand "consecrated" houses of God, doctrines known to be directly at variance with modern knowledge. With the authority of such civilization as we possess, the same doctrines are carried abroad to defenceless native races. Children in our State schools are taught "inspired" absurdities, which are legally protected from ridicule and overt contempt. Still, the English theologian confidently declares that he has hopes of a regenerated Church. He has little quarrel now with those who reject "creation," "design," and even "revelation," as long as they refrain from openly announcing the fact. Perhaps he never had much real quarrel with them, for he likes to pay his tribute to sincerity in his own way. When Darwin died, an illustrated journal on the Continent produced

a picture of his bust surrounded by a crowd of monkeys mourning their loss. A German naturalist said at the time that the caricature did not make him angry, but pensive. It directed his mind to other times and places.

Darwin himself has left no room for doubt concerning his personal attitude to religion, and particularly to Christianity. As early as 1839, he tells us, he had "come to see that the Old Testament was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos." Miracles he regarded as the product of an "ignorant and credulous" age. His hold on Theism gradually weakened to complete Agnosticism. In the concluding paragraph of the *Posthumous Essay on Instinct*, edited by Romanes, there is a delightful touch of satire on the beneficent Creator's method of guiding the process of biological evolution.

It matters little in what particular spot the world's great dead are laid to rest. The "loyal disciple of Nature" was buried in Westminster Abbey, though not without some protest, and there is a monument to him in his native Shrewsbury. For my part, I am glad that no decorations encrust his name.

A. D. McLAREN.

Dope.

Dope springs eternal in the Daily Press.

THE glorious free Press can work up something sensational on any subject it pleases. From standard bread and sweet peas to Welsh revivals and Spiritualism. At the present time its "Special Investigators" are interested in Dope! The dangers of the traffic in drugs, the use of which stultifies and degrades, are pointed out in columns on columns of vivid details. Why this outcry against dope which its victims seek voluntarily when dope more deadly has official sanction and is by law established? What use in raiding a solitary club here and there when at every corner is erected an edifice for the supply of dope in unlimited quantities to both young and old?

One person who passes the "White Snow" is fined a hundred pounds. Another who deals in the blood which is whiter than snow gets rewarded with ten thousand a year! Is it logical?

Dope! Why, the Press is silent about the disastrous effects of dope which is forced upon young children. Dope—which if ridiculed lays the scoffer open to nine months' hard labour! Such a condition of affairs is possible because the people like to be doped.

A queen goes slumming, graciously invading a two-room tenement, and immediately the crowd goes mad in its endeavours to see, *just see* a queen! Windows, behind which the bare necessities of life and comfort are unknown, flaunt a gaily coloured strip of bunting. The "general" shop, passing rich with five shillings-worth of stock, displays the words—"God bless our Queen"! The Press reporter records instances of women redeeming from pawn their wearing apparel in order to pay honour to the occasion. The slum remains a slum, whilst the inhabitants remember with ecstasy the goodness of Royalty—Dope!

A prince or a princess advertised and paraded in public to strengthen popularity—is Dope.

Archbishop and Bishop and lesser fry, fearful of the advance of knowledge, more fearful of losing what power they may still possess, strive to capture Labour. Labour considers it respectable and desirable to associate itself with religion, and listens with both ears when the Church advocates reforms—Dope!

Monarchy and mystery—prince and priest—this is the greatest traffic in Dope. Yet the Press is preaching a crusade against the use of dangerous drugs!

J. DRISCOLL.

Relics of the Buddha.

THE visit of the Prince of Wales to Ceylon, and to the shrine of the Tooth at Kandy, has given rise to some discussion as to the veneration of relics by Buddhists, and the authenticity, or otherwise, of this particular relic. There was originally an authentic relic of Gotama the Buddha enshrined at this place, but it was publicly burned by order of a Roman Catholic archbishop during the Portuguese occupation of the island in the sixteenth century. The existing tooth was substituted later, but it is not a genuine relic of the Buddha, nor is it even a human tooth. It is admitted by Buddhists that this relic simply represents the original and genuine one which was dealt with in characteristic Christian fashion. Since that time, however, there have been several discoveries of relics of the Buddha, any one of which might fittingly take the place of the tooth and thus remove any justification for the taunt of imposture—not that there is any imposture attempted.

It is stated in the Buddhist books that the bodily remains of the Buddha were cremated, that relics were distributed to the kings or chieftains of various nations and tribes, and that eight stupas were erected at certain places named. Following the great Brahmanical persecutions of Buddhism in the eighth Christian century, and the various Mahomedan inroads which came later, all traces of these stupas and temples were lost, and the references to them were considered to be legendary. But in the years 1892, 1896, 1909 and 1917, various antiquarians, among them Sir John Marshall, head of the Indian Archaeological Department, located some of these places, and their excavations led to the discovery of the relics *in situ*, contained in their original caskets which bore inscriptions stating what they were and who had enshrined them. These inscriptions, together with collateral evidence, proved beyond doubt that these were actually relics of the Buddha.

Some of the Christian papers, commenting on the tooth relic of Kandy, consider it to afford "melancholy proof of the dark and degrading superstitions to which mankind are liable when they have no guiding light from the Word of God." Now, that great Rationalist and Freethinker, Gotama, the Buddha, never advocated the veneration of relics, nor superstitious worship of any kind, not even of a god. So that, from a Buddhist point of view, there is no *worship* of relics; they simply stand as a symbol and a reminder of the actual existence of the great teacher. That ignorant and undeveloped minds should regard them with superstitious awe is only to be expected. Such minds will invent superstitions in any case. But we can say, without fear of contradiction, that such superstitions as have been grafted upon Buddhism have never been so fraudulent and degrading as those of Christianity. The relic which the Christians burned in Ceylon was, at least, authentic, which is more than can be said of the tons of nails claimed to be those with which Christ was crucified, or the wood of "the true cross," of which it is said that enough was in existence to build a good sized ship.

There can be no objection to the holding in rational veneration the memory of a great and good man through the erection of a tomb or shrine which encloses the remains of the bodily frame which once was his. But the Buddha himself, judging by his own teaching, would have been the first to repudiate the worship of such remains. Nor are they worshipped in the sense in which Christian relics are worshipped. Apart from the tooth relic, those which have been discovered in modern times have at least this advantage: they prove that the Buddha was really a historical personage. There is no such evidence for the existence of Christ.

E. UPASAKA.

Acid Drops.

A few days ago there was a proposal before the Northamptonshire County Council that "the proceedings of the Council be opened by invoking divine guidance and blessing upon its work and labours." After some discussion the proposal was rejected. One of those who spoke against the resolution said that the matter was different from the House of Commons. Millions depended upon what the House of Commons did, and their decisions affected people in all parts of the world. But the Northamptonshire County Council was comparatively a modern body and did not desire to create a sensation. Now that is very considerate and modest. How on earth can one be justified in troubling God Almighty to look after a small County Council when he has the affairs of millions of others to look after? But there may be another side to the desire not to call attention to the doings of the County Council. We hope the councillors do not dread supervision.

One of the members thought the matter should go before a small committee for consideration. Now that is really too bad. To ask for the help of God is what one would expect from religious folk; for although he does not help, still, being religious, they must pretend that he does. To decline to ask him for help on the ground that he has bigger things demanding attention is considerate, and we are sure the deity will appreciate the consideration. But to let a small committee decide whether he shall be called in or not is treating him rather contemptuously. He is entitled to greater consideration than that. Evidently, the Mayor of Northampton took this view, for speaking at a Baptist Church, he said that the attitude of the Council was an insult to God. All we can hope is that as the County Council is a new and small body God may not notice it. And in that case, the Mayor would be well advised not to call his attention to the affair, for judging from the way he acted in Bible times, when he is annoyed with one member of a body he doesn't mind going for the whole crowd.

Miss Gertrude Page, the novelist, is reported as having said shortly before her death that religion ought to command the love and respect of the man in the street. She forgot to add the important condition that it must be a religion that is fit for the educated man in the street to love and respect. When so much time has to be spent informing the world that it ought to respect something or the other it is a fairly safe assumption that it is not worthy of either.

A preacher in the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church said the other day that there were two classes of unbelievers. There was a type of unbelief that was "wistful, plaintive, and longing for certainty." Of course, the preacher could get along well enough with that. The kind of half-baked Freethinker who moons about pretending that he would like to believe if he only could is a peculiarly sickening type to anyone with a properly healthy intelligence. And we should prefer to see him inside the Church rather than supporting it from the outside. But there is another type, said the preacher. This is the man who "passes Christianity with a shrug, and makes light of it." This is the "most subtle" foe of Christianity to-day. We quite agree that this type is the most deadly enemy of Christianity. He is the only one who cannot be bought or bribed. It is only when a man or woman perceives Christianity to be the ridiculous thing it is, when he can meet it with a shrug and dismiss it with a smile, that he is really liberated. One may trust Christians to know where their real enemies are.

Admiral, Lord Nelson died in the early years of the nineteenth century. Although he left no direct issue, this country is still paying his legal heirs £5,000 yearly. The irony of the affair is that this money is being paid to the descendants of Nelson's brother, who was a clergyman, and who had as much to do with the Battle of Trafalgar as Charlie Chaplin. No wonder Britons smile at the Chinese because they believe in ancestor worship.

Bishop Welldon says that in Protestant churches the sermon has usurped the idea of worship. Perhaps that partially explains the empty churches of to-day.

Clergymen may be "men-of-God," but the deity does not apparently interest himself in their welfare. The sad case of the Vicar of St. Sepulchre's Church, Holborn, is a case in point. After being fatally injured by a steam-wagon, he lay for twenty minutes in the street waiting for an ambulance.

The *Western Mail* of April 1 is published on a rather suitable date for the appearance of a column on "Sex, Atheism, and Drink" by a Mr. Raymond Allen. Mr. Allen takes a column to say what a reasonable person might have said in a dozen lines, and he would have said it more effectively and less offensively. Mr. Allen says, for instance, that sex, Atheism, and drink are actualities, and it would be idle to deny a possible "inter-relation"—and he adds the quite needless phrase, between them. There could not, surely, be an inter-relation unless it was between them. We have no objection to there being an inter-relation between sex and Atheism, and we admit—it would be idle to deny it to a man of Mr. Allen's penetration—that the Atheist is always either a male or a female, and therefore there is some relation between sex and Atheism. But we should like to know what is the necessary connection between drink and Atheism. Mr. Allen must know that quite a number of religious people get drunk, and we venture to say that if all Christians kept sober the question of drunkenness would trouble no one in this country. We do not deny that some Atheists get drunk also. Nor do we see why this furnishes Mr. Allen with any special grievance—unless he wishes to claim for the Christian Church a monopoly of drunkenness. Apart from this we fail to see why on earth Mr. Allen wrote his article, or what he had in mind when he wrote it. Perhaps he thinks he is doing his work when he sets up a supposed connection between Atheism and drink. And the Christian in between his glasses of beer or whisky will read Mr. Allen's article, and then go staggering home thanking God that he is not an Atheist or God only knows what kind of a beast he might make of himself. What Mr. Allen really needs is a sense of humour.

The clergy have an amiable weakness for passing on their bad debts to other people, and the other folk are not always Church worshippers. An additional rate of rod. in the pound has been made on the parish of Pottesgrove, Bedfordshire, to make up a deficiency due to the operation of the Tithe Rent Charges Act, which removes a considerable payment of rates from the parson to the inhabitants, who are mostly labourers who do not trouble the pew-openers.

Dry rot has endangered the roof of Kew parish church. Dry rot in the pulpits of thousands of churches apparently makes little difference.

At a service at Lawston Church nearly 800 eggs were brought as an offertory. No wonder the local clergy are crowing.

The Church of England poses as the friend of Labour, and one hymn for the working-class is graciously included in the hymnal. Hence we are surprised to find the Church Army offering situations to women with no salaries attached, but only "pocket money." Truly, in this instance, religion is "without money and without price."

The Church Army is to open a "Clergy Rest House" at Herne Bay. It seems almost like gilding refined gold, for so many of the dear clergy only work one day weekly.

Because he considers sermons useless and out-of-date, Mr. S. A. Lazarus, a member of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, Hill Street, Dorset Square, has suggested the substitution of lectures for sermons.

Over twenty-one thousand farthings have been cadged from children at Folkestone Sunday-schools for missionary work abroad. The result will be that a number of savages will be made worse Christians.

There is nothing like religion to induce friendly feelings. At El Paso, the quarrels between the Mexican Catholics and the Mexican Protestants have become such a danger to the peace of the town that a Board of twenty-eight citizens has been formed in order to encourage toleration. The Board may do good, provided that it is made up of men who are without any strong religious opinions. If they are it will be like spraying a burning building with petroleum in order to put out the fire. What is needed in all these cases is to get the people to forget their religion. That is the source of the whole trouble.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc has written a book about the Jews, which, thanks to the log-rolling that goes on in journalistic circles, has received far more consideration than it deserves. It is filled with the usual rubbish about "race," as though the Jews were a people differing altogether from any other people on the face of the globe, and ignoring that the Jew, as he is, is a product of a peculiar set of sociological forces easy enough to understand if one is not blinded by prejudice or by pre-conceived ideas. Mr. Belloc argues that the Jew cannot become merged with the people of other nations in face of the plain fact that all over the world that merging is going on, and would be complete in countries like England were it not that we are always getting a new influx of Jews who come here as the victims of the religion Mr. Belloc represents. The publicity Mr. Belloc gets for his pre-scientific, or unscientific ideas is an example of what may be done by one with friends on the Press.

But we are not now concerned with Mr. Belloc particularly, but with a review of his work which appears in the pages of the *Church Times*. The writer here says that "it is our duty to recognize and insist that the Jew is racially different from ourselves." That is Mr. Belloc's case, and his inference is that the Jew cannot be granted national rights because he can never feel with a nation of people who are not Jews. But here a difficulty fronts the *Church Times*. There is the mission for converting the Jews. And if the Jew is unconvertible in a national sense, turning him into a Christian will leave him where he was. And what is the good, therefore, of preaching Christianity to him? The Jew remains unconvertible. So the *Church Times* caps Mr. Belloc's foolishness with some foolishness of its own. It does not understand the subject sufficiently to correct Mr. Belloc, and it does not wish to discourage missionary work. And it ends with the lame hope that Christians will awaken "to the real duty to labour more earnestly and prayerfully than they have done in the past for the reconciliation of Israel to Christ." But what is the use? If the Jew converted to Christianity remains as he was, what is the good of going to the trouble of changing the unchangeable? We admit this sounds a bit mixed, but the foolishness is not ours.

Indifference.

AMONG the green rushes, where the foot
crushes
Moist mosses and stubble and garlands
of earth;
Where sorrel with red leaf at the sun blushes;
Where dragon-flies dance at an hour from
their birth;
Where honey bees hum 'mid white clover
blooming
Near the wild thyme, yellow trefoil and
eyebright;
All these may be seen (though Winter is
looming)
By a cat or a King ere they vanish from
sight.

WILLIAM REPTON.

To Correspondents.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

TAB CAN.—Thanks. We had intended dealing with the matter in the next issue and shall probably do so. We have a great deal of work to do yet before the world is mentally clean.

C. C. DOVE.—We are greatly obliged for all you are doing. It is always good for Freethinkers to do what they can with the local Press all over the country. Many a man and woman has owed his or her introduction to Freethought to this means.

W. BRANDLE.—There is no reason why there should not be a strong Branch of the N. S. S. at Aberdeen. Lecturers when visiting Glasgow could then continue the journey before returning to London. You might see what could be done for the next lecturing season. Thanks for propagandist efforts.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press" and crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen's lecturing this season came to an end with two very good meetings at Huddersfield on Sunday last. We think the Branch intends to try and have more frequent lectures next winter, and if it can be accomplished nothing will please the present Secretary, Mrs. E. Taylor, better. She has her heart in the work and takes heed of no trouble that will advance the cause. On Sunday last the chair was taken at both meetings by that old Freethought veteran, Mr. A. B. Wakefield. We were pleased to see him looking so well after the lapse of so long since we last met.

We are pleased to learn that the Aberdeen Public Library has just ordered copies of Mr. Cohen's *Grammar of Freethought* and his *Other Side of Death*. We see no reason why this class of work should not be ordered by all the public libraries in the kingdom, and perhaps if all our friends would bestir themselves in the matter this would be done. It is all part of a movement for giving Freethought literature the publicity it deserves.

May we also again ask the assistance of all our well-wishers for their help in the work of introducing the *Freethinker* to new readers. This is a most valuable

form of advertising, and in the present state of trade the only one that we can afford. Like other publishing firms we are feeling the financial condition of the country, and are doing what we can to make things move. That is never an easy task, so far as Freethought is concerned, but we must all do what we can. And while we are about it, it may as well be pointed out that all our pamphlets and books may be ordered through any bookseller or agent in the country by anyone who does not care to take the trouble of ordering direct.

The last meeting of the Swansea Branch's lecturing season will be held to-day (April 16) at the Elysium, High Street. There will be a musical lecture by "Casey," whose abilities on the violin are well-known. He will be accompanied by Miss Dolly Pickard. Reserved seats will be 1s. 6d., 1s., and 6d. The Swansea Branch is passing through a very difficult time at present owing to the shocking state of trade in South Wales, and we hope that all friends of the Branch will see that this last meeting goes some distance towards replenishing the Branch's exchequer. To add to its difficulties the Christian proprietor of the shop in Alexandria Road, which is a centre for all Freethought publications, has given Mr. Dupree notice, so that there is all the difficulty of getting new premises. There is the more reason for all friends to rally in support. We must show the enemy that difficulties cannot crush, but only incite to greater efforts.

It is good to see that our friends are still active in the matter of the repeal of the Blasphemy laws. And many of the replies given by Members of Parliament are much what we should expect. Thus, Mr. John Murray (West Leeds) replies that the Bill now before Parliament has his complete support. Mr. A. C. Farquharson replies, "I beg to say in reply to your letter that I will not vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy laws and will do everything in my power to defeat the measure now before the House of Commons." And Sir W. Middlebrook (South Leeds) writes: "I should not be prepared to vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy laws. I am not fully conversant with the nature of them, but there are certain points where they should be modified which I should support." It is evident that we shall have to do a great deal in the way of educating Members of Parliament on this subject. The amount of ignorance which enables a man to get into Parliament is astonishing. And there is still a large number of men, such as Mr. Farquharson, who are honestly convinced that it would be all up with the deity if the supporting arms of the policeman were withdrawn.

We have another reply to hand from Sir Donald McLean, M.P. for Peebles. In reply to a question he says, "I am not in favour of the sweeping proposals contained in the Bill for the Abolition of the Blasphemy laws, but I am in favour of such an amendment of the law as would put an end to vexatious prosecutions." That seems to us an elaborate way of saying very little. No one is in favour of vexatious prosecutions. The whole question at issue is whether there should exist a special law which affords to religious opinions a measure of protection such as no other subject has. Sir Donald's opinions on this subject are either very vague or very accommodating. But there are a great many people whose opinions will veer in our favour if we show them that we are not the few they imagine us to be.

How often do we not hear of the religious instinct! Renan asserted that the religious instinct is as natural to man as the nest-building instinct is to birds, and many authors have written of it as one of the fundamental attributes of the human mind. But, if we accept the doctrine of the evolution of man from animal forms, we are compelled to see the origin of religious emotions and impulses in instincts that are not specifically religious. And consideration of the conditions, manifestations, and tendencies of religious emotions must lead to the same search.—Dr. William McDougall, "An Introduction to Social Psychology."

The Religion of Jesus.

V.

(Concluded from page 231.)

It is only necessary to go carefully through the Gospels in the light of modern thought and knowledge to realize how far behind we have left Jesus and his religion. What is his message to democracy on the subject of work, for example? That really funny story of Jesus having to pay tribute money? It was pointed out to me as a perfect instance of work being commanded in order to pay our way. But the scream lies in Jesus, who had to pay his taxes, telling Peter to go to the sea, "and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them *for me* and thee." I would rather like to find a few fish myself similarly endowed where-with to pay *my* taxes; but I am always being told that this is one of those stories that must not be taken literally—that it is really a command to earn our living. The part Jesus plays in the working for his living reminds me of a Communist who told me with scorn that he was out for complete liberty for everybody, but that as soon as his party came into power *he* would see that *I* was put to doing some useful work in the interests of the community! What he would do, in the way of useful work, he failed to say. Of course, the truth is that Jesus never did any work as far as we know, and his ready acceptance of the dinner offered by one of the class whom he was always reviling, and his vulgar and impolite outburst because the Pharisee " marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner " is a story that no Christian ought to read without being thoroughly ashamed.

I have said there is not a spark of humour in the New Testament, but I do not mean that we cannot laugh at some of its stupidities and absurdities. Is there anything more deliciously dignified than Jesus cursing a fig-tree or rebuking the spirit of an unclean devil? I like that unclean devil. He must have been the brother to that other more famous one who carried Jesus about and set him " on a pinnacle of temple." If I laugh at these precious yarns I suppose I am blaspheming and committing a very dangerous crime, but I cannot help it. I did not invent them. They are all found in the Christian Bible with hundreds more, and not all the persecution in the world can stop people from laughing at their childish credulity and silly superstition. And yet Professor Peabody tells us that—

Each period in civilization has had, in turn, its own peculiar interest and its own spiritual demands, and each, in turn, following its own path back to the teaching of Jesus, has found there what seemed an extraordinary adaptation of that teaching to immediate issues and needs.....It seems to each age to have been written for the sake of the special problems which at the moment appear most pressing. As each new transition in human interest occurs, the teaching of Jesus seems to possess new value.

The eminent Professor evidently has made good use of those two famous books, *Swank by a Yank* and *Get on or Get Out*—books which insist that you can't laud yourself up too much if you wish to make an impression. How the religion of Jesus is going to solve those problems which we are battling with now—good government, the building of houses, the growing and distribution of food, the finding of work at more than a living wage for everybody, the absolute abolition of war, tolerance for all ideas, freedom of thought and speech, encouragement of art and music and literature for the masses, good education, etc.—is a profound mystery to me. And no book I have yet read has solved them—certainly Professor Peabody's,

with its great show of quotations, mostly German, has not. And how authorities differ! It was Bishop Magee, of Peterborough, who said that " It is not possible for the State to carry out in all its relations literally all the precepts of Christ, and that a State which attempted this would not exist a week. That if it were possible to do this the result would be a perfect intolerable tyranny." Of course, Professor Peabody does *not* quote Bishop Magee.

The religion of Jesus has taught us nothing in music, art, or literature. It has taught us nothing in medicine or surgery. What would we think of anyone able to cure disease and blindness and not letting the world know the cure? It makes a pretty story to read how Jesus cured the blind and healed the sick, but that is all. It has not been of the slightest use to anyone else. It is also very pretty to read how Jesus said, " Suffer the little children to come unto me....." but the curious thing is that the people to whom he said it were the Jews, than whom no other race in the world shows more love for children. Yet the followers of Jesus in this country have to support a very hard worked society, or rather two—one to prevent Christians from ill-treating their children and the other to prevent Christians from ill-treating dumb animals, and this after nearly two thousand years of Christian teaching and exhortations to righteousness! The shining example of Jesus does not seem to have penetrated the hearts of some of his followers at any rate.

There is no need at the moment to go into the parables and miracles of Jesus. They cannot be dismissed in a line and they are, for the most part, too foolish to waste more than a line on. And the prophecies are equally as stupid. They have been nearly all falsified, and the thousands of books devoted to elucidating them are nearly all forgotten. The world has no time for these and the other mysteries of Jesus. How many educated people outside the profession really believe that God sent his only begotten son to die for us to save us from the sin of Adam? This and a dozen other things connected with the Christian deity are as dead as a doornail, and can never be believed in again by anyone with just ordinary intelligence. Such stories are fit only for missionary fare to be taught to the benighted heathen—and they don't swallow everything!

But I am still puzzled. Many years ago I read the New Testament. For the purpose of these articles I read the Gospels carefully again. I am, in truth, a sadder and wiser man, for I found them to be far more puerile than I thought. Why, in the name of all that's holy, have they imposed so long on the civilized world? Would not the world really be cleaner and better if the whole mass of devils and spirits, of myth and miracles, of fear and terror, of hell and damnation, of silly parables and dubious and uncertain moral aphorisms, which comprise the religion of Jesus, were swept away?

If it has not yet been done, it is slowly but surely being done in the noble service of, and hope for, the great heart of humanity.

H. CUTNER.

THE WAGES OF SIN.

God the Inscrutable
Looked on complacently
The while young Denison
Slipped all his debts by careful insolvency,
Broke his wife's heart, and ruined the serving
girl.

But Lobster Salad and Iced Watermelon—
That was too much for even a godhead:
" I'll smite him for that," quoth God the
Inscrutable.

And the wretch died in torment
At two in the morning.

JESSICA NELSON NORTH.
From *Poetry*, a Magazine of Verse.

The Laugh That Kills.

RIDICULE has always been considered a very dangerous, though useful, weapon in controversy. It is, indeed, a two-edged sword; it sometimes recoils upon those who use it if they do not employ it with skill and dexterity. But it is a perfectly legitimate weapon. The politician uses it frequently, and often finds it more effective than a multitude of dry facts and figures; the lawyer employs this mode of advocacy when it suits his purpose, and if he can succeed in reducing his opponent's case to an absolute absurdity he is satisfied, and the theological controversialist does not disdain to employ it if he can only find what he considers some glaring flaws in his opponent's armoury. But when the Freethinker turns upon the theologian the self-same weapon, and with daring skill uses it against the absurd stories of the Bible, or the incredible tenets of the Christian creed, the theologian, and his crowd of credulous followers, call loudly for help and invoke the aid of the police to prevent the Freethinker from shattering many of his most treasured idols.

In nearly all prosecutions for blasphemy it is the fear of ridicule that actuates the appeal to the law for protection. Instinctively, bigots seem to realize that their creed will not bear the test of reason, especially when it is employed to bring their cherished beliefs into ridicule and contempt. No wonder the late Lord Chief Justice said that "blasphemy was a most dangerous class of crime." Dangerous to error it undoubtedly is. If, however, Christianity were true, any attempt to bring it into ridicule and contempt would be perfectly fruitless. You cannot harm the truth. In fact, the more you examine and criticise it the more clearly its sterling and imperishable qualities are revealed to you. The more you try to ridicule the axioms of Euclid the clearer and more indisputable they become. No astronomer ever objects to ridicule being brought to bear upon the established facts of astronomy; no geologist would ever think of asking the Government to pass an act to punish people who felt disposed to laugh at the deductions from the observed order of phenomena in his branch of physical science, nor would the biologist, nor any other scientist. It is only the priest and the parson who seek protection against the assaults of the enemy.

When Benedictus Spinoza gave up his belief in the Bible as the inspired word of God as long ago as 1636, the Jewish community were prepared to punish him with great severity for his unbelief. It was, indeed, the old, old story oft repeated in the history of religion:—

Ralph thou hast done a fearful deed
In falling away from thy father's creed.

As the late Geo. Wm. Foote says in his admirable series of pamphlets entitled *Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought*, essay on "Spinoza," p. 53:—

On July 6, 1636, the Jewish Synagogue at Amsterdam was crowded with excited men of Israel, assembled there to witness the excommunication of the recusant Spinoza. Angry, frowning faces, and lurid dark eyes told more eloquently than any words how enraged the faithful were, and how absorbed in the zeal of persecution. What mercy could be shown to a perverse youth who deliberately forsook the religion of his own people and forefathers and opposed himself to the matchless wisdom of their rabbis? While the anathema was being pronounced the long wailing note of a great horn occasionally sounded; the lights seen brightly burning at the beginning of the ceremony were extinguished one by one as it proceeded, till at the end the last went out and the congregation was left in total darkness. And in the solemn mysterious gloom the faithful responded with fervid *Amens!*

The anathema was a dreadful one; it reminds one, however, of the fearful curse in the *Jackdaw of Rheims*. "But what gave rise to no little surprise, no one seemed one penny the worse." For young Spinoza promptly removed from Amsterdam to Rotterdam and got away from the sphere in which the fearful curse was operative.

The Freethought of the eighteenth century found one of its ablest representatives in Voltaire, who directed the shafts of his irony and wit against the Christian religion as embodied in the creed of the Roman Catholic Church. Naturally, he was slandered and persecuted for his pains, but the blows he inflicted upon the incredible creed by the sharp sword of reason and irony left their mark upon the debasing superstition of that age. The laugh of Voltaire was more powerful as a weapon of destruction than the special pleading of a thousand priests.

Thomas Paine, the English Deist, was a different type of man from the French Freethought champion. Voltaire was a poet, philosopher, novelist, historian, playwright; indeed, he had all the accomplishments of a great man of letters. Paine was a shrewd man of the world, with a fair knowledge of science, and a large measure of what is called "common-sense," and when he attacked the Christian superstition he subjected it to a critical examination, from which it never really survived, at any rate, in the minds of those who had the courage to read his *Age of Reason*. Indeed, Paine struck a vital blow at the whole scheme of the Christian faith. He saw that the scheme was a priest-made affair, and he exposed it with all the earnestness of his truth-loving nature. He said:—

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and in order to qualify himself for that trade he begins with perjury. Can we conceive anything more destructive to morality than this? (*Age of Reason*, p. 2).

No wonder the priests and parsons of every sect never forgave him. They knew that Paine understood the secret of the whole profession. But Paine, like Voltaire, ridiculed the absurdities of the Christian faith and reduced the whole scheme to an absolute absurdity. Take this for an example:—

The Christian mythologists tell us that Christ died for the sins of the world, and that he came *on purpose to die*. Would it not, then, have been the same if he had died of a fever, or of the small pox, of old age, or of anything else?

That goes to the very root of the matter, and leaves the poor Christian apologist without a leg to stand on. Because, if Christ could have saved the world by death from any of these causes, what need for the crucifixion? and if it was necessary to die on the cross, then Judas Iscariot ought to be made a saint, for if he had not betrayed Christ the whole race would have remained unsaved; in other words, would have gone to everlasting perdition. Ah! there's the rub! And in this case again it is the laugh that kills.

We need not undervalue the work of such great scholars as Bishop Colenso in his *Examination of the Pentateuch*, or of the critical examination of the *Life of Jesus* by Strauss, or the more sympathetic treatment of the subject by Renan; all these have helped to undermine the scheme of the Christian superstition; but we must not forget the work of such pioneers as Priestley, Shelley, Carlyle; all these played a noble part in helping on the great work of human emancipation. When, however, we come to estimate the value of the work done to advance Freethought in this country during

the past fifty years we must not forget George Jacob Holyoake, Charles Bradlaugh, George William Foote, Charles Watts, Touzeau Parris, Joseph Symes, Mrs. Harriet Law and Mrs. Annie Besant; these were the pioneers of those early days, they bore the brunt of the great battle for human freedom, and but for their devotion to a great cause in those days of strife and persecution we should not be able to express our views on religion with such freedom as we do to-day. As that brave Radical clergyman, the Rev. Stewart Headlam, said at South Place a short time ago, these men "cleared away a great deal of rubbish associated with the Christian faith" in the past.

Let it be understood that we, as Freethinkers, have no desire to destroy anything that is true, or good, or beautiful in any religious faith, even if we could. Our desire is to uproot the false, the wicked, the mischievous wherever we find it, and to scatter the seeds of truth on fruitful soil. And if we can only succeed in clearing away some of the weeds of superstition we shall have done something to make smooth the pathway for those who follow us. We, too, in our small way are pioneers. As Walt Whitman sings:—

O you youths, western youths
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride
and friendship
Plain I see you, western youths, see you tramping
with the foremost
Pioneers, O pioneers.
Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied,
over these beyond the seas?
We take up the task eternal and the burden and
the lesson
Pioneers, O Pioneers.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Resurrection.

THE Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christianity. "If Christ be not risen," St. Paul says, "then is our preaching vain."¹ Yet the Resurrection is a pure romance, a legend which grew up in the Apostolic age, and was propagated amongst those who greedily swallowed such marvels without the slightest investigation. The famous Jerusalem ghost is as fabulous as the Cock Lane ghost, or any other phantom born of ignorance and credulity.

Whoever will read the story of the Crucifixion with an unprejudiced mind will find himself in a perfect atmosphere of superstition. Wonders are so plentiful that one writer throws in an earthquake, or a wholesale resurrection of dead men, on his own account, as though they were everyday trifles.

While Jesus hung upon the cross, according to Matthew, "there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."² This is improved upon by Luke, who says the darkness extended "over all the earth."³ Such a phenomenon must have excited universal surprise, but it escaped the attention of the Jewish historian, Josephus, whose writings are voluminous and minute. "It happened," says Gibbon, "during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. But the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe."⁴ Pliny, indeed, like Virgil, Plutarch, and Dion Cassius, relates the preternatural darkness that followed the murder of Cæsar; but all the poets and historians of the age are silent as to the more marvellous darkness of

the Passion of Christ. What is still more singular, it is not referred to by the apostle John, who, according to the story, was present at the Crucifixion.

Another wonder recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but ignored by John, is the earthquake which rent the veil of the temple in twain. This timely and accommodating earthquake was unknown both to the Jews and the Pagans. To remedy this deficiency of evidence the Fathers discovered a passage in Phlegon, which relates that in the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad there was an unprecedented eclipse of the sun, and an earthquake in Bithynia, that overthrew several houses in Nice. But Bithynia is far from Judæa, and the Crucifixion took place on the first, and not the fourth, year of this Olympiad.⁵ Nor, indeed, could the eclipse of the Passion have been a natural phenomenon, for eclipses occur at the time of the new moon, and Jesus was crucified when the moon was at the full. Fathers like Jerome, Gregory, and Hilary, therefore, represent the darkness as supernatural; the last telling us that the sun was palsied at the sight of the suffering Redeemer, just as Virgil had said that the sun, at the death of Cæsar, covered his disk with a bloody veil, and made the impious age tremble with apprehension of an everlasting night.⁶

The most serious objection to the passage in Phlegon is its character as a forgery. Gibbon says it is "now wisely abandoned"; and Dean Milman adds that "its authority is rejected by every writer who has the least pretensions to historical criticism."⁷

A still more astonishing incident of the Crucifixion was unknown to Mark, and Luke, and John. According to Matthew, the "graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."⁸

Not only is this incredible in face of the silence of other evangelists; it is in opposition to St. Paul, who describes the risen Christ as "the first-fruits of them that slept."⁹ In itself, also, the story is ridiculous. Resuscitation after death is a miracle, and the power which wrought it could have raised the corpses without the assistance of an earthquake. We may also inquire as to the identity of the "saints." Who were they? Who saw them? Who recognized them? What were they doing between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning? How did they obtain clothes to cover their nudity? Did they return to their graves after exhibiting themselves in Jerusalem, or are they still the Wandering Jews?¹⁰ How are we to account for the Jews being ignorant of such a miracle? Would not the whole population flock to see the men who had risen from the dead? Would there not have been universal curiosity to learn from them the secrets of the grave?

Similar prodigies were related of the death of Cæsar, as Shakespeare notes in a passage of *Hamlet*:—

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mighty Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.

The one prodigy is no doubt as authentic as the other. Both belong to the common superstition of the age. Nor is it surprising that Julius Cæsar, like Jesus Christ, should likewise exceed the fate of ordinary men. "Cæsar also," in the words of Mr. Froude, "was believed to have risen again and ascended into heaven, and became a divine being."¹¹

By this time the reader will perceive that the marvels of the Crucifixion are such as to make us very critical as to the Resurrection. The age was infinitely credulous,

¹ 1 Coriuthians xv., 14.

² Matthew xxvii., 45.

³ Luke xxiii., 44.

⁴ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, chap. xv.

⁵ Peyrat, *Histoire Élémentaire et Critique de Jésus*, p. 306.

⁶ Virgil, *Georgics*, bk. i., v., 446, etc.

⁷ Milman, *History of Christianity*, bk. i., chap. vii., footnote.

⁸ xxvii., 52, 53.

⁹ 1 Coriuthians xv., 20.

¹⁰ Eusebius informs us that Quadratus presented an apology to the Emperor Hadrian, in which he asserted that some of them still survived! This was in A.D. 120, nearly eighty years after their resurrection!

¹¹ J. A. Froude, *Cæsar*, chap. xxviii. (first edition). In the second edition the passage is altered as follows: "The enthusiasm of the multitude refused to believe that he was dead. He was supposed to have ascended into heaven, not in adulatory metaphor, but in literal and prosaic fact."

and the biographers of Jesus Christ were steeped in its familiar superstition.

But before we enter upon a full examination of the Resurrection story let us press this point more forcibly. Dr. Westcott, Bishop of Durham in succession to Dr. Lightfoot, ventured the extraordinary assertion, with respect to Christ's disciples, that "there was no popular belief at the time which could have inspired them with a faith in an imaginary Resurrection."¹² Now there are several good answers to this assertion. In the first place, there has always been an inclination to believe in a lost leader's return; witness the legends of Arthur, Arminius, Barbarossa, and Napoleon. Suetonius records the belief in the expected return of Nero to resume his throne. To this day the followers of Joanna Southcote believe that she will revisit the earth. Perhaps the most signal parallel to the Apostle's frame of mind is to be found in Omar, who drew his scimitar when news was brought of the death of Mohammed, and swore he would kill the wretch who dared to say that the prophet of Allah could die.

In the second place, the resurrection of the dead was not unfamiliar to the Jews. They had a story in their Scriptures of the restoration to life of a widow's son by Elijah,¹³ and another of a dead man who revived on touching the bones of Elisha.¹⁴ When Herod heard of the fame of Jesus he said it was John the Baptist whom he had beheaded.¹⁵ When Jesus inquired of his disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" they answered, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets."¹⁶ This proves the existence of a general belief in the resurrection of eminent dead men in the very time of Christ. Nor is this all. The evangelists relate the raising from the dead of three persons by Jesus himself; the widow's son, the ruler's daughter, and Lazarus; and the first evangelist, as we have already seen, relates a wholesale resurrection of dead "saints" at the Crucifixion.¹⁷

In the third place, if the idea of resurrection was familiar to the Jews, it might be expected to exist in the greatest strength in the minds of the disciples of Jesus, who were drawn from Galilee, which was the most superstitious part of Palestine. Lightfoot represents the ordinary Jews as "mad with superstition," and as "given to an easiness of believing all manner of delusions beyond measure."¹⁸ What, then, might be expected of the rude Galileans, whose ignorance and credulity were proverbial?

In the fourth place, it was the common belief among the Jews that the Messiah would transcend the greatest of the patriarchs and prophets; and if Enoch was translated, and Elijah went up in a fiery chariot, it was only natural that the Messiah should also ascend to heaven. Other Jews, indeed, than the disciples of Jesus were deluded by this expectation. Sabbathai Sevi, for instance, in the seventeenth century, proclaimed himself the Messiah, and attracted a crowd of disciples in the Levant. Being seized by the Sultan, and offered the choice of death or becoming a Mussulman, he preferred conversion to execution, and lived until 1676, when he succumbed to the colic instead of the bowstring. "It might have been expected," says Milman, "that his sect, if it survived his apostasy, at least would have expired with his death; but there is no calculating the obstinacy of human credulity: his followers gave out that he was transported to heaven like Enoch and Elijah; and, notwithstanding the constant and active opposition of the Jewish priesthood, the sect spread in all quarters."¹⁹

¹² Westcott, *Gospel of the Resurrection*.

¹³ 1 Kings xvi., 17, etc.

¹⁴ 2 Kings xiii., 21.

¹⁵ Matthew xiv., 2; Mark vi., 14.

¹⁶ Matthew xvi., 13, 14.

¹⁷ Grotius, writing of the Resurrection, cites Pagan authorities in favour of its possibility. "Neither," he says, "did wise men believe it to be impossible: for Plato relates it of Er, the Armenian; Heraclides Ponticus, of a certain woman; Herodotus, of Aristæus; and Plutarch, out of another: which, whether they were true or false, shows the opinion of learned men concerning the possibility of the thing."—*De Veritate*, bk. ii. and vii.

¹⁸ Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ*; Works, vol. xi. p. 8r.

¹⁹ Milman, *History of the Jews*, p. 584.

Substitute the name of Jesus Christ for that of Sabbathai Sevi, and the disdainful words of Milman are precisely such as a philosophic historian might apply to the Christians.

Strange as it may sound to orthodox ears, there is no positive proof that Jesus died upon the cross. Some of the early "heretics"—this is, Christians who had the misfortune to be in the minority—disbelieved the story. According to a Gospel said to have been written by Barnabas, the companion of Paul, Jesus was taken up into the third heaven by four angels, and Judas Iscariot was crucified in his stead.²⁰ The Basilidians asserted that the substitutionary victim was Simon the Cyrenean.²¹ The Docetæ taught that Jesus was a phantom, and not flesh and blood; an opinion adopted in the Koran, which says that Jesus was privately taken up into heaven, and that a certain resemblance of him was fixed to the cross; and consequently Jesus was not dead, but the eyes of the Jews were deceived.²²

It is not clear even from the Gospels that Jesus really died upon the cross. Crucifixion was a lingering death, and Pilate marvelled at the report of his expiration in the brief space of three hours.²³ The legs of the two thieves were broken, but those of Jesus were untouched. John tells us, although the other evangelists do not, that a soldier speared his side, and there came forth blood and water. But this is an impossible circumstance. Water could not flow if he were living, and blood would not flow if he were dead. The early Fathers, as we have already observed, looked upon the whole circumstance as preternatural. The water and blood were regarded as symbolic of purification and redemption²⁴ and this may account for its introduction in the fourth Gospel.

No post-mortem examinations were then made, and no inquests were held upon the bodies of executed malefactors; and as Jesus was hurried away from the cross, and placed in a tomb by a friend, it is conceivable that he survived the ordeal; indeed, there is a Jewish tradition to that effect.

Now when we are discussing a case of resurrection, as Professor Huxley points out, the most important link in the chain of evidence is the proof that the man was really dead. The evidence of ordinary observers on such a point is absolutely worthless. Even medical evidence may have little more value. The ordinary signs of death may be fallacious, unless the temperature has sunk below a certain point, and the cadaveric stiffening of the muscles is well-established.²⁵

No such observations were made in the case of Jesus, nor was there so much as a cursory examination by independent persons. His death, therefore, is by no means a certitude; and when we are discussing a miracle, every link of the chain must be thoroughly tested.

Let us now take the burial of Jesus. His body was begged by a rich disciple, Joseph of Arimathæa, and laid in a new tomb. A big stone was rolled against the entrance, and Joseph of Arimathæa probably went home to supper. In that tomb Jesus remained three days, the whole of which time he miraculously put in between late on Friday afternoon and early on Sunday morning. Meanwhile the chief priests and Pharisees were acting in a most unaccountable manner. They went to Pilate and said:—

Sir, we remember what that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead.²⁶

Surely this was an extraordinary request. Pilate had given the body to Joseph of Arimathæa, who had placed it in his own tomb. It is simply incredible that the Governor should take any further trouble in the matter. Who can believe that he allowed a company of Roman soldiers to guard a private sepulchre without the owner's desire or acquiescence?

²⁰ E. P. Meredith, *Prophet of Nazareth*, p. 288.

²¹ Dr. E. Burton, *Heresies of the Apostolic Age*, p. 159.

²² Grotius, *Truth of the Christian Religion*, bk. vi.

²³ Mark xv., 44.

²⁴ Burton, p. 469.

²⁵ Huxley, *Hume*, p. 138.

²⁶ Matthew xxvii., 63, 64.

How did the priests and Pharisees come to know that Jesus prophesied his resurrection? It was unknown to his very disciples, according to the express statement of John; ²⁷ and this is corroborated by the preparations for embalming the body. ²⁸

But the story grows in incredibility. The sepulchre was blocked with a stone, this was sealed, and the soldiers watched it night and day; although no one seems to have ascertained whether the body was really inside. During the second night there was another earthquake; an angel flew down from heaven, rolled back the stone, sat upon it, and paralysed the keepers with fear. Amidst the hubbub Jesus seems to have made off. *But no one saw him do so.* The angel told the woman "he is risen," and showed them the place where he had lain. But that he was ever there, or that he ever left, is merely a supposition.

(To be Continued.) G. W. FOOTE.

JAMES MILL ON RELIGION.

My father's rejection of all that is called religious belief was not, as many might suppose, primarily a matter of logic intellectual. He found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness. His intellect spurned the subtleties by which men attempt to blind themselves to this open contradiction. The Sabœan, or Manichœan theory of a Good and an Evil Principle, struggling against each other for the government of the universe, he would not have equally condemned; and I have heard him express surprise that no one revived it in our time. He would have regarded it as a mere hypothesis; but he would have ascribed to it no depraving influence. As it was, his aversion to religion, in the sense usually attached to the term, was of the same kind with that of Lucretius: he regarded it with the feelings due not to a mere mental delusion, but to a great moral evil. He looked upon it as the greatest enemy of morality: first, by setting up fictitious excellences—belief in creeds, devotional feelings, and ceremonies, not connected with the good of human-kind—and causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtues: but above all, by radically vitiating the standard of morals; making it consist in doing the will of a being, on whom it lavishes indeed all the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful. I have a hundred times heard him say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity.—*John Stuart Mill, "Autobiography,"* pp. 39-41.

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

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METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Debate—"What does the Bible Prove?" Mr. E. C. Saphin v. Father Vincent McNabb. Discussion Circle meets every Wednesday at 7.30, "Coronet" Hotel, Soho Street, W.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.—No Meeting. SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No Meeting.

COUNTRY. INDOOR.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (The Elysium, High Street, Swansea): 7, Casey and Dolly, "Art and the Artisan." Seats 1s. 6d., 1s., and 6d.

²⁷ John xx., 9.

²⁸ Mark xvi., 1; Luke xxiv., 1; John xix., 39.

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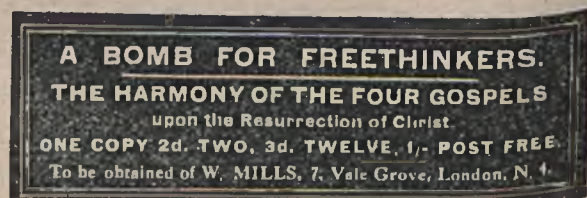
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