

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

LETTERS TO THE CLERGY.—VI. ON "THE CREDENTIALS OF THE GOSPEL." To the Rev. Professor Joseph Agar Beet.

(CONTINUED.)

ACCORDING to your philosophy, Christ not only saves from the future penalty of past sins, but also from the power of present sin. It is possible that you believe this, but what evidence is there to prove it? It is clearly impossible to examine the lives of individuals, or to penetrate the secret recesses of personal character. We are able, however, to judge of a general influence by average results, and an appeal to statistics does not show us that Christians are morally superior to unbelievers. I defy you to adduce a single reason for believing that they are so. When I was imprisoned for bringing your religion into "disbelief and contempt," I found it was taken for granted that every criminal belonged to some form of faith. There were a few Jews, many Catholics, and more Protestants. Their religion was stated on the cards affixed to their cell-doors, mine being accurately described as "None." A chapel was maintained for their devotions, and a clergyman to physic their souls. Surely, then, you will not maintain that unbelievers fill our gaols, or populate them even in proportion to their numbers. Nor can it be maintained that they neglect their share of positive duty. They recognise the law of "thou shalt" as well as the law of "thou shalt not." You will find them conspicuous in every advanced movement; not, perhaps, in soup, blanket, and coal societies, which only skin and film the ulcerous sore, but in those radical associations whose object is rather justice than charity, and the prevention of evil rather than its mitigation.

It is idle to tell me that the "wonderful fitness" of Christianity as a moral gospel has been "tested by thousands of men and women." The advocates of Buddhism, Brahminism, or Mohammedanism might make a similar assertion. The "fitness" in every case is the result of training. What men are "fitted" to is "fitted" to them. Had you been born and bred outside the pale of Christendom, you would have appreciated the "wonderful fitness" of some other faith.

Thus far I do not see that you have established the credentials of your creed. I will now follow you through the remainder of your argument.

You erect a number of dogmas on the basis of our ignorance of the origin of life and the evolution of mind. But this is entirely illegitimate. We are not entitled to reason from our *ignorance*. Every argument must be based on what we *know*. And while science is seeking a solution of new problems, I would remind you that its solution of old problems was always in opposition to religious dogmas. The clergy have always *been* wrong, and the presumption is that they are *still* wrong. I would also observe that the doctrines of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul prevailed for thousands of

years before Christianity was born, and are therefore no part of the *speciality* of your faith.

You are more to the point in asserting that "one religion"—to wit, your own—"occupies a place of unique superiority." Yet the statement is somewhat vague. I understand "unique," and I understand "superiority," but I cannot put them together as adjective and substantive. What is unique is not superior, and what is superior is not unique.

You assert that "all Christian nations stand immeasurably above all others." Do you include Abyssinia in "all Christian nations," and if not, why not? Or do you regard it as "immeasurably above" Ceylon in morals or China in civilisation?

What, also, do you mean by asserting that "in spite of their many wars, the Christian nations of the world form, in a very real sense, a political brotherhood?" Where is the political brotherhood between France and Germany, or England and Russia? Is it not a fact that nine-tenths, at least, of the quarrels in the world are between Christian nations? Have not Christian nations carried the art of war to its highest development? Do they not manufacture all the rifles, all the cannon, and all the gunpowder, as well as all the rum, brandy, gin, and whiskey? You yourself admit that "No army has the slightest hope of victory unless armed with the weapons and directed by the strategy of Christian nations." You add triumphantly that "The sword has passed into the hands of those nations who recognise the unique majesty of the lowly Nazarene."

This is the only part of your lecture with which I have the honor to agree. I would remark, however, that the military power of Christendom has nothing whatever to do with Christianity. Where were the "weapons" and the "strategy" of your faith when it vainly hurled crusade after crusade, for three centuries, against the infidel Saracens? Where were the "weapons" and the "strategy" of your faith in the seventh and eight centuries, when the successors of Mohammed swept Christianity out of Asia and Africa? Did not the Cross go down before the Crescent on a thousand battle-fields? And what has turned the tables? What has put the power of the sword into the hands of Christian nations? Is it not that Science which the Church fought tooth and nail, with the vigilance of a sleuth hound and the ferocity of a tiger? Without science, the British troops would not slaughter the Sudanese with such facility; without science, England would have established no empire in India; without science, the Anglo-Saxon race would never have colonised the world. Had Christianity succeeded in strangling Science, as she furiously endeavored, Europe would still be plunged in barbarism, and would have to hold its own against the hordes of Asia and Africa by sheer physical valor.

It is well that civilisation gives us the means of defending it. It is well that Europe is for ever safe from the incursions of outer barbarians. But how strange the eulogy of our military prowess sounds from the lips of one who "recognises the unique

majesty of the lowly Nazarene." Did he not declare that whoso took the sword should perish by the sword? Did he not teach the sinfulness of resisting evil? Did he not command his disciples to present their cheeks humbly to the smiter? Are you not glorifying Science instead of Christianity? Are you not riding roughshod over the plainest teachings of your master? How will you present yourself at the Day of Judgment before the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount?

With respect to Art, you assert that it "owns the supremacy of Christ." You remark that "Non-Christian nations contribute nothing to our galleries of painting and sculpture, or to the world's treasury of music." The grain of truth in these statements is simply this, that Europe leads the world's culture. But it did this before Christianity appeared, and the explanation is not religious but physical. Christianity has not given the Abyssinians any ascendancy. It will not give it to converted negroes or South Sea islanders. The question of superiority is simply one of race and climate. Given the Caucasian, with his large and complex brain, and his superior facial angle, and he is bound to lead the march of progress. Science, literature, and art are not the product of Christianity; they are the product of the Caucasian brain. This was true before Christianity appeared, and it will be true when Christianity has vanished.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

"CAN A NON-INTELLIGENT CAUSE PRODUCE AN INTELLIGENT EFFECT?"

SUCH is the exceedingly crude but not altogether ineffective question occasionally put as a poser to Atheists by one of the outdoor lecturers of the Christian Evidence Society. It was first brought to my notice by an Athiest friend who felt puzzled by it and wished me to solve the difficulty for him. As the chief difficulty lies in the unsuspected retention of the remains of old ideas, which are apt to linger in the recesses of our mental machinery long after we imagine them to be completely extirpated, it may be better to address my arguments and remarks to those who hold views more or less theistic rather than to those who are already converted to the only true religion, namely, none at all.

As an indispensable preliminary to argument, I must ask my theistic reader to allow that the question is to be decided by observation of facts and not merely by the foregone conclusions or intuitions or expectations of our own ill-trained minds biased by erroneous thoughts and beliefs derived from the past and by inherited predispositions. If, indeed, foregone conclusions of a religious nature are to decide questions of fact, then undoubtedly non-intelligent matter cannot of itself develop intelligence. On the same grounds it was once perfectly certain that the sun went round the earth, that the earth was a vast rectangular plain, and that the world was created six thousand years ago. These and many other beliefs have since been completely disproved. So that intuitions and religious ideas are not decisive as to questions of fact. Hence further inquiry is necessary. But if, on the other hand, observation of facts is to decide, then it must be held that certain combinations of non-intelligent matter can and do produce intelligence.

1. As far as observation goes, intelligence is *always* derived from matter, and from no other source whatever. There is no instance of intelligence which does not flow directly and immediately from a combination of matter which taken in its separate items is non-intelligent, though intelligent as a whole. Without a complicated brain built up of non-intelligent food, the higher forms of intelligence are absolutely unknown; and the lower forms of intelligence are

equally dependent upon matter in a less highly organised condition. Those who like to *believe* that intelligence can exist otherwise than as a product or result or quality of material substance, should show us an example. We *know* of any number of millions of facts or instances in direct support of our contention. They do not know of one solitary proven instance to the contrary. They fondly hope and believe that intelligence exists without matter as the basis from which it springs, although they cannot bring forward a single case of such separate existence which will bear examination.

2. The realities of the universe do not necessarily conform themselves to our personal wishes. This obvious and important truth is commonly lost sight of by fond believers in the immortal existence of mind apart from matter. It may be unpleasant, or even utterly abhorrent, to some people to think that they will perish like the beasts and that this life ends all. They turn away in disgust—or at least they profess to do so—from the cruel "mockery" of a short seventy years' lease of life. Existence is to them unendurable unless cheered by the assurance that it can never be got rid of, but may have to be everlastingly endured, perhaps by themselves, and certainly by the majority of their neighbors, in endless physical or mental misery. Of course they contrive to largely ignore the unpleasant aspect of their theory, and they indulge in pleasing but highly inconsistent anticipations of a heaven, where they will be re-united with those they love, and will enjoy everlasting happiness. The painfulness of the loss of this carefully-cherished belief in immortality is, however, not the slightest proof of the separate and independent existence of mind and matter. To say that man is immortal because in many cases he strongly covets immortality, as many eminent religious reasoners urge, is going beyond the province of logic. To abhor one conclusion and to intensely desire the other does not conduce to a clear judgment as to the truth. As this powerful bias in favor of a belief in personal immortality prevents an impartial consideration of the arguments, it is well to remind those who desire truth, and truth only, that they must view the question apart from their personal likes and dislikes, and without the slightest regard to men's wishes and beliefs.

3. Where is the difficulty in believing that intelligence springs from non-intelligence? Why should not intelligence, as a complicated effect, result from complicated combinations and interactions of millions of atoms and molecules possessing special polarities or affinities and varied properties under varying circumstances? Fact, and not feeling, must decide. Our inability to comprehend how and why is no argument against a universal fact. That intelligence does so result we see for ourselves; and the burden of proving that it results in any degree from the initiative or superintending action of a supernatural factor rests with those who put forward such an hypothesis.

4. Suppose intelligence could not arise from non-intelligence, but only from previous intelligence. This would not destroy the Atheistic position. Mind and matter might alike be eternally self-existent and alike indestructible, even as time and space cannot otherwise be conceived of than as eternally self-existent and indestructible. There is no need to assume deity to account for mind and matter. If intelligence must be created, then the "supreme intelligence" must have been created. God must have been created by a presumably greater God, and he in his turn by a still greater God, and so on *ad infinitum*. The hypothesis that mind or spirit or intelligence must be created, is the opposite of an explanation; for it creates great difficulties without really solving any.

5. The fundamental error is that we regard an attribute of an object as a separate object. Mind is only known as an attribute of matter. Intelligence is never manifested except as a property of certain highly organised substances under certain conditions. It varies in degree with the complexity and suitability of the organisation. No distinct boundary line can be drawn between intelligence and non-intelligence, just as none can be drawn clearly separating reason from instinct, or animal from vegetable. Non-intelligent matter, moreover, is almost as wonderful in its properties as if it were already gifted with the more variable adjustabilities which we name intelligence. When non-intelligent molecules of water form themselves into the delicate crystallisations of the snow-flake and of the frosted window-pane, they build up beautiful and varied designs superior to those produced by the intelligence of ordinary men. Even the elementary atoms of matter display strongly marked preferences and degrees of preference in the choice or selection of the particular atoms with which they will combine or refuse to combine. When climbing plants search for and clasp projections or insert tendrils into crevices, they really display a rudimentary form of intelligence. The parasitic plant that dips into the reservoirs of the pitcher-plant only does in a simpler form what the intelligent school-boy does when he robs an orchard. When the leaf of the Venus's fly-trap seizes an insect, presses it to death, and slowly digests it, the non-intelligent leaf only does what the more highly organized intelligence of the tiger or of man does in a more complicated way. Nay, if we look at the matter fairly, the rudiment of intelligence is displayed when a plant sends its root one way and its leaves the other, and when it opens its flowers to the sun and closes them at night. The adaptation of acts to ends is the rudimentary form of intelligence. The intelligence of the fish, of the bird, of the elephant, and of the man, is only a continued development of the simpler forms of intelligence seen in inferior animals and in plants; and this again in its lowest exemplifications is but a step higher than the elective affinities of chemical atoms and molecules. And whosoever would rightly understand how this development has taken place before all things it is necessary that he should carefully study the Darwinian theory and its applications. The gradual evolution of intelligence has obviously been brought about by the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest through innumerable generations.

6. Going beyond the strict limits of the question we are confronted with a much more formidable difficulty. It must be admitted that consciousness is almost as inexplicable as matter, or a first cause uncaused. We can neither "understand" consciousness nor account for it. Advancing intelligence, or complex adaptability, seems a natural result of the survival of the fittest. Life and intellect seem inevitable as ultimate consequences of the play of atoms with certain complex properties. But the addition of consciousness, sensation, the feeling of pleasure and pain, to the automata inevitably evolved, evades our comprehension. But science has solved many problems which at one time seemed insoluble. Who can say that the spirit of patient investigation which has revealed to us the workings of the solar system and the general process of evolution may not in due time explain to us the nature and origin and development of consciousness, partly, perhaps, by clearing away the mental difficulties created by inherited prepossessions or modes of cerebration, which have imbedded plausible errors and crude working hypotheses deep into the very structure of language and thought? Who knows how far science may enable the human mind to understand itself? If, however, there is any "explanation" suitable to

our capacities, it is beyond our reach at present. Religious people need not rush to the conclusion that their theory must therefore be true. Eclipses were not caused by dragons seizing the sun, although the Chinese had no other explanation to offer. Neither we may presume, was New Zealand pulled up from the depths of the ocean by the entangled fish-hook of a god, although the New Zealanders were perfectly ignorant of any other reason for the emergence of their islands from the sea. Any theory is not necessarily better than none. Because science has not yet explained everything, we need not regard the confident guesses of ignorant men as infallible.

7. Before giving a direct reply to the question whether a "non-intelligent cause" can produce an "intelligent effect," I should point out that one single cause is not the limit of nature's resources. She has a practical infinity of active causes at work in the innumerable atoms and molecules and substances and cells and tissues of which the material universe is composed. The question, to be an honest one, should ask whether a practically infinite number of non-intelligent causes and conditions acting through enormous periods of time might not evolve intelligence; and to this question the self-evident answer is, Yes. Science has already done much to show us how this has actually come to pass, but the farther she explores the farther does the creative intelligence recede from view and the less need there is for it. To say that there *must* have been an intelligent "first cause uncaused" is to fill up the unknown and perhaps unknowable with a mere belief which, having no warranty or proof whatever, can only be retained so long as the believer refuses to subject it to the laws of reasoning.

W. P. BALL.

THE NEW EMANCIPATION.

Lecture delivered in the Paine Hall, Paine Memorial, before the Ingersoll Secular Society, by L. K. WASHBURN.

(CONCLUDED.)

I HAVE tried to see wherein the world is helped by accepting the Bible as the word of God, and Jesus as the Savior of man, but I cannot discover that this faith blossoms into any virtues different from what humanity bears, where it rejects this faith. I cannot see that any terrible consequences follow doubt of the divinity of Christianity, or that misfortune or calamity singles out those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, and until Christians enjoy immunities from the ills on earth, until they are exempt from the pains and penalties which follow violation of Nature's laws here, all talk about the blessings of salvation through faith in Jesus is nonsense pure and simple.

We want the proof that Jesus helps man, that a person who surrenders his independence to this so-called Savior is benefitted by his act. We fail to see that faith in Jesus does this world any good. I admit that it builds churches, that it supports priests and ministers, but I cannot find that the earth is freer from pain or vice where Christianity exists than where it has never been heard of. We cannot go to another world to verify its claim that the Christian faith saves the human soul from suffering *there*.

Does it pay to support an institution which cannot show that it is doing what it claims? It seems to me that the world is paying a good deal for nothing, when it supports the Christian Church, and that it would be wise for the world to insure itself against pain in the future, and use what it gives the Church to relieve suffering in the present.

The plain fact, without any pious misrepresentation, is this, the Christian Church wants the world to "believe in Jesus" for the purpose of helping the Church and not for the purpose of helping the world. When we make a practical test of faith in Jesus it fails to yield any results that recommend it to our adoption. This dogma of salvation is illogical and ridiculous. It cannot pass an examination by common sense. How are we saved according to Christian teaching? By believing. That is all. What are we saved from? Not from cold, hunger, poverty, or vice. Faith will not feed us, clothe us, or support us. Will believing anything give us anything or make us anything?

What has Jesus done for those who work for a living, that makes their labor lighter, their toil easier? I do not see but what men have to work just as hard to live and get a living, as though Jesus had never lived or died. Wherein is man benefited in his earthly life by believing in Jesus? This is the true test of the value of the Christian faith, and by the answer which the world makes to this question must his faith stand or fall. I claim that this faith robs man from his cradle to his grave, that it has developed a system of ecclesiastical plunder which has oppressed man without mercy, and that all it has given the world is a worthless promise on the future. The physical existence of humanity is not dependent upon the Christian faith.

The work of the world is no less, the suffering no less, the disappointment no less, for what Jesus did. Jesus as a Savior is only an ecclesiastical ornament. Of what use is he in time of famine or distress? What help does he render in sickness or misfortune, in time of flood or drouth? Let his name banish disease from the earth, drive vice and crime from human society, choke with hands of love the greed and lust for money, pull down the cruel wall of separation between the rich and poor, change poverty to comfort, touch the heart of stone with hand of pity and behind the rain of grief put the sun of joy, and faith in Jesus will defy the attacks of unbelief. But as long as man has to depend upon himself for what he gets in *this* life, I see no reason to think that Jesus will be of any more service in another life than he is in this.

Safety in the present is salvation in the future. Not a Savior's arm to lean on, but strength to stand and go alone, is what man wants. Jesus is not the kind of Savior that this century can honor. We can get along without him. We want practical assistance, not a sentimental salvation. Jesus is not a substitute for a cord of wood, for a ton of coal, for a barrel of flour, for a bushel of potatoes, for a kind word, or a humane deed. When we get into a tight place Jesus does not get us out. The truth is, when the arm of Jesus was nailed to the cross it lost its power to further help the world.

We know nothing about the life and career of this Nazarene preacher that can be relied upon. He has left no mark of his personality upon the history of the world. We do not know whether he walked in paths of sunshine, or whether he was driven by the winds and storms. We must confess that whatever is believed about Jesus, nothing is positively known concerning him, and that faith is not a reliable biographer.

We are told that a sacrifice was made for the sins of men when Jesus was crucified. This is a theological fiction. The defeat of a personal ambition cannot be made an event of universal consequence. The religious doctrine of the Atonement, with Jesus as the sacrificial offering, has not a particle of truth in it.

Humanity requires the death of no man in any such way, and I see no historical evidence that bad men can be saved by killing good ones. There was nothing connected with the life or career of Jesus that lifted it above human importance. The mind must be emancipated from the superstitions of the New Testament. They have enslaved the human soul too long. Christianity is not the fruit of human strength, but of human weakness. It does not stand upon independence of the intellect, but upon the slavery of the intellect. We must rescue the mind from Christian bondage.

We stand upon this ground—that every man has the right to think and judge for himself, and that any authority that forbids the right of private judgment must be deposed and trodden under the feet of men. The word Christian stands for the authority of Christ and the submission of the believer. There is command in this word on one side and obedience on the other. We must resist this command and teach the world to resist it. We must put the truth in the place of the gospel. There comes no light from Bethlehem, no message from Jerusalem, no word from Nazareth, that this age needs. We get no cue from the life of Jesus that labor can follow, that Government can adopt, that mankind want. There is nothing human, nothing real, about the person of Jesus. His journey through life was like a billowy shadow from a passing cloud.

History has no stone that marks the end of his life, and oblivion has followed and erased every footstep that he made on the earth, and has slept above his grave for eighteen centuries. We should know every hour of the life of Jesus from his birth to his death, everything he said and did, if this life contained so much of the world's destiny as Christianity declares; but we know nothing. Is not the world tired of lies and frauds? Is it not sick of the pious cant and

hypocrisy that fill Christian churches? What is called religion to-day is belief of a superstition. What is called piety is submission to a priest or minister. It is time to give the world freedom. The next anti-slavery movement is to free the mind from Jesus—to dethrone this dead king, and break the shackles of his tyranny. His is dead to this century, dead to its politics, its science, its civilisation, dead to its homes, and its hearts, dead to its wants and its necessities, dead to its every way. The spiritual servitude of mankind must end. The world must get off the knees of fear. Man as a race is our inspiration, not man as a Christ, as a king. Pull the weeds out of the brain, the superstitions out of the mind. Let flowers grow there that have the blossoms of truth, that have the perfume of joy; let fruit ripen there that gives peace and satisfaction to life. The star of love should rise over every cradle and set over every grave. This star should guide our steps through the ways, and its beams light our feet, and its purity light our hearts.

We cannot look with indifference upon the false and foolish notions which underlie modern religious faith, nor can we speak of these notions without betraying our convictions. We will not bow our heads in hypocritical deference to the pious public opinion which reigns in society. I care nothing to hear a man state his opinions unless they are his own, and the prevailing sentiments on matters of religion are only what the Christian Church has taught for centuries. Christianity has been forced upon mankind so long that its theology almost runs in the blood. The religious opinions of most men have been handed down to them as pious heirlooms. But no religious dogma has done so much to destroy the mental integrity of mankind as the dogma of the divinity of Jesus. The man who accepts that dogma is a slave. It makes every fact of life a falsehood. It chains reason at the feet of faith, and makes the mind a coward and a hypocrite.

I believe in freedom for man, for freedom is necessary to human happiness and necessary in order to find the truth. When a man says "I believe," he says there is nothing more that I want to know. A creed shuts the door of investigation and locks it. It is unbelief that has found every truth that the world possesses.

This age has parted with the past. It is the era of science, not of theology. Man, not God, moves the world's heart. We cannot accept the Christian faith without dwarfing the mind. It is the moral, not the religious, that touches human sympathy. What the age lacks is the courage of its convictions. What it should do is to follow its living thought. It has left the Church; it should cease to support it. It has abandoned the Christian idols; it should destroy them. It has given up the hollow faith of Christianity; it should now drive it from the earth.

The minds which are free should help emancipate the race. Jesus has sat astride the world long enough. Mankind can get along without his services. He is the last of the heathen Gods. He does not belong to our civilisation. He deforms it. The silly adulation of Jesus witnessed in Christian churches shows how superstition will steal away the brains, and degrade the majesty of the mind.

I believe that we should be as honest in public as we are in private; that what we acknowledge to ourselves in the secret chamber of the heart, we should confess before the world; and I also believe that what we do not accept as true, we have no moral right to support. A high obligation is imposed by our convictions, and that is, to support them and make them respected. When those persons who have outgrown the Christian superstitions cease to aid them, they will soon decay, and then will dawn the day of the new emancipation upon the earth, when man will acknowledge no man as master, and when the human mind, freed from dogma and creed, will work for the welfare of humanity in perfect intellectual freedom.

That eccentric North Briton, the Rev. Peter Mackenzie, has been preaching at Mablethorpe Wesleyan chapel on Jonah. He said, and we agree with him, that the book of Jonah beats any three-volume novel. He also said, and this is refreshing, that Jonah's adventures must be regarded as literally true, a remark which was loudly applauded by his Wesleyan auditors. He concluded by hoping that "all might be taken into God's glory and see Jonah for themselves." The invitation is certainly attractive, and we will think it over. But why not throw in the whale too? A chat with Jonah on the whale would be interesting, but not more so than a chat with the whale on Jonah.

ACID DROPS.

Our Unitarian contemporary, the *Inquirer*, has made the discovery that the Freethinkers whom Mrs. Besant has for many years been addressing are "plain common-sense people with no lack of intelligence, but with a decided lack of reverence in their thought, and of poetry in their lives." Well, we confess to having very little reverence for anybody's superstitions, not even those of Unitarians. But we reckon we have as much taste for poetry as the Godites, only we prefer the plays of Shakespeare to the psalms of David. Our library is not as extensive as we could wish, but it is as extensive as we can afford to make it, and it includes a first-rate collection of ancient and modern poets, from Homer to Browning. What is more, these poets have all been read, some of them over and over again. It is just possible that we care more for poetry, and know more about it, than the man who wrote the *Inquirer* paragraph.

Poetry is the real thing, and religion is the simulacrum. Religion, indeed, has been defined as the poetry of unpoetical minds.

The *Inquirer* hopes Mrs. Besant will use Theosophy to do for her old admirers "what Atheism could never do," namely "awaken in their minds a capability of reverence and worship, and be to them a beginning of spiritual life." Beautiful! What airs the Godites give themselves! "I am holier than thou" is their constant assumption towards Freethinkers. But statistics show they are not better, and controversy shows they are not more intelligent.

By the way, Mr. Inquirer, what is "poetry in our lives?" Is it psalm-singing? Is it praying? Is it church-going? Is it talk about God and Immortality, and Heaven and Hell, and all the other items of theology? Or is it tenderness to the weak, sympathy with the suffering, and succor to the oppressed? Is it a sweet home, where the wife smiles fondly upon her husband, and the children climb upon his knees and fold their arms about his neck? Is it friendship, with its selfless bond, stronger than death or disgrace? Is it a love of mountain, wood and stream, and of the myriad-fold life that pulses in and around them? Is it a joyous basking in the golden sunlight, and a silent communion with "the huge and thoughtful night"? Is it a taste for art and fine literature? Is it a passionate interest in the great drama of life? Is it a study of what once was, and a dream of what is to be? If these things are the "poetry of our lives" the Freethinker need not go to religion to find them, for he has them already.

Recurring to Mrs. Besant, we may observe that all the sects are hoping to get her. Here is the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale, for instance, who tells the representative of a North London paper "I hope to welcome her back into the ranks of Christianity." Well, as Ophelia says, we know what we are, we know not what we may be. Still, we venture to hope Mrs. Besant will never be welcomed "over" by the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale.

The tithe war still goes on in Wales. Bailiffs and auctioneers who attempt to levy distraints are met with such powerful arguments that they are usually soon induced to relinquish their efforts.

Mr. T. J. Evans, writing in the *Daily News*, tells of a parish church which he entered with a friend a Sunday ago in Cardiganshire. They were astonished to find the parson reading the Litany and other portions of the Lessons without a soul in the church to listen or to respond. Mr. Evans himself attempted to accompany this much-neglected parson in a hymn tune, though, he says, "a more ridiculous exhibition of a duet I am sure was never witnessed." No doubt this parson would like the statute of Elizabeth put in force, which compels every person in the parish to attend church under pain of a severe fine.

The Church Congress meets this year in the diocese of the Bishop of Llandaff, and according to a newspaper report his lordship is to be presented with a pastoral staff. The article will be over six feet long and adorned with silver chasings. We hope it will be used to hook the wandering speakers back to the subject. In that case the chairman

and the speaker would be giving an imitation of the two Mac's, and we guess it would be the liveliest feature of the whole show.

Some funny things occurred at the recent Congress of Spiritists, which sat almost at the same time as our own at Paris. One gentleman told, as a proof that human beings had a double, the fact that he had left his wife at home, but that he had seen her during the day near *l'Ecole Militaire*—the military school. Yet upon his return she assured him she had never left the house. Joseph the carpenter was not more surely convinced of the angelic visits to Mary than he of the fact that his wife must have a double.

A report of the International Congress in *L'Egalité*, of Paris, has some funny blunders. We read of a veteran English Freethinker as Citoyen Holyaki, and Dr. Voelkel, of the *Neue Frei Religioses Sonntags Blatt*, of Magdeburg, is put down as "Wolkeel, redacteur, d'un journal Anglais 'Les Religions'"—editor of an English journal *The Religions*. Such little mistakes are not easily avoidable when reports are hastily written upon imperfect information, and we ourselves by no means pretend to infallibility.

At Woolwich the Rev. James Adair McAlister, vicar of Plumstead, has been summoned by the overseers of the parish for £58 4s. 6d., for parochial rates. He alleged that they were due on tithes which he had never received. The case cannot as yet be considered settled.

At Birmingham, a colored preacher and former slave has been appointed minister of Hope Street Chapel. He has made the interesting discovery that the chapel was built by a man who made a large fortune in the slave trade.

The missing Worcester clergyman, Canon Carroll, has turned up in Madras. Perhaps our friends there may be able to report further efforts at the evangelisation of young ladies.

The Rev. A. F. Barfield, the Walsall man of God and Unionist lecturer, who was supposed to have been murdered and quicklived by the Irish Invincibles, has, it appears, eloped with a young lady with whom he had been living under the name of Wilson. The pair have made tracks for New York.

Robert Foxton, calling himself a lieutenant of the Salvation Army, and living at Stratford has been convicted at West Ham, for singing in the streets and refusing to desist when requested. He was fined 2s. 6d. and costs. It thus appears that the howling religionists have no more right to annoy other people than anybody else, a doctrine which will commend itself to all sensible citizens if not to "General" Booth.

The Rev. W. T. Twamley, of Bradford, went to Doncaster races and got drunk. He was fined 5s. and costs. Hallelujah!

The Rev. J. McNeill has taken advantage of the Dock Strike to preach from the infamous parable of Dives and Lazarus. We observe, however, that he wound up by saying that the rich do not go to hell because they are rich, nor the poor to heaven because they are poor. Will he tell us, then, why Lazarus soared to glory? He was poor, and he had sore legs, but beyond that he had no recorded virtue. The fact is, the parable is a piece of devilish claptrap. Lazarus has a bad time on earth and a good time in heaven, while Dives has a good time on earth and a bad time in hell; and the whole moral is that two blacks make one white—which they don't.

Giordano Bruno has been honored by the abuse of the Papacy. The wretched libels of Papa Pecci are now promulgated from the Catholic pulpits in England. The great martyr of Freethought is bespattered with defamation. Every vice is ascribed to him, with the exception of some unnatural offences that are the peculiar property of priests. The faithful are told of his "wickedness and corruption," his "unrestrained passions," his "selfishness," his "intolerance," and his "abject meanness." Every word is a lie,

and the biggest liar in Europe is the priest who wears the tiara at Rome.

It is the old, old story. Libel the Freethinkers you cannot answer; defame the men you persecuted and killed. This has been the clerical policy with respect to Voltaire and Paine. It is now the clerical policy with regard to Bruno. True, the slanders are new, and he has been dead for nearly ~~three~~ three hundred years. But what does that matter? The faithful know next to no history, and they swallow lies with eager credulity.

It is pitiable to see so great a man as Cardinal Newman echoing the Pope's nonsense about Giordano Bruno. He confesses himself "inexpressibly shocked" at the "infidel declarations preached in the Holy City," and hopes God will protect the Catholic world from what seems before it. We are pleased to note, however, that Cardinal Newman does not reproduce the filthy libels with which the Papacy seeks to injure the reputation of the man it murdered.

It is said that the Pope is thinking of going to Malta. We wonder if he has ever thought of going to Jericho. Perhaps, if he went there, the genius of the spot might enable him to imitate Joshua, and make the world stand still.

The meetings of the "British Ass." have certainly declined in value since they were presided over by men of the weight of Professors Huxley and Tyndall. The best thing that could be said of this year's president was that he had acquired greater familiarity with the interior economy of the whale than any other man since the days of the Prophet Jonah.

The Bishop of St. Asaph has expressed his astonishment that Nonconformists could stand by and see the shame and disgrace the tithing riots were bringing on Wales. Perhaps they consider the shame and disgrace lie with the bishops and parsons who seek to enforce payment from people who want none of them or their Church either.

The Duke of Newcastle has spent £40,000 on a handsome new church at Clumber. When will he spend half as much on something sensible?

Down at Peterborough the Tories have raised the *odium theologicum* against Mr. Morton, the Radical candidate, by spreading a report that he is a Freethinker. He happens, however, to be a member of the Church of England. Still, the report is a damaging one. Calling a man a Freethinker is like crying "mad dog."

At the Spiritist Conference in Paris it was seriously proposed to gather the names of all the spirits known to be in communication with mediums and publish them. There was some little sense left in the meeting for the proposition was negated.

Celestine Edwards, the East-end black preacher, has been acting as an Aid to Faith in Plymouth under the auspices of the Christian Evidence Society. One of his lectures was on "Freethought and its Advocates," and was delivered to "men only." This prurient method of getting an audience is confined to Christians. It has always been scorned by Freethinkers, who have the decency to write and speak for both sexes. But what a lecture might be given on the Bible to "men only"!

Superstition is the enemy of human welfare no less than the foe of common sense. A good illustration of this has just occurred at Wisbeach, where no less than thirty-six people were summoned under the Act of Charles II. for working on a Sunday, although they had been engaged in saving the crops of a local farmer. It is evidently the opinion of the police in that district that a farmer should be ruined rather than do any work on the Lord's Day. Public opinion, however, is growing more enlightened, and the Wisbeach magistrates felt obliged to dismiss the case. Still, they inflicted a small fine for mending some strawberry wires, by way of keeping the bigots in countenance.

The Rev. H. Coley, speaking at a missionary meeting, had to apologise for the unsatisfactory results of the North

Indian Mission. The geographical difficulties were great, and the Hindoo mind was peculiar. The Hindoo seemed to treat the churches as a sort of huge stores—a large clothing and feeding establishment. Precisely so, Mr. Coley. You corroborate the old statement that the only way to make converts is to feed and clothe them "free, gratis, for nothing;" so that they are not brought over, but bought over. It is simply a question of cash. The Hindoo mind is not so very peculiar, after all.

The Baptists are making a forward movement in London: Their little game seems to be to sink religion as far as possible and go in for visiting "the poor." Addresses are to be given on "Sweating" and "Hard Work and Bad Pay." We are glad to see the Baptists turning their attention to the secular evils of life, but what has this to do with their creed? What is the brief hell of the sweater's den in comparison with the everlasting hell of the almighty sweater? If there be a hell after death, let the Baptist ministers go on saving people from it; if there be not, let them disband, and cease living on false pretences.

A Munich artist who goes in strongly for realism has, like the great English artists Sir Joshua Reynolds and Grinling Gibbons, a partiality for cherubims—those curious fowl who, having nothing to sit upon, "continually do cry." It was easy to get for his model a naked child, and append the wings of a goose to its shoulders, but the difficulty lay in posing the model so that it should seem to be in mid air. This he at length overcame by employing the father and mother to toss the child up in a blanket while he took a series of instantaneous photographs. He says his cherubims shall be triumphs of realism.

They have been electing a sky-pilot at Kirkoswald, a rural parish in Ayrshire. No blood has been spilt, but the language was something awful. Swearing and obscenity were freely indulged in, and the rival factions grew so warm that extra police were drafted into the place with a view to suppressing an outbreak. We commend this to the attention of Mr. Stead, who wishes to keep the Church of England and make it a democratic institution.

Paley's *Evidences* is still the authorised text-book at Cambridge, but few apologists would venture nowadays to appeal to Paley's test of martyrdom. Self-sacrifice, as we are every day reminded, may be developed under the most opposite creeds. A writer in the current number of *Blackwood* portrays a Moravian missionary no less heroic and devoted than Father Damien. The Rev. A. Wilsheare has for years ministered to the population of Robbin Island, off the coast of Cape Town, consisting, as we are told, of 130 lepers, 200 lunatics, 30 convicts, and their guardians.

The Turkish ecclesiastical authorities have woken up to the fact that there are such things as printing presses in the world, and have, after much deliberation, decided that the Koran may be printed, always provided that first copies of every edition are submitted to careful examination to have their errors corrected. Of course, the writers of manuscripts are disgusted with the innovation.

La Cronaca Nera, of Rome, publishes stories tending to show the gross immorality of eminent Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authorities. Of course, they are wicked slanders. The holy men of God who undertake to lead us in the path of salvation never—that is, hardly ever—fall from the path themselves. But when they do appear to slip, wicked sinners are prone to take up the slanderous stories on purpose to damage the moral guides and destroy their beneficent influence.

How can the saving of a sinner's soul help a minister or priest? If the sinner goes to heaven isn't he the one that will harp? If he goes to 'll isn't he the one that will hop? What has the priest to do with it, any how? Why can't he attend to his own soul and let other people go where they please in peace and without price?—*Ironclad Age*.

"Way down in Tennessee," the newspapers say a judge has instructed his grand jury "to indict all persons who publicly express infidel sentiments." They are likely to have a good deal of law business in that quarter.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, September 29, Concert Hall, Lecture Hall, Nelson Street, Newcastle; at 11, "Is the Bible Inspired?" at 3, "What Must we do to be Saved?" at 7, "Is there a God?"

Monday, Sept. 30, Co-operative Hall, Ashington, "Come to Jesus."

Tuesday, October 1, Co-operative Hall, Bedlington Station, "After Death—What?"

Wednesday, October 2 (no bill to hand).

Thursday, October 3, North Shields, "Is Christianity True?"

Friday, October 4 (no bill to hand).

Saturday, October 5, Oxhill, "Bible Blunders."

Oct. 6 South Shields; 13 and 20, London Hall of Science; 27, Milton Hall, London.

Nov. 3, Birmingham; 10, Camberwell; 17, Hall of Science, London; 24, Huddersfield.

Dec. 1, Camberwell; 8, Nottingham; 15, Portsmouth; 29, Hall of Science, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d. Australia, China and Africa:—One Year, 8s. 8d.; Half Year, 4s. 4d.; Three Months, 2s. 2d. India:—One Year, 10s. 10d.; Half Year, 5s. 5d.; Three Months, 2s. 8½d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.

It being contrary to post office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will in future receive the number when their subscription expires in a colored wrapper.

C. KINGSTON.—The Rev. Marsden Gibson is misinformed if he believes that Mrs. Besant has become a Christian. She has not even left the Secular platform. Her view is that her new opinions are not inconsistent with the principles of the National Secular Society. We do not share that view, but it is fair to say that she entertains it.

F. MARGETSON.—See "Sugar Plums." We hope your brave efforts will be supported at Tottenham. Mr. Foote would come himself if he were not out of town.

F. W. SMITH (Capetown).—We have handed your order and remittance to Mr. Forder. Glad to hear you have captured several stray sheep from the orthodox fold by means of our publications, and that Mr. Wheeler's *Dictionary* is thought to be such a valuable work, as indeed it is.

F. SIMPSON.—Go on and prosper. See "Sugar Plums."

J. T. HILLIER.—You ask us to announce your meeting in Bristol. How can we do so when you mention neither time nor place? You had better postpone your meeting and send us proper notice.

J. H. THOMAS.—Thanks for the cutting.

GEORGE WISE.—You are all at sea. Mr. F. Millar, who often lectures on Branch platforms, is not even a member of the N.S.S. Mr. Marchant never was an Atheist. He fell out with the Hyde Park Branch because he was not allowed to lecture on "The Folly of Atheism." Your letter is therefore based on a misconception.

J. HOUNSLOW.—Cuttings are always welcome.

JOSEPH BROWN, hon. sec., North-Eastern Secular Federation, 86 Durham Street, Bentinck, Newcastle-on-Tyne, acknowledges the following:—Parcels of literature from Mr. Armstrong and a friend in Berlin; Newcastle Branch, 14s. 3d.; Mr. Elwin, 5s.; Mr. Saunderson, 5s.; Captain Thompson, 5s.

A. FRASER.—We are nearly tired of contradicting Christian lies about Thomas Paine. The Manchester District Friends' Tract Association is very ignorant or very unscrupulous. It treats us less to contradict such falsehoods. The best plan is to circulate the real facts in a work like *Infidel Death-Beds*.

S. STANDRING.—We quite agree with you. When there is no orthodox opposition, Freethinkers might usefully question their own lecturers on interesting points.

S. SODDY.—We appreciate your courage, and hope you will be adequately supported.

J. T. WATSON.—Sunday cricket is a good idea. Freethinkers' heads will be all the clearer for kicking their heels.

G. CROOKSON.—Mr. Forder will send you a weekly contents-sheet.

W. H. SOWDEN says that John Burns was not a member of the Battersea Branch, though he attended the hall pretty frequently. He was, however, a member of the Westminster Branch.

A. GUEST.—It is one of the old puzzles of the Resurrection. All the clergy can do is to fall back on the miraculous, and say that all things are possible with God.

QUIZ.—Proverbs xxxi., 6, 7.

CAIN.—We hope to find room for it. Glad to hear you have got us four new subscribers.

E. G. BILLINGTON.—There has been no communication from the Rounds friends. They had better write soon if they want the date.

H. W. BOLTON.—You should insist on being supplied and threaten to remove your custom. Marlborough is not the only wholesale agent; if he will not supply the trade there are others who will.

WM. HARDIE, a brother of Keir Hardie, informs us that the latter never was a Freethinker, and is therefore not a convert to Christianity. His father has been a Freethinker for thirty years, and his brother is also one. We have forwarded this information to the *Star*.

INCOG.—Your verse is "too too." Try to be a little more moderate.

H. PORTER.—We thank you for guaranteeing five copies on condition the sheet is displayed. The question of outdoor lecturing in the provinces is engaging the attention of the Organisation Committee. Unfortunately your letter got torn. Will you send us the address again?

E. P. S. (Liverpool) writes: "Since your enlargement I have taken two copies weekly, and I always leave them on the restaurant table where I get my lunch, and where they stay all the week and are devoured by clerks and other educated men, with good results."

A. N. S.—Mr. Foote spoke guardedly, but he had no doubt as to the Catholic rite of pre-natal baptism. Thanks for your corroboration as an ex-Catholic.

W. STUART.—The apocryphal books are prescribed for use in the Church of England. See the table of Lessons for October and November.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

PAPERS RECEIVED — Portsmouth Evening News — Der arme Teufel — Der Litchfreund — Open Court — Western American — Truthseeker — Fritankeren — Menschenthum — Birmingham Daily Gazette — Liberator — Christian Commonwealth — Freethought — South Hampstead Advertiser — Secular Thought — Auckland Star — Birmingham Daily Times — New York Herald — Ironclad Age.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE had a first-rate audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. Prior to the lecture he gave a brief account of the International Freethought Congress.

TO-DAY (Sept. 29) Mr. Foote begins an eight-days' lecturing tour in the Tyneside district. There will be twelve lectures in all, besides travelling and literary work. A list appears at the top of another column. The tour is under the auspices of the North-Eastern Secular Federation.

THE Newcastle clergy have nearly all been preaching on the Bradlaugh-Gibson debate. Dr. McCann has also been lecturing on "The Curse of Secularism." He was well heckled by several Freethinkers who couldn't see where the curse came in. One result of this agitation will doubtless be a large attendance at Mr. Foote's lectures.

MDE. BLAVATSKY has been stung by some of our criticisms, and has replied in a pamphlet entitled the *Thersites of Freethought*. Mr. Foote is glad that the lady has given him the opportunity of easing his mind on a very interesting subject. He will reply to her in an open letter, which will be published next week as a pamphlet, and entitled *The New Cagliostro*.

THE International Freethought Congress at Paris was followed by an International Congress on Education, the chief promoters of which are as much Freethinkers as those of the former. We were, indeed, informed that the chief organiser, M. Lavy, was an Atheist schoolmaster, who has debated with M. Loyson (Père Hyacinthe). The special object of the congress is the application of the democratic principles of 1789 to education.

MESSRS. FOOTE and Wheeler are back from Paris, and working hard at arrears of work. They had the pleasure, while in the gay city, of foregathering with their old friend, Mr. J. M. Robertson of the *National Reformer*. They spent a red-letter day together before leaving Paris, visiting Versailles and walking about under a Corot sky. Some of the English delegates were less fortunate. They did not know enough French, but they showed any amount of

British pluck. Mr. Truelove, for instance, turned up at every sitting of the Congress, and sat it all out without understanding a word.

By the way, Mr. Truelove left his handsome bust of Thomas Paine behind as a present to the Paris Municipal Council, Dr. Regnard undertaking to present it. Some day or other we hope to see it at the Hotel de Ville.

M. GUIMET, the founder of the Museum of Religions at Paris, is of middling stature for a Frenchman, well built, alert to the finger tips, and as genial as he is accomplished. His manner is one of perfect frankness, and his delightful humor gathers in the eyes before it springs from the lips. He is wonderfully fluent, but his speech is beautifully ordered, and every word tells. His voice is very gentle and persuasive, but you can see that there is an adamant firmness behind. France might well point to M. Guimet and say "Behold a man."

AMONG the ladies who took part in the International Freethought Congress should be mentioned Madame Leonie Rouzade, author of several Freethought and Socialistic works; Madame Achille Tessier, the foundress of an anti-clerical school for young girls; Mdlle. Astic de Valsyre, a writer in *L'Egalité*; Mdlle. Jankowski, a Polish lady, and Madame Marya Cheliga-Loevy, another Polish lady and a charming speaker, who directs the *Bulletin de l'Union Universelle des Femmes*.

THE Swedish Freethinkers send to the International Congress a large quantity of printed copies of M. Victor E. Lennstrand's address to the King on the subject of his prosecutions for blasphemy. In our next issue we shall give an abstract of this address for the benefit of English readers.

DR. VOELKEL, of the *Neues Frei-religioses Sonntags-Blatt*, is a stout, hearty, broad-shouldered and genial German, who smokes persistently and talks both good sense and nonsense fluently in French, English or German. He lectures widely through Germany, and looks as though he could easily bear a weight of work which would overcome ordinary men.

M. JOFFRIN, the opponent of General Boulanger at Montmartre, is the Municipal Councillor of Paris who received the International Congress of Freethinkers at the Hotel de Ville until the arrival of the President, Dr. Chauteemps. M. Joffrin is a fluent speaker and a thoughtful man. He is by trade an engineer, and for some years worked in London. He ran General Boulanger very close, and if the Republicans unite at the second ballot will certainly defeat him.

CAMBERWELL Freethinkers gave Mrs. Besant a good heckling on Sunday evening, the questioning and discussion being carried on till a very late hour. Colonel Olcott was present with other leading Theosophists.

THE Camberwell Branch, which has the use of the scientific library and apparatus formerly at the service of the Hall of Science Classes, has made arrangements for carrying on the good work. Classes in inorganic chemistry and geology will be conducted by Mr. J. B. Coppock. The terms are 2s. 6d. per class, and a beginning will be made on October 4. Those who wish to join should write to Mr. S. Soddy, 5 Church Street, Camberwell, S.E.

THE West Ham Branch played a cricket match with the Southgate Branch on Sunday and won by five runs. The victors have to thank their friendly rivals for a good tea.

SECULARISM is making a great stir in the extreme north of London, and it is only natural that the Christians should be incensed. It is to be regretted, however, that they resort to violence. Last Sunday they stormed the Freethought platform at Tottenham, headed by a drunken fellow who was, in more senses than one, powerfully inspired by the spirit. A man who has often lectured on Christian Evidence platforms stood by and smiled approval of his rowdy co-religionists. Mr. Soddy bravely stood his ground as long as possible, but was obliged to yield to *force majeure*. Strong threats were made of still worse

treatment if the Secularists dared to show their faces again. Well, they are not daunted, and they *will* go again. This afternoon (Sept. 29) at 3.30 the stand will be pitched in the Seven Sisters Road as usual, and we appeal to Freethinkers in the neighborhood to be present and keep order. A few determined men will overawe a crowd of bullies.

WE regret to report that Mr. Keen was also mobbed on Sunday afternoon in Finsbury Park. This gentleman should also be supported. His stand is pitched at 3.30.

THERE is a flourishing Branch of the N.S.S. in the Gibraltar garrison. It began with seven members and now numbers thirteen. Soldiers cannot spare much money for literature out of their meagre pay, and this Branch will be very happy to receive any books or pamphlets that our well-to-do readers may send them. Address—Private F. Simpson, Casemate Barracks, Gibraltar.

PART IX. of Mr Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers* contains the names of half-a-dozen saints viz., Sainte-Beuve, Saint Evremond, Saint Glain, Saint Hyacinthe, Saint John, (Lord Bolingbroke) and Saint Lambert.

SINCE the illness and death of the lamented Horace Seaver, the *Boston Investigator* has been conducted by Mr. L. K. Washburn and Ernest Mendum. We feel confident the paper will retain its prestige among American Freethinkers under the new régime.

ON the 29th of October, Mr. Edward Truelove, the veteran Freethought and Radical publisher will attain his 80th year. It is likely there may be many of his friends anxious to give some testimony of their regard to one who has fought so long and suffered so much in the cause of free publication, and we venture to remind them that a fitting opportunity will shortly present itself.

GEORGE MEREDITH has written a satirical poem on religious fanaticism, which is to appear in an early number of the *Universal Review*. We understand it refers chiefly to the vagaries of the Salvation Army.

THE Cardiff County Council has refused to vote the £200 to enable the Mayor to entertain the Church Congress. The Parson's Palaver will therefore not be fed and wined at the public expense. One for Cardiff.

Der Lichtfreund continues its interesting and valuable account of "The Reformation of the Nineteenth Century," which deals with the doings of the rationalist and free religious organisations of Germany.

THE American papers report that a party of Syrian emigrants at New York, six men and two women, who are detained at Castle Garden awaiting a decision of the collector, spent part of the afternoon in worshipping a picture of Robert G. Ingersoll that hangs over the lunch counter in the garden. They all knelt before and muttered what seemed to be a supplication, and took turns kissing the picture. It is supposed that the Syrians mistook the colonel's picture for that of some saint. It is rather a joke for the countrymen of the prophets to be worshipping the great American Freethinker. But they might have chosen a worse saint.

WE are pleased to record that Mr. Eugene Macdonald, editor of the New York *Truthseeker*, has so far recovered from his attack of typhoid fever as to be able to return to his desk, a thinner and twenty pounds lighter man, but with lots of work left in him yet.

MACMILLAN'S magazine for October has a strong article on the Jesuits' Estates Act in Canada, by Prof. Goldwin Smith, who sees the danger of concentrating vast stores of wealth in the hands of a religious community, whose practical interests are separated from those of the people.

UNDER the title of "Papal Thunder at Edgbaston" the Birmingham *Daily Times* publishes an admirable article on Giordano Bruno and the papal calumnies. Our contemporary regards the Allocution as a sign that the Papacy cannot reconcile itself to its loss of temporal power.

THE Rev. Mr. Bagshaw was posed, and it happened in this way. He interrupted a Liberal van meeting at Osbourn by asking "Where is the money to come from?" to pay for free education. The speaker, Councillor Chapman, said it might be got from the State Church; whereupon the parson denied that the clergy were paid by the State. "Then," said Councillor Chapman, "if the State doesn't pay you, and the land doesn't pay you, who does?" The parson collapsed.

THE *Weekly Times and Echo* is one of the most liberal papers in opening its columns for the discussion of burning questions. A long correspondence has appeared on Agnosticism, and now another is running on Freethought and Theosophy.

THE INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS.

As far as the representation of nationalities was concerned, the Paris congress must be pronounced a great success. All the world and his wife desired to see the Centennial Exposition, and although this and the other attractions of Paris prevented many delegates, notably the foreign ones, from giving that constant attention to every sitting which we felt to be our own duty, there was always a good representation of the principal European countries, though the representatives were by no means always the same. If much real work was not done, there was at least a good deal of acquaintance made and fraternal feeling exchanged.

The programme of questions to be discussed was not indeed drawn up in a method calculated to facilitate business. Three parts of the time of the Congress was spent in discussing principles which ought either to have been settled beforehand or to have been taken for granted. The questions of Religion from the point of view of evolution; the comparison of different philosophical and scientific theories; the influence of Freethought upon the Revolution of 1789; the immorality of religions, and the rights of women—all were doubtless subjects of interest, and each gave opportunities to the delegates to display their erudition and to air their crotchets; but the questions of Freethought propaganda and of mutual aid and organisation which were assuredly of far greater importance, were left until the last, and in consequence received but very inadequate attention.

Many valuable addresses were delivered, and reports made upon the voluminous papers sent in to the Congress. We may particularise Dr. Regnard's paper on the evolution of religions, the contribution of M. Delorme to the question of philosophy, the able address of M. Leon Furnémont on the influence of Freethought upon the French Revolution and the reciprocal action of the Revolution upon Freethought, and on Tuesday, when Signor Cipriani took the chair, and Mr. Foote was called to the platform, the admirable summary made by Citizen Schacre upon the reports on the question of the new basis of morals. M. Schacre affirmed that religions were immoral, since they imposed the abdication of reason, taught passive obedience and resignation, and founded the practice of good on the hope of recompense. He declared that morality has for base the science of the faculties of man, and their development in view of perpetually enlarging the domain of life and of conscience, and that it was necessary morals should be taught without any connection with religion or superstition. Citizen Schacre, we may say, by the way, spoke often and sometimes somewhat long, yet we felt that but for his bringing the matters to some head, we might be still discussing principles. Among the good things which he let fall was the saying that what we wanted was not the cult but the culture of humanity.

The question of the rights of women brought up a whole crowd of able speakers. The chair was taken by M. Navez, the report was read by Mme. Barbarousse, who affirmed the absolute equality of the two sexes, and demanded for women, both civil and political rights. This was supported by Mr. Knut Wicksell, the Swedish delegate, and by Frau Hedwig Henrich Wilhelmi, who denied men's rights to fix women's duties. One French delegate, a socialist, affirmed the superiority of woman and demanded "the abolition of the tyranny of marriage." Dr. Wiet (Belgium), wanted to know if women were superior, how it was they were the great supporters of the church. In the end, a resolution was passed, affirming that to bring woman out of the power of the priests, she must be granted equality of rights

It was not till Thursday evening, when M. Jules Lemaitre of Liège presided, that we arrived at the application of Freethought principles to the questions of education and legislative reform. Upon the proposition of Mr. J. M. Robertson, speeches were limited to ten minutes. The report on the 6th question which demanded the separation of Church and State, and the suppression of all religious teaching in schools, was succinctly read by M. Jules Allix, and a formula to that effect, moved by Citizen Schacre, was eventually adopted. The discussion mostly ran upon specialities connected with French and Belgian schools. Dr. Wiet contended that teachers should be elected by the parents and not appointed by Universities. Messrs. Foote and Robertson objected to the time of the meeting being taken up with details which were not international. One speaker proposed that children should be taught to speak as late as possible, as so many words were used to no purpose. We felt inclined to endorse his observation, if not his recommendation.

On the 7th question, dealing with the legislative and social reforms, the report of the Belgian societies affirmed that the wealth of the clergy was a danger to society, and demanded the abolition of the convents.

Dr. De Paepé spoke to the point upon cremation and the laicisation of hospitals. He pointed out that the Freethinkers of Liège had themselves taken the initiative of action, and provided for the civil funerals of their members. He advocates the formation of a corps of secular nurses who would both attend to the sick in hospitals, and also go out to their homes. M. Hy. Vaudemont of Charenton remarked that in Paris they were behind the Belgians in the matter of funerals. Freethinkers were forced to pay just as much to the church at funerals as if their friends were buried by the priests, an iniquity against which the meeting was emphatic in its protest.

On the question of statistics M. Schacre gave an account of the French *budget des cultes* which he affirmed was something enormous, and in itself a cause of poverty. Messrs. Foote and Robertson spoke as to the Revenues of the Church of England, and similar information was supplied from the delegates of other countries. It was decided that further information should be gathered in order to make as complete and as exact as possible the information in the *compte rendu* or report which it was decided at the outset of the proceedings should be published.

On Friday afternoon, M. Furnémont presided, and this being the last sitting the discussion was of a very miscellaneous character. A crowd of other matter prevented sufficient attention being given to the question of mutual aid in persecution. Several French delegates spoke in favor of the substitution of the Republican calendar for the Christian era, and for the institution of civil festivals to replace those of the church and the substitution of commercial halls, schools, and museums in the place of churches.

The General Council of the Federation was re-elected, and its head-quarters fixed at Brussels, as before. A committee residing at Paris was also appointed to supervise the publication of the report of the proceedings of the Congress.

A multitude of propositions and suggestions were made for the consideration of the General Council, and among them we may interpolate our own, which is that the next Congress shall deal only with a few practical questions of international organisation, to be adequately discussed, and that all documents and speeches dealing with general principles shall be "taken as read."

On the motion of Senor Maglia y Galvis, seconded by Senor Odon de Buen, a recommendation was addressed to the General Council at Brussels that the next Congress should be held at Madrid, where the delegates are promised a handsome reception.

The proceedings terminated, as they had begun, with short speeches from representatives of various nationalities.

VISITING THE MONUMENTS.

Those English delegates who went off from the Hotel de Ville without accompanying the others to see the statues, missed one of the most characteristic and distinctly French features of the proceedings. The delegates all wore the pansy, which in the French language of flowers signifies "*la pensée*" (thought), and which is adopted as the badge of Freethinkers in France, Belgium, Italy and Spain. At each of the monuments—those of Dolet, Rousseau, Diderot and Voltaire—we gathered round, uncovered, put some children (sometimes mere *gamins* looking on) in the centre, and then Citizens Schacre, Odin, and, at the statue of Voltaire, Dr.

Voelkel, pronounced an oration of eulogium. These proceedings attracted a great deal of attention, and in each case a *sergeant de ville* came forward to learn the nature of the gathering and duly enter it in his notebook.

On the following day the most socialistic among the delegates went to Père la Chaise to place a fine monumental wreath on the graves of those who fell during the Commune, and visited the new crematorium and the tombs of the many notables who were buried in that famous cemetery.

THE RECEPTION IN THE HOTEL DE VILLE.

We have already briefly mentioned our reception by the Paris Municipal Council, but the event is of sufficient importance to merit a little further detail, impossible to give in our last. While awaiting the convenience of the Council we remained in the luxurious salon of the Hotel de Ville, which, with the single exception of the painted ceilings, which are not yet done, is fully as magnificent as in the days of the Empire. Introduced into the Municipal Chamber, M. Joffrin, the vice-president, in the temporary absence of the president, said—Ladies and gentlemen, we welcome you into this Hotel de Ville, where Liberty, and with her, Freethought, has sometimes been banished, but where liberty has so often been proclaimed that she has finished at last by triumphing. It is here that our precursors, making no difference of race or of people, received, at the time of the Great Revolution, the Freethinkers Anacharsis Cloots and the American Thomas Paine, both Frenchmen and foreigners having no other aim than the fraternisation of all the peoples. (Applause.) The members of the Municipal Council of Paris are, in a very large majority, themselves Freethinkers, and we believe, with you, in the absolute necessity of ending with the religious idea which makes both slaves and masters. We especially applaud the efforts of foreign Freethinkers, since every Freethinker is naturally inclined to Republicanism and a friend of France. M. Joffrin desired that all foreigners should take away a pleasant souvenir of Paris, and of France and the Republic, so often calumniated.

Dr. De Paepe returned thanks to the Council. Paris, and France, he declared, had been apostles of humanity. He spoke of those who had come to the country of Voltaire from various parts of the world, and pointed to Mr. Truelove as among the early founders of Secularism. During Dr. De Paepe's speech, to which he gave a somewhat socialist turn, M. Chautemps, the President of the Municipal Council, arrived and stood with the other councillors until Dr. De Paepe had finished.

Dr. Chautemps then, from the presidential chair, again welcomed us to Paris. He particularly addressed himself to the ladies, of whom there was a large number present, as having in their capacity of teachers of youth the future of Freethought in their hands. In bringing so many women to our ranks we had done the most precious work for the emancipation of the human spirit and the future of humanity. The present Congress was particularly marked out as continuing the movement of emancipation begun in France in 1789. The Revolution, it was necessary to feel, had indeed only commenced, and those who would complete it had to fight in every country against the same implacable adversary. The spirit of superstition was always and everywhere at the service of the party of reaction. By combatting superstition you not only serve your own country but you hasten mutual understanding and fraternity among all the members of the human family.

Dr. Voelkel, on behalf of the foreign Freethinkers, said it was their mission to unite in a common bond all the children of the great family of humanity. M. Schacre spoke of the services of Paris to the cause of liberty, and Dr. Chautemps, in replying, said that the presence of so many delegates from abroad proved that Paris was not alone in taking strides in the domain of Freethought and liberty of conscience. He then invited the whole of the delegates to an adjoining salon to drink a toast to the future of Freethought. We noticed that the sentiment was done full justice to, in large glasses of champagne, while we hurried away to despatch the brief missive which appeared last week.

M. GUIMET'S MUSEE DES RELIGIONS.

One of the most interesting features of our trip to Paris, was the visit paid, in common with the other delegates from various parts of the world, to the Museum of Religions founded by M. Guimet of Lyons, and which he intends, as soon as all arrangements are complete, to throw open to the people of Paris and visitors to the gay metropolis.

It was gratifying for Freethinkers to be received by the Paris Municipal Council and to be welcomed and congratulated by the President of that Council, and by one of its most influential members, M. Joffrin. It was still more gratifying to find that visitors to Paris have placed before their eyes fine monuments erected to great Freethinkers like Dolet, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and Gambetta. Yet to students of religions who see how inevitable is the triumph of Freethought, when once Christianity is seen in its due place as but one of the many cults that have engaged the faith and devotion of mankind, perhaps the most gratifying thing of all is the fact that there is at Paris a permanent institution which will serve as an object lesson of Freethought—a museum of religions, in which the growth, evolution, and decay of gods can be studied exactly as any other phenomena.

The Musée des Religions is a handsome building situated in the Avenue de Iena, not far from the bridge leading to the Champ de Mars. We were received at the entrance by M. Emile Guimet in person, who accompanied us round and explained the most salient objects of interest. M. Guimet is not only a man of wealth, but of erudition; a wide traveller, full of the bonhomie which springs from sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men.

His explanation of the objects of interest with which his large museum abounds, was all that could be desired, and conveyed in a most genial form a deal of information, often bearing on the origin of Christianity. We took notes of many items of which we may have something to say on a future occasion, but which space will not permit us to enter into at present. Suffice it to say M. Guimet has made a unique collection which will be a permanent source of instruction on the subject of comparative religions.

THE BANQUET.

A goodly company of ladies and gentleman sat down to the banquet on Friday evening at the Salons Bonvalet.

The chair was taken by M. Adolphe Deluc, of the Council General of the International Federation. M. Okecki acted as toast-master. After justice had been done to the repast, M. Deluc spoke of the fraternal nature of the gathering and proposed a toast, "The abolition of War." Mr. J. M. Robertson, in the name of the gentlemen of the press, presented a handsome bouquet to Mlle. Marie Veron, a charming young lady who acted as official reporter of the Congress. A succession of toasts and speeches followed. In France, where the highest political posts are open to free competition, and where a great career is possible to the popular orator, it was no marvel to find a number of able and fluent speakers, the other countries having usually sent their orators, there was a continuous volley of rapid speeches, usually in French, but with a mingling of Spanish, Swedish, German, and other tongues. Mr. Foote spoke both in French and in English for the benefit of the English present, who longed to hear a little of their own language. He referred to the influence of English Freethinkers on Voltaire, and quoted the words of Paine, "The world is my country, and to do good is my religion." Mr. Wheeler also fired off a little speech in French, quoting the words of President Carnot, that "every man had two countries, his own and then France."

The centennial of the Revolution and the imminence of the French elections naturally gave a somewhat political cast to many of the speeches, and much was said of the hopes of foreigners for the maintenance of the Republic and the fraternisation of peoples.

M. Guimet, who was present, had his health drunk with great enthusiasm. The proceedings were protracted to a late hour, and when we left many were preparing to make it still later by joining in the mazy dance.

A SCENE IN HEAVEN.

THE TRINITY IN COUNCIL, A.D. 1889.

YAHVEH (after creating worlds and enjoying a sound sleep of 6,000 years [Genesis ii. 2] wakens up: Is Jesus about?

HOLY GHOST: Yes. Yah! Hallelujah! Playing at forfeits with Mrs. Putophar, just liberated from purgatory.

YAH: Call him. (Holy Ghost vanishes.)

JESUS: Want me, pa?

YAH: Verily I do. These despatches, flung *en passant* into Elysium by Beelzebub—damn him—inform me that after spending thy precious time on earth, and spilling thy more precious blood, to save the sinful races of man-apes, the result has been a disastrous failure, with loss of prestige.

Thou didst perform so badly that in spite of tricks and miracles only a miserable fraction of mankind at this moment professes the Christian religion. What dost thou say to that?

JESUS: Well, pa, following the example of the old serpent, who approached Eve in a familiar way and succeeded, I became man and pitched my tent among the residuum. Educated Hebrews, who follow thy stern decrees, would not listen to my speeches, which they declared savored of communism. In spite of Hebrew-Tory opposition I persistently preached and prayed—was kicked, cuffed, spat upon, crucified, and buried. I arose and presented myself before thy awful throne, about eighteen centuries ago; but our sexless partner would not allow me to disturb thy slumbers. During all this time the Devil has carried on the government on earth, saying that thou wast asleep, for they could hear thee snoring in hell. Too bad, dad! I think the creation job almost finished thee up.

YAH.: True. It was a tremendous feat, creating so many worlds out of—nothing, particularly the living creatures on earth. By-the-bye—the vermin bred so rapidly after I gave the order (!) that myriads of grateful flies, midges, bugs, beetles, cockroaches and mosquitos, followed me into heaven, when I ascended to fix the stars in the firmament. A damned nuisance! I hear there has been great trouble with our chosen people, whom my “alter ego,” the Holy Ghost led and fooled in the desert, Mehercule. All’s gone wrong. My kingdom on earth has vanished. Jerusalem is in the hands of infidel Turks, and we celestials are the laughing stock of a cursed mob that got enlightened in spite of us (Genesis iii. 4-5). They ought to have been kept in utter darkness. What’s to be done?

JESUS: Don’t know, Pa. I think it was a mistake to plant that tree just in their way.

YAH.: Call number three.

JESUS: Yes, Pa. Hallelujah!

YAH.: (to pigeon who looks bright after moulting). Thou hast heard the dismal news from earth, and knowest the worst?

H. G.: Yes, Yah, Hallelujah! The people have got terribly mixed. I am afraid we shall have to wipe them out again.

JESUS: Don’t, Pa. Hallelujah! The Devil alone will get the benefit. It would be proof of the utter failure of our plans. The souls of so many sent to hell, pell-mell, at one bang, will swell the host of Satan, and enable him to make another descent upon heaven. I dislike fighting. My lamblike nature rebels against it. (Bleats; pigeon coos). Let the wretches on earth stew in their own grease. We can make it hot enough for them there. Think, what fun we have watching their antics (sic!) Take the English, for instance, that Christian nation, “par excellence,” led by a rotten aristocracy, a besotted clergy and all kinds of religious

mountebanks. They’ll go any length to benefit our cause and their own.

YAH.: Confound the pack of drunkards, cheats, hypocrites and murderers! Look at the result of Bible-teaching! One man has taken a leaf out of our book, and butchered eight unfortunates in Whitechapel, and is still at large! I think of giving Booth or Spurgeon the tip.

JESUS: Don’t, Pa? Hallelujah! No direct interference in human affairs. These men will at once set up as prophets divinely inspired. I know their natures. They invoke my name with such impudent familiarity as if they had played at leap-frog with me.

YAH.: With the Briton, religion is a business, and business a religion. Look at the enormous sums that quack Booth raises among religious fanatics.

JESUS: He advertises our show at any rate. I can see no harm in it. They certainly carry on a more ridiculous religious carnival than any other nation in the world, but in spite of all the Devil reaps the largest harvest there.

YAH.: I am fully convinced that the creation of man in our image which is also that of the monkey, was a mistake. Let us look out for another planet, and there beget a new race of men.

JESUS: I object to the creation of talking and thinking bipeds. I don’t want to be made a fool of again. Old Nick is sure to get wind of our plan, and will spoil the game. Let the H. G. change places with me next time, and play the part of Saviour to damned sinners. I hope he’ll like it. I did’nt. Once bitten twice shy. Look at the result. (Shows divers scars).

H. G.: Thanks, Jesus! Dost thou see any green in my eye? My dove-like nature forbids me embarking in religious gymnastics that might ruffle my feathers. (Coos). I have too much self-respect to be jeered at, spat at, cuffed and hanged without drawers upon a cross, like a stretched haddock, to save a pack of dirty men, monkeys, and all to no purpose, except amusing Satan! (Bravo from the heavenly host) I love peace in Elysium. Try it thyself Javeh. Hallelujah! (More cooing and bleating; Peter’s cock crows).

YAH.: Damn thy impudence! Get out of my sight, or I’ll quicken thy sluggish liver! We are beaten. Satan, thou art boss on earth! Perseverance, energy, cunning, vigilance and strict attention to business ensured thy success. The earth is thine. I am weary, and shall take another nap of ten thousand years. By the time I waken the dirt-ball, earth, will have cooled down to a lump of ice, and we shall have no more bother. Watch ye, pray, sing psalms and keep the Devil out. I go to sleep. (A terrible yawn.)

ALL: Yes, yah. Hallelujah!

CHORUS: “The heavens are telling.”

All remains in statu quo ante above and below. Yawning, bawling, cooing, bleating and snoring. (Curtain.)

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