

# The Freethinker

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF THOMAS COOPER.

### I.

THOMAS COOPER was for many years a distinguished Secularist; he was so when Secularism was first formulated. He was a distinguished convert, and, though he lapsed from the "true faith," he was, while in the "state" of Secular "grace," distinguished in his profession. But for Secularism he had been a mere sceptic, whereas he made ethical argument the feature of his discourses. His strength lay (and in this respect he continued distinguished) in his studious exposition of useful knowledge. His merit was that he was the best Secular lecturer of his day. The grounds of my respect and regard for Mr. Cooper were quite irrespective of the opinions he came to hold. Those reasons I will state in another paper, in which I will explain the anti-theological and Secular opinions he held, and how he came to abandon them. As he ceased to hold Secular opinions and to eagerly attempt their refutation, it is not inconsistent with the unchanging regard I entertained towards him to make an estimate, for the instruction of the public, of his personal characteristics. Respect for Mr. Cooper does not preclude the right to delineate his controversial characteristics. Unless he is well understood, Secularists will be misunderstood. Mr. Cooper himself professed plain-speaking. He edited a paper which he called the *Plain Speaker*, and he was a plain speaker himself even to rudeness, which makes plain speaking objectionable. He therefore would not object to plain speaking here, which, though explicit, shall not be rude.

No better description of his career exists than that given by the *Norfolk News* many years ago, and which he himself selected to reprint on a handbill, and to which therefore he may have been presumed to assent. The *Norfolk News* describes him as "a shoemaker, for seven years a Wesleyan local preacher; afterwards a Chartist, a sceptic, almost an utter infidel [whatever that may be]; a convicted sedition-monger [unjustly convicted, be it said], imprisoned for more than two years; a poet, a linguist, a teacher of classics, always an earnest student, a reporter, a contributor to the press, sceptic again, a preacher again, a sceptic no longer—that is, a Wesleyan preacher again."

This gives the reader a very fair idea of his energy, his waywardness, and uncontrollable impulsiveness. Though he would strongly object to the comparison, he very much resembled Joseph Barker, to whom every form of opinion seemed, for the time he held it, equally true. Mr. Barker conceived a new principle strongly, retained it resolutely, adopted a new phase of thought, held it vividly, vindicated it with all his force, then abandoned it, and finally returned to the views with which he set out. Though this implied instability, it did not imply insincerity—he was inconsistent, but not dishonest. These were the characteristics of Mr. Cooper. A man of natural stability of mind discerns a new area of truth beyond him, and advances into that field. As soon as that horizon expands and he has the advantage of further

light, he goes steadily forward, but never returns to the narrower field and the erroneous conceptions he formerly had. This was not Mr. Cooper's characteristic. He was a man of capricious convictions and impulsive speech. His beliefs neither ascended nor gravitated by any known law, but were like the French *gardes mobile*, lithe in transition. His mind was like a courier—it travelled to and fro; it was in a continual state of there and back again. Nor did these changes occur from levity of character: they were the struggles of an unquiet and unbalanced spirit. He drifted into Freethought through imagination, and drifted out again through unsatisfied ambition, without casting anchor on either side. He was by nature antagonistic, and prone to extremes. He had pride, ambition, sensitiveness, and courage. Stung by injustice or neglect, he was drawn on that side where he could best resent wrong or vindicate his own importance. It was quite credible that he should be honest all the time, for his feelings were stronger than his intellect, and served him in the place of logic. This is not to call in question his power of intellect, but only the proportion which his understanding bore to the force of his feelings.

Like all persons prone to employ terms of offensive imputation, Mr. Cooper was most sensitive at the slightest disparaging epithet applied to himself. Any one whose memory goes back thirty years may recall a marvellous instance of Mr. Cooper's effrontery, not to say insolence, towards those who differed from him, not in language, but merely in opinion. I should hesitate to adduce the example of his impatience—to call it by its gentlest name—was it not recorded in the *Bury Times* of 1860. Mr. Cooper had not long left us, when he was addressing a religious audience in that town. The Rev. Mr. Lawson presided at his lectures, and differed from Mr. Cooper. Mr. Lawson said, as Hamilton, Vaughan, and Pearson have said, that the existence of Deity, was not provable by reason. Mr. Cooper told him that he "might be a very good preacher, but he believed he had never doubted much"; and that "he ought to go down on his knees and ask God pardon for what he had done. Mr. Lawson had done very wrong, and he hoped he would never do so again. It would be much better for Mr. Lawson to go home and pray over his conduct."

The Rev. Mr. Lawson was undoubtedly right. Many eminent theologians before his day, and in his day, and many more at this day, are of the same opinion. Yet Mr. Cooper, a new convert to Christianity which he had abandoned, undertook to rebuke and humiliate a minister who had never changed, for a mere difference of opinion as to the proof of theism.

I am a connoisseur in converts. I have seen many in my time. Mr. H. Knight, a sudden and vehement lecturer, who appeared at the John-street Institution, was converted with such alacrity under the inspiration of the Rev. Henry Townley, that his new convictions were believed to have originated in financial prospects. Mr. John Gordon, who compromised the Leeds Society by extravagances that seemed premeditated and calculated for contrast, passed all at once from a public and vehement blasphemer into docile and saintly "Pastor

Gordon." One Sunday night Mr. Cooper occupied our platform and the next announced himself as converted to Baptist-Methodism, for he had mixed both together. It is but justice to him to say that he displayed none of the suspicious extravagance which Knight and Gordon exhibited. Still, from mere regard to religious taste and reputation, Mr. Cooper should have shown more deliberation in his change. Conviction means character, and character cannot be acquired in seven days. Character implies not only changed views, but changed habits of thought. No doubt, as Wesley and eminent followers of his contend, a man may be changed in a minute by the inspiration of a noble thought or some splendid act of devotion, but the conversion can only be known to be real when its permanency is confirmed by time and experience. Mr. Cooper gave no proof, nor could give any, that this change had occurred in him when he announced it, which caused many people to suspect its reality long after the sincerity of his change was confirmed by continuity of years. He spoke of himself as no longer a sceptic—but what kind of sceptic was he? He never defined his position to himself. What did he doubt? and why did he doubt it? Did he doubt everything? If he did he was more wild and absurd than any sceptic I ever knew. The criticisms of Strauss had excited and convinced him of their truth. He doubted theological tenets only. He did not doubt honor, or truth, or morality. In these respects Mr. Cooper's character always stood high, alike when he was sceptic and when he was Christian.

Like most self-taught men, Mr. Cooper thought it very extraordinary that he should know all he did. Untaught, and his self-acquirements unrevised by the learned, he had no scholarship, and was without real authority in criticism. But he used like a theologian what he did know. When in his converted days an honest sceptic, whose moral sense was outraged by some Christian tenets, urged his objection to it after Mr. Cooper's lectures, Mr. Cooper would demand "whether he could read the New Testament in Latin or Greek; if he did not, he did not know what he was talking of; he should go home and learn before he made objections which merely showed his ignorance." Mr. Cooper knew my contempt of this sort of argument. It implied that no man, save a qualified classical critic, could possibly be sure of what to believe, and must go to heaven second-hand. In the debate I had with him many nights in the city of York, when two Canons of the Minster presided, he attempted this. I claimed to criticise Christianity by its ethical purport in whatever translation it might appear. Tried by that standard, the simplest man and the priest stood upon the same level. Miracles, inspiration, authenticity, eternal perdition, all proved indefensible by him brought to that test. Mr. Cooper refused ever after to debate Christianity on that ground.

☞ In another paper I will give an account of how he came to be confirmed in his conversion; and what were the nature of his opinions. G. J. HOLYOAKE.

(To be continued.)

#### SCIENCE THE TRUE HELPER OF MAN.

THE present age is essentially scientific, and as such it will be known in the future. Thought is constantly developing in new directions, and its discoveries are being formulated on a systematised basis. There is hardly any branch of knowledge that has not in our day been extended beyond what our forefathers probably ever even imagined, while discoveries in physical science have advanced to a marvellous extent. It is in this field that laws have been recognised that have entirely altered the current of opinion upon many subjects, and caused men to remodel their earlier notions as to man, his nature, and destiny. This change has provoked much violent

opposition both from the adherents to ancient customs and habits, and from the dogmatic theologians, who ever fear that their faith is in danger whenever new truths are brought to light. It is a peculiar fact that the further removed any subject is from the possibility of real knowledge being obtained, the more dogmatic and persistent will be the opinions held regarding it. Hence, speculative theories are always adhered to and fought over with a zeal that is seldom shown in the field of positive knowledge.

Being a scientific age, it is necessarily a practical one, and the wild theories that were accepted with satisfaction in times past will not content the inquiring minds of the nineteenth century. The teaching that there is a supernatural providence ever ready to help in the hour of need may suit for pulpit declamation, but it finds little or no recognition in the real business of life. That which is professed to be a help to man must be capable of having its power of assistance demonstrated here and now. The world has grown tired of looking "beyond the skies" for service while the ever-present helper, science, is to be found on earth. When men relied upon some imaginary providence apart from the domain of the natural, the conditions of society were deplorable in the extreme. Disease, premature old age, and early deaths were the general characteristics of the period, and the many advantages of existence enjoyed to-day were almost entirely unknown. The human family yearned for deliverance from their misery and woe, but the deliverer was repulsed by priestcraft. The Church flourished in all its power, sermons were preached, prayers were offered up, and faith in the unseen providence was extolled; but redemption did not come. Ultimately, however, the genius of man discovered in science a real savior, and rescued this helper of man from the confines of ignorance, bigotry and credulity; and, through indomitable human energy and persistent labors science was permitted to commence its career of emancipation. Its progress unfortunately reveals a sad conflict between the friends of mental freedom and the adherents to a traditional faith. Reason has had to cope with misguided emotions, and intellectual discrimination has had to fight against the stagnation of theology. Scientists have been misrepresented and their efforts depreciated by orthodox teachers who were sagacious enough to foresee that the triumph of science meant the decline of their influence over the minds of the general masses. From almost the very inception of modern science the Church declared war against it, and all its various developments and advancing stages have been marked by an irreconcilable warfare with the exponents of theology. As the Rev. R. Ferguson, in his *Penalty of Greatness*, in speaking of the Roman Catholic Church, remarks: "Not only were means taken to prevent any, even the least, difference of religious opinion, by the invention of the most finished instruments of torture and suffering, but science itself became the object of burning jealousy and persecution. Men were made to deny the very laws of nature." Similar opposition to, and condemnation of science have been manifested by Protestants. Dr. Andrew D. White gives many instances of this in his *Warfare of Science*, and truly observes: "Warfare of this sort against science seems petty indeed; but it is to be guarded against in Protestant countries not less than in Catholic."

It is almost superfluous at the present time to indicate the benefits of science, inasmuch as its advantages in every department of life are so apparent. No one can accurately deny but that it has proved itself to be the unprecedented helper of the human race. Experience has established the fact that a proper adherence to its laws secures healthy bodies, directs aright the resources of the mind, and proves the greatest factor in promoting the harmony and well-being of society in general. Without its

aid we should still be surrounded by the state of physical wretchedness and moral degradation that existed during the period of theological domination; without its discoveries the superstition and fanaticism of the Dark Ages would still cloud the intellect and stifle the reason of man; without its influence, the world would still be in a chaotic condition of desolation, and its people the unfortunate victims of a semi-barbarism. In the domain of the emotional part of our nature, too, science plays an important and an effective part. To study the universe in all its grand and sublime beauty; the millions of glittering stars which illuminate the heavens; the earth with its green covering, its flowers of every hue that adorn its surface; the rippling brook, the rolling waters of the ocean, the rainbow forming an arch above; the singing of the birds—all these impart a joy unspeakable and produce feelings of delight and veneration within those who come under such magic influences.

Regarding science as the true helper of man, we hold it to be not only distinct from theology, but entirely opposed to its pretensions. Theology and science have always been antagonistic to each other, and their disagreement has been felt by the disciples of each whenever they have come into contact. In the early ages men had no knowledge of the laws of nature, and then theology reigned with unlimited sway; but the first dawning of the sun of science deprived it of some of its power, and it has been gradually becoming weaker up to the present time. The advocates of theology have been gradually giving way, conceding bit by bit of their territory, till at the present time the throne of their champion is beginning to totter, and the disciples of science have a hope in the future.

Science is confined to this world, its experiments are conducted, its discoveries are made and its results are proved in nature, and nowhere else; theology pertains to some other world, and its teachings refer to the alleged supernatural; science enjoins reliance on human effort, theology inculcates dependence on something more than human; science is systematised truth, theology is chaotic speculation; science is based upon the uniformity of natural law, theology postulates an interference with the "order of nature"; science rests on knowledge and experience, theology on conjecture and vain hopes; science is the helper of man, theology is claimed as the servant of God. The object of science is to secure as far as possible the happiness of man on earth; theology professes to provide him with bliss in heaven. "Science is a white-robed messenger of love, theology is a dark-robed demon of fear; science is the day full of light and joy, theology is the night wrapped in darkness and gloom; science is a mantle adorning the living present, theology is a shroud covering the dead past; science is the herald of progress, theology is a dungeon of despair." Thus it will be seen that science is the friend of man, while theology is the weapon of the priest which he has too frequently used to degrade the masses, limiting their rights and fettering their intellects. In the words of Colonel Ingersoll, "science is modest and merciful, theology is arrogant and cruel. The hope of science is in the perfection of the human race, the hope of theology is the salvation of the few and the damnation of almost everybody else."

CHARLES WATTS.

The following story is an old one, but it will bear repeating. T. Allsop records that it was told with great glee by Coleridge. At the holy sacrament a priest gave, without noticing it, a counter instead of a wafer. The communicant, thinking it would melt on his tongue, very patiently waited, but without effect. The priest, seeing him hesitate, asked what was the matter. "Matter," said he; "I fear your reverence has made a mistake and given me God the Father; he is so hard and tough there is no swallowing him."

## WILL CHRIST SAVE US?

(Continued from page 402.)

It may of course be plausibly argued that Christ was (and is) God; that, being so, his ability to save us, here and hereafter, is unquestionable; that, having the power to save us, he may be presumed to have the desire; that he is the Son of "our Father which art in heaven," and that we may—and indeed ought to—rely upon his mercy and generosity for our salvation.

Now there are two fatal defects in this argument. In the first place, it is not clear that Christ was God; in the second place, it is not clear that, if he was, he will certainly save us.

The deity of Christ has always been rejected by a more or less numerous section of professed Christians. Learned books have been written to prove that the doctrine is inconsistent with the teaching of Christ and the utterances of the primitive Church. Even an outsider, who studies Christianity as he studies Buddhism or Brahminism, sees that the doctrine of the deity of Christ—or the dogma of God the Son—was slowly developed as primitive Christianity made its way among the Gentiles. It required centuries to reach its perfection in the metaphysical subtleties of the great Creeds, which are accepted alike by Protestant and Catholic. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, speaks to his countrymen of "the man" Jesus whom they had slain; the god Christ was an after construction of the Græco-Oriental mind.

We do not propose, however, to trouble the reader with laborious proofs of this position. We prefer to leave the historical ground—at least in the present inquiry—and to tread the ground of common knowledge and common sense.

Apart from history and metaphysics, for which the popular mind has neither leisure nor inclination, and in which it is often as easy for a skilled intelligence to go wrong as to go right—there are only two ways in which the belief in Christ's divinity can be supported. It may be argued that he was not born, and that he did not live or die, like a mere human being; and that his supernatural career proves his deity. Or it may be argued that he taught the world what it did not know, and could never have discovered for itself.

We will take the second argument first; and in reply we have simply to observe that a very slight acquaintance with the teachings of antiquity will convince us of the truth of Buckle's statement, that whoever asserts that Christianity revealed to mankind truths with which they were previously unacquainted is guilty either of gross ignorance or of wilful fraud. The note of absolute originality is lacking in the utterances of Christ; what he said had been said in other words before him; and it is inconceivable that God should come upon earth, and go through all the painful and undignified stages of human life, merely to inform his creatures of what they had already discovered.

Let us now take the first argument—the supernatural career of Christ. We are told that he was born without a father; but whoever will read the Gospels critically, without the slightest reference to any other authority, will see that they do not contain the first-hand testimony of any valid witness. If the Gospels were written in the second century (as they were) they are no evidence at all. If they were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they are still no evidence of the miraculous birth of Jesus; for neither of those writers was in a position to know the facts. The only persons who could know anything about the matter were Joseph and Mary. Joseph himself could only know he was *not* the father of Jesus; he could not know who *was*. Mary, indeed, knew if there was anything uncommon; but she does not appear

to have informed any one; in fact, she is said to have kept all these things hidden in her heart. How then did the Gospel writers—or rather *two* of them, for Mark and John were ignorant or silent—how, we ask, did they discover the minute details of the annunciation and miraculous conception? Joseph and Mary appear to have kept the secret, if there was one to keep; and during all the public life of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, not a whisper transpired of his supernatural birth; on the contrary, he is unsuspectingly referred to as “the carpenter’s son” by his neighbors and fellow citizens.

Were such “evidence” as this tendered in a court of law, it would damnify the case for which it was adduced; and Catholics are sagacious in reminding the Protestants that the witness of the Bible is insufficient without the living witness of the Church.

A miraculous birth is necessarily suspicious. The advent of a God should be entirely supernatural. It is not enough to dispense with a father; he should also dispense with a mother. Both are alike easy in physiology. But when there is a mother in the case, it is natural to suppose that there is a father somewhere.

With regard to the miracles of Christ’s life, however they are acceptable to faith, they are not acceptable to reason. There is an utter lack of evidence in their favor—at least of such evidence as would be admitted in a legal investigation. It is this fact, indeed, which induces advocates like Cardinal Newman to lay stress upon the “antecedent probability” of the New Testament miracles; which is only supplying the deficiency of evidence by the force of prepossession. Even the Resurrection is unattested. There is no first-hand evidence, and the narrative is full of self-contradictions. This is perceived by Christian apologists. They have abandoned the old-fashioned argument. They say as little as possible about the Gospel witnesses. They stake almost everything on St. Paul, who is not mentioned in the Gospels, who never saw Jesus in the flesh, who only saw him in a vision several years after the Ascension, and whose testimony (if it may be called such) would be laughed at by any committee of inquiry. They also argue, in a supplemental way, that the early Christians believed in the resurrection of Christ. Yes, and they believed in all the miracles of Paganism. But in any case belief is not evidence; it is only, at best, a reason for investigation. The resurrection was a fact or it was not a fact, and the disinclination of Christian writers to face this plain alternative is an indication of their own misgivings. A counsel does not resort to subtleties when he has a good case upon the records.

The deity of Christ, therefore, is very far from proved; it is even far from probable. Faith may cry “He was God,” but Reason declares “He was man.” Even however if he were God, it does not follow that he *will* save us. What he may do behind the curtain of death is only a conjecture. In this world it is patent that God only helps those who help themselves; he also helps them as far as they help themselves; that is, he does not help them at all. Prayer is no longer a hearty request for divine assistance. Christians ask on Sunday, but they do not expect to receive on Monday. Their supplication is formal and perfunctory. They know that it will not deflect the lightning from its path, or turn the course of the avalanche, or divert the lava’s stream, or change the line of an explosion, or bring rain in drought, or draw sunshine for the crops, or quicken the growth of a single blade of grass, or diminish by one iota the statistics of human crime.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

## GNOSTIC MYSTERIES.

A CLEAR link between the ancient Pagan mysteries and those of Christianity appears among what are called the Gnostic monuments in the Christian Catacombs at Rome. One of the monuments to Vibia mentions Vincentius, pontiff of the god Sabazis. There are four frescoes depicted in W. Palmer’s *Early Christian Symbolism*, 1885. One shows Vibia, like Proserpine, being snatched off by Death, or Pluto; Mercury with his caduceus, leads the way to Hades. The next shows a banquet of seven pious priests. The third represents Vibia conducted by Mercury before the throne of Dispater and Abracura—God the Father and Abra Kore, or Proserpine. The last shows the introduction of Vibia by a good angel to paradise, where a feast is prepared. The inscription, as remarked, says: “This is Vicentius, the pontiff of the deity Sabazis, who with pious mind celebrated the sacred rites of the gods.”

The Sabazia were allied to the Bacchic mysteries: Sabazios was a Phrygian phallic-solar vegetative, dying, and reviving deity identified with the mystic Bacchus, and hence sometimes named Dionysus Sabazios, and termed a son of Zeus by Persephone. (See Diod., iv. 4.)

Origen says (*Against Celsus*, I., ix.): “He compares . . . believers to . . . soothsayers, and Mithræ, and Sabbadians.” Origen goes on to say that in the Christian system there is “at least as much of investigation into articles of belief, and of explanation of dark sayings, occurring in the prophetic writings, and of the parables in the gospels, and of countless other things, which either were narrated or enacted with a symbolical signification” (p. 405, vol. x., Ante-Nicene Christian Library).

Among the things represented in the mysteries were the amour of Zeus as a Serpent, and Proserpine, or Eve. A golden living serpent was introduced into the bosom of the candidate, who exclaimed, “Evoe! Sabai, Bacchi, Anes, Attes Hues!” Arnobius (bk. v.) says the serpent was introduced from above and taken out below. Diodorus Siculus (iv. 4) tells us the Sabazian mysteries were performed in secret and at night. As both sexes took part in the purifications, initiations, and ceremonies, they were considered disreputable. “Serpents,” remarks the Rev. G. W. Cox, “played a prominent part in the rites of Zeus Sabazios, whose worship was practically identical with that of the Syriac Tammuz, or Adonis.” Clement of Alexandria says, “The token of the Sabazian mysteries to the initiated is ‘the deity gliding over the breast’—the deity being the serpent crawling over the breasts of the initiated. Proof surely this of the unbridled lust of Zeus,” continues the horrified and holy father. Bunsen says Sabazios is the god Sbat, the seventh planet. Lydus, speaking of Dionysus, says, “The Chaldeans call God Iao, and in the Phœnician language he is often called Sabaoth.” Says Robert Brown, in *The Great Dionysiac Myth* (vol. i., p. 171): “Iao, as we have seen, is identical with Dionysos, and Sbat, Sabaoth, or Tsebaoth, the ‘Lord of Hosts,’ or Sabazios, is the same being, the two together forming the divinity Jehovah Sabaw, Iao Sabao, the Abraxas, or rather Abrasax of the Greeks.” Sabao itself was a mystic word, probably allied to sheba, seven, the shouters of the word being usually excited. Saboi became an equivalent for madman. The modern Greeks still call a madman Zabos. Much that was known and cruelly suppressed as witchcraft, was really survivals of Paganism, and the witches Sabbath preserved the name as well as some of the rites of the ancient mysteries.

Epiphanius tells (Hæres. 37) what shows a connection between the Bacchanalian rites and those of Christianity. He says of certain Gnostics: “They kept a tame serpent in a chest or sacred ark, and

piled loaves upon a table before the same, and then called upon the serpent to come forth. Whereupon, opening of himself the ark, he would come forth, mount upon the table, and twine about the loaves, which they broke in pieces and distributed among the worshippers, calling this their Perfect Sacrifice and their Eucharist." The Ophites, or serpent worshippers, were, according to Hippolytus, the progenitors of all the Gnostic heresies. How similar the doctrines and rites of the heretics were to those found in the Pagan mysteries, may be fully seen in Hippolytus, who throws much light on the Gnostics, and thereby on his own faith.

It is just possible that a remnant of Gnostic heretics still exist in the very curious sect yet living on the borders of Persia and Arabia, and known as Mandaites, Mendæans, or Christians of St. John, since they call themselves Mandai Ijahi, or Gnostics of John the Baptist. They are also known as Nazoreans, and they call their saints Natsoraye. By the Mohammedans they are known as Sabæans. According to the Acts of the Apostles (xviii. 25, xix. 2), there were certain disciples at Ephesus who, like Apollos, knew only the baptism of John, and had not so much as heard of there was any Holy Ghost. The Mendæans look, indeed, on Christ as the spirit of God, and believe with the Mohammedans that Christ's crucifixion was only a delusive appearance. They keep a Midsummer St. John's festival, when they all flock for five days for baptism to a flowing river, where they dip three times daily. In their eucharist they use wafers of flour, wine and oil, the other elements being a kind of wine made by steeping dry grapes in water.\* Their sacred books comprise the Divan, the Book of Adam, the Book of St. John the Baptist, and the Completion, a book of chants and rites. Of these the Book of Adam was printed in Sabæan and Latin by Norberg in 1815. Polygamy is not only permitted, but enjoined. To become a priest one must undergo strict trial for sixty days, and pass seven days and nights awake and in prayer with a priest. These are Christians, and possibly far better representatives of primitive Christianity than any of the Western varieties, for stagnation is the rule in the East as evolution is in the West.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### THE POET SHELLEY.

ON Fame's eternal mount  
Thy escutcheon now is hung;  
And joyful will thy muse recount  
To what thy harp was strung.

To witchery it rose  
And echoes now repeat  
The wanton strain, as oft it flows  
From fingers wild and fleet.

And yet to solemn minstrelsy  
Many a note was given,  
Which in thy hands did emulate  
The rapturous bird of heaven.

Pity the lyre so oft is strung  
The bigot's heart to seize;  
Pity that sounds so sweet are flung  
Like fragrance withered weeds among;  
They sadden whilst they please.

Awake, O Poet! no longer sleep,  
Bards prostitute their lays;  
But long and loud, as thunder deep,  
Truth will thine echo praise.

W. R. L.

\* See M. Norberg, *Codex Nasarans "Liber Adami"* (1815) and *De religione et lingua Sabæorum* (1781).

#### ORIGIN OF WHAT IS CALLED CHRISTIANITY.

By HENRY MACDONALD.

UNTIL "higher criticism" had demonstrated the late origin of the New Testament books, no authentic history of early Christianity was possible. To understand the factors in the movement which culminated in what was afterward called Christianity, we shall have to review the different schools of philosophic thought prominent in the Roman empire before the first century of the Christian era.

Confucius (550 B.C.), when asked if the rule of human conduct could be expressed in a single word said: "Is not Reciprocity such a word? What you do not like when done to you, do not that to others." Five hundred years before Jesus, Buddha had preached the "Sermon on the Mount." Universal charity was the web and woof of his discourse. Judge not that ye be not judged. If thine enemy smite thee on one cheek turn to him the other, were his precepts. This peaceful philosophy, more suited to the Asiatic mind than to the more vigorous European, was widely spread by Buddhist missionaries. In Palestine, the great Rabbi Hillel (75 B.C.) lectured on the "Golden Rule," and taught all the nobler sayings afterward attributed to Jesus.

The oriental doctrine of the immortality of the soul, invented by the Indians, grasped by the Assyrians and Egyptians, was ignored and disbelieved by the Israelites and their Bible. After the time of Cyrus this belief of their conquerors, the Persians, was gradually accepted by a strong party among the Israelites—the Pharisees—who afterward acquired most influence with the women and common people. Their rivals, the Sadducees, who comprised the rich and cultivated, were rationalistic in their philosophy, and never accepted the new belief.

The intellectual centre of the Roman world was at Alexandria; the dominating philosophy was that of the Athenian sage Plato (427 B.C.) From Egypt and Persia he had imbibed the belief in the immortality of the soul, and was the first person in Europe to speak the word that all men and nations were brothers. In reasoning on the difficulties involved in the idea of a Supreme Being, he was induced to consider the divine nature under the forms of the First Cause, the Reason or Logos, and the Soul of the Universe. These three principles were represented in the Platonic system as three gods, united with each other by a mysterious generation. These mysterious doctrines might amuse but could not satisfy a rational mind; but a belief, proceeding from world-wide ignorance and fanaticism, was at hand, that was designed to be the hammer that was to weld these speculative views into dogmas that were incumbent on all to believe, impious to doubt, and fatal to mistake.

The most downtrodden—those who feel the pangs of hunger, misery, and oppression—believe most implicitly in a future age of triumph. This hope had given birth to the belief in a Messiah, and in a space of two hundred years more than forty Messiahs had offered their services to mankind. All of them suffered tortures and death; two of them—Judas and Bar Cochba—were formidable enough to mark indelibly the history of their own times. One of them, Jesus, historically unknown to his contemporaries, has achieved the most widely known name among the sons of men. The Jews of Palestine were abjectly poor; to be popular, Messiahism was usually Communistic and Anarchistic. Wealth and government were their antipathy. The rich man was the wicked man. They resisted government by having nothing to do with it. To them faith was more righteous than reason.

A hundred years after Jesus, the Messiah movement made its greatest effort. Bar Cochba (Son of the Star), was acknowledged by the High Priest

Akiba as the Messiah; armies were placed in the field, coins were struck in his honor, and hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives were fanatically sacrificed to this insane delusion. The struggle of Bar Cochba advertised the Messiah idea to the Gentiles. In the Roman world all Messiahs were grouped as The Messiah, just as we in our day group all Mahdii as The Mahdi. A condition of first importance to religious exaltation is ignorance—it is the mother of fanaticism. The Messiah idea appealed to the ignorant, to the hopelessly poor, to the slave, the outcast, and the dissatisfied. Its failure politically was given a spiritual meaning.

The original Messiahs (or Christians as the Greeks translated the name) were called Ebionites—a Hebrew word meaning the poor. The Gentile converts soon outnumbered the Jewish ones; in the clash of opinions the original Christians, who looked on Jesus as a human being, were excommunicated. Their insane, temporal, Messianic notions were spiritualised, and explained by the metaphysical speculations of Plato, which were the philosophical fad of the time. The Messiah became the Logos, the second person in the trinity of Plata, and the Logos became the Mediator between the First Cause and man.

The obscurity of Jesus favored his apotheosis. His existence, the events of his life, the dates of his birth and death, are historically unknown. The history of an extraordinary man, Apollonius of Tyana (born 4 B.C.), whom the Emperor Vespasian condescended to use as a prophet and oracle, probably helped to form and suggest the legend of Jesus. It was said of Apollonius that he was descended from Deity; that he raised the dead, cured the blind and lame, cast out devils, and finally ascended to heaven.

The advantages of inspired books were seen in the case of the Jews. A large literature was already in circulation, much of it atrociously miraculous and even grossly obscene. About one hundred and fifty years after the supposed death of Jesus appeared a canon written from a standpoint of the latest theology, and enforced by the influence of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement. The great and learned (?) Irenæus, when asked why the gospels were limited to four, replied: "Because there are four winds, four quarters to the earth, and animals have four legs!" His logical consistency is shown by his forcing the acceptance of gospels which claim the ministry of Jesus lasted three years, while his own writings insisted that Jesus lived fifty years, and that his ministry lasted twenty years!

In that age, when not one in ten thousand could read, it was a comparatively easy task for an organisation to foist upon ignorant followers an authoritative canon. The greatest names in Church history have always claimed that the end justifies the means. Some have considered it impious to keep faith with the unbeliever. Many have said with St. Paul, "For if my lie has redounded to the glory of God, why am I judged a sinner?" Even in our own day, when truthfulness is a much more exalted virtue than it was with the ancient Christians, a United States judge has found it necessary to publicly censure Anthony Comstock (a much higher type of man than any early Christian Father) for lying and fraud in the supposed interest of his deity.

If we were to believe the early Christian Fathers in their malicious calumnies of each other—murderer, liar, thief, forger, adulterer, sodomite, are a few of the epithets they apply to each other—literary forgery and interpolation might be regarded as almost virtues. In one council one of the bishops was kicked to death by his brother bishops, and conspiracy, poison, and the dagger were often used to dispose of leaders of obnoxious factions.

The Roman world at this time was without a religion. With contemptuous toleration, Rome had

invited the gods of all the nations to her Pantheon. Brought face to face, the claims of all were rejected with equal disdain. The Emperor Constantine saw, with political insight, that the altar is the strongest support of the throne. The old superstitions were dying, a new one must be found and enforced. He saw the growth of a sect, which probably numbered in his time (according to Gibbon) one in twenty of the empire, whose tenets were certain to please a despot. A priesthood that can be tuned by a master hand, inculcating obedience to the powers that be, and rewards in a life to come for ills endured in this life, is the strongest support of monopolised wealth and centralised government. Christianity became the State religion. Wealth, honors, and position were showered on converts of rank and ability. Philosophic schools were closed; reason was banished, and the gloom of the Dark Ages slowly settled on Europe.

The movement that started in opposition to wealth and authority became the strongest support of monopoly and ended in absolutism. Had Jesus, Paul, or the Apostles never lived, the movement would have been the same. They were not necessary: there was nothing new in it. A philosophic prophet could have foreseen it, as he could have foreseen from the Protestant movement the dissolution of all dogmas. We have made the cycle again. Our gods have once more been brought face to face, and with the same result. What will be the next cycle?  
—*Twentieth Century.*

## ACID DROPS.

Blessed be ye poor. Among personal estates proved within the last year or so are the following:—Archbishop Thompson, £44,570; Archbishop Magee, £20,000; Bishop Goodwin, £18,977; Dean Plumtre, £46,947; Dean Elliot, £3,810; Dean Church, £32,021. During the last thirty years forty bishops and archbishops of the Established Church in England have died, leaving behind them personal property amounting in one case to £140,000, in three cases to £120,000, in twelve cases to between £70,000 and £90,000; the remainder averaging between £30,000 and £40,000.

Parker Pillsbury gives the following instances of how pious Americans contrive to make a good thing out of the non-taxation of churches. "I have heard of men who have bought valuable city lands and reared on them cheap little shanty churches, which, by the solemn mockery of dedication, could be exempt from the tax-gatherer or assessor, and then holding the church, lands, and all until the growth of the city and rise of real estate enables them to realise fortunes on the original meagre investment. I know of a church or an exempted building in Boston which cost 80,000 dols., that perhaps could not now be bought for double that money. When the walls were up and roofed in, a lecture-room was temporarily finished, and then furnished with rude seats and benches, so that a single service could be held, which was called a dedication. That service was to keep away, not the Devil and his angels, but the government and its tax-assessors, and it has had the desired effect to the present hour."

The death of Bishop Claughton, who held on to his stipend until he was eighty-two years of age, reminds us that there are still on the episcopal benches some half a dozen or more right reverend fathers in God who draw big screws while totally unable, from age and infirmity, to perform the duties of their office.

Most people think more of a dog run over in their own street than of an earthquake in a distant country, or the difficulty of reconciling with the providential government of God wholesale disasters like that which recently visited the island of Great Sangir, near the Celebes, would be more recognised. Hundreds were suddenly killed by the showers of stones and ashes thrown up from the great volcano Gunonsa Arvau, which is near Tarvena, the capital of the island. Most of the natives were engaged in the fields, getting in the paddy crop. Even those who reached their homes were not safe, for the houses collapsed under the weight of stones and

ashes which settled on the roofs and soon buried whole families in their ruins. Many met a horrible death, and were swept away in the rivers of molten lava that flowed rapidly down the valleys. "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn," but the worst deeds of men are outdone by what the Christian calls Providence.

Sixty miners drowned in a flooded mine in Japan, fifty deaths from sunstroke in Chicago, 160 cases in New York, heavy mortality both of men and horses through the intense heat in America, are among this week's chronicle of the work of Providence, while last week the outbreak of Asiatic cholera in the suburbs of Paris caused over 400 deaths.

In the first half of this year no less than 3,588 deaths by disaster in America were recorded in the *New York Tribune*. What a record for Providence! Some think there are more disasters now than formerly, but the explanation probably is the modern facility of news-gathering.

According to later accounts the island of Guona Awa, near Celebes, which has been destroyed by volcanic action, contained only two thousand people. Still this is a pretty good holocaust to a God of mercy.

"When the interesting burglar's not a burgling" he is living on the last lot of swag or meditating fresh business. No doubt he thinks a good deal in his way, but he is sometimes mistaken. Some of the fraternity, one day last week, made the awful blunder of breaking into Mr. Foote's house, while the whole family was at the seaside, and the person in charge had gone out to do a little shopping. In broad daylight, and in a busy thoroughfare, they forced open the front door and rummaged the house. The few cupboards and drawers that were locked were neatly forced. But all the burglars found worth taking away was four shillings on the kitchen dresser. Clothes were not removed. The enterprising visitors were evidently after money, jewellery, or other portable valuables. Probably they had spent a day or two in watching the house, and "four bob" was a poor dividend on their investment. Next time they crack a crib they had better make sure it is not inhabited by a Freethought editor and lecturer.

The burglars must have been deucedly annoyed by their examination of Mr. Foote's study. Books and papers, and papers and books, but not a cent, or a portable article worth a cent, in any of the drawers. They took away the keys of his desk, perhaps thinking they might be useful elsewhere; and helped themselves to three or four cigars (considerately leaving three for Mr. Foote), with which they perhaps consoled themselves for a misspent afternoon.

A lady of fine artistic taste (writes Mr. Ashby Sterry in the *Graphic*) has discovered that at church-parade her Prayer-book, by its incongruous color, entirely ruined the effect of a carefully-conceived costume. It struck a discord in an otherwise perfectly harmonious dress. This has been remedied by having a cover to her Prayer-book which shall be perfectly in accord with the leading tone of her garments. The Prayer-book cover will henceforth receive as attentive consideration as the bonnet, the gloves, and the sunshade, and no jarring note of color will be introduced by means of a volume bound in blue velvet or in scarlet morocco.

Under the heading of "The Worm Turns" Mr. Grant Allen writes the following in the *Athenæum*:—"I have often been laughed at for saying in print that the English author, unless rich enough actually to defy his public, must work under painfully soul-killing restrictions. May I be permitted briefly to recount a recent experience of mine which proves my thesis? For years those who know me well have said to me frequently, "Why do you never put anything of yourself into your novels?" But I knew my public too well; I give it itself instead—which is what it wanted. Some months since, however, I was tempted by conscience to set to work at a more serious romance on a social theme that deeply interested me. I got absorbed in it; I was carried away by the subject; I wrote at white heat, in a glowing fever of moral enthusiasm. I put my soul into the thing. I put my religion into it. And I wrought long and hard at it, with graver and burnisher, till I believed for once I had made a work of art. It was a part—a small part, a

first instalment—of the authentic Message which, rightly or wrongly, I imagine the Power that inheres in the universe has implanted in me for transmission to humanity. When it was finished, I gave it to a publisher who is also a personal friend, and in whose judgment I have absolute confidence—he knows his public even better than I do. After reading it, he implored me in the strongest terms not to publish. He said the book would ruin me. Nobody would afterwards take any other novel of mine. It would spoil my future. I am a very sane monomaniac; I yielded at once to his advice. I dare run no such risk. I shall destroy the manuscript. I hope those who read this note, so wrung out of me, will pardon its egotism. However insignificant a man may seem to others, to himself the failure of his life-work must always be a tragedy. But after this, nobody, I am sure, can ever laugh at me for saying free thought is gagged in England."

We have a good deal of sympathy with Mr. Grant Allen, but, to tell the truth, our sympathy runs into compassion. He had a choice to make, and he made it. He decided to please the public instead of his own intellect and conscience. He swapped his dignity for a good mess of pottage, because he could not live without the pottage and could live without the dignity. He would fain have both, and hence these tears. But greater men than he, though not "rich enough," have defied the public; and smaller men, with more courage, have done it repeatedly. On the whole, we incline to think that Mr. Grant Allen should have refrained from proving himself a victim by proving also that he is no hero.

"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." His "follower," however, Bishop Warren, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, is building himself a 75,000 dol. house in Denver, Col. Truly this is following "the Master" at a very great distance. The one preached a Gospel of Gush; the other practices the Gospel of Groed.—*Secular Thought*.

Dr. Briggs, Professor Dods, and Professor Brown have been giving some mild doses of "the higher criticism" at the Oxford Summer School of Theology. Said the last-mentioned: "Opponents of the higher criticism regarded it as tantamount to a denial of the supernatural in the Old Testament." He held, however, one might believe in the supernatural without supposing its record was made by supernatural means. "For example, the narrative of certain striking miraculous events in the Book of Daniel is not an evidence in itself that the narrative contains real history." This although Jesus endorses Daniel.

Further Dr. Brown said: "We cannot class the restoration to life of the son of the woman of Zarephath (2 Kings) with that of the widow's son at Nain, or the story of the dead body revived by contact with Elisha's bones with the raising of Lazarus." Yet there is quite as much evidence for the Old Testament miracles as for the New—that is, none at all—only the Christian feels more reluctance at throwing overboard the latter. For our part, we think it likely the story of raising the widow's son at Nain was circulated because a similar tale had been put about regarding Elisha. It would never do to let the Messiah be outdone by the old prophet.

The soon-to-be heavily-pensioned Lord Chancellor, presiding at the meeting of the Victoria Institute, indulged in a lot of verbiage about the sophistries of the age which contributed to the literature of unbelief. His lordship talks as if all reason was on his side, but he takes care to invoke the law also, as he showed pretty well in his prosecution of Mr. Bradlaugh.

Dr. Jayne, the Bishop of Chester, advocates all the public-houses being taken over by the County Councils. Dr. Jayne is reported to have expressed a wish to run a gospel groggery of his own.

The English Church Union advertises among its list of patrons the Lord Bishop of Delaware, U.S.A., the Lord Bishop of Indiana, and the Lord Bishop of Pittsburg. We wonder what the republican episcopalians of the United States think of it. Probably the bishops like it, and the E.C.U. might do well to advertise in the American church papers, "The title of 'Lord' will be given to any repu-

lican bishop subscribing a guinea to the English Church Union."

The *Times* of July 19 gives an account of the enthronement of the child lama of Tibet, who is believed to be a re-embodiment of the soul of the previous lama. This superstition is used by the Chinese to keep the Tibetans well in subjection. The lama is regarded almost as a divine being, and most things are tabu to him. He is thus kept well under the rule of the Chinese regent, and whenever he gets of age and shows signs of acting for himself, he dies and is re-incarnated in a new child. It is said that grand lamas rarely live to be over eighteen.

The hopeless obscurantism of the clerical mind is illustrated by the Rev. F. O. Morris, who writes to the *Church Times* on "The Evolution Craze," and speaks of Darwinism as "incredible nonsense."

The Rev. A. Marwood Wilcox, of Spitsbury Vicarage, Oxon, disregarding the fact that by the Mosaic law a brother was compelled to marry his dead brother's childless wife (Deut. xxv. 5), would translate Deut. xxvii. 23 "Cursed be he that lieth with his sister in law." In this case there would be no prohibition of lying with one's mother in law. Both the Authorised and Revised Versions read "mother in law." Mr. Wilcox's attempt to bolster up the Church law against marriage with a deceased wife's sister is a very lame one.

*Appropos* of baptism and its saving efficacy, a French Catholic missionary, one M. Bataillon, at Tahiti, hit upon an ingenious way of ensuring a chance of glory to the damned souls of poor lost heathen. He said: "I have always with me a flask of scented water and a flask of plain water; I begin by sprinkling a little of the scent on the head of the infant, under pretence of comforting the babe, and whilst the mother takes pleasure in spreading it over the baby's face, I dexterously change the flask, and use the water which conveys regeneration, without any suspicion being excited of the nature of the action."

A story is told of the Bishop of Manchester that once, when the Alexandrian MSS. was appealed to, he took up King James's version with the remark, "Rather let us consult the Holy Original." Some people are occasionally to be found who look on the English words as inspired, and this belief is as warranted as the assertion made on the title-page of the Authorised Version, "translated out of the original tongues." Nobody knows anything of the originals, or even in what language they were written. All the early Fathers said Matthew was written in Hebrew. Yet our translation is made from the Greek, the Hebrew original being irrecoverably lost.

The American papers report that there is a person in San Francisco calling himself the Rev. J. Nouri, D.D., who says he discovered Noah's ark on Mount Ararat. This was in April, but he said nothing about it till he got to California, for fear of being laughed at. Probably the Rev. Mr. Nouri is projecting a Noah's Ark Exploration and Restoration Company to get down the old boat and exhibit it at the Columbus celebration. Plenty of Bible cranks would subscribe.

The Ober Ammergau peasants find they make a good thing out of the Passion Play, and though under vows to produce it once in ten years, the burgomaster announces that other religious plays will be performed by the villagers in August and September.

Much fuss is continually made about clerical poverty. It should be known that a large proportion of this is owing to the market being overstocked. There are some 4,000 persons in holy orders but out of work. The fool of a well-to-do family is made a parson, and the crop is always plentiful.

At Devizes last week, Gurd, the murderer, made the usual pious ending. He wrote most religious letters to his aunt, and expected to meet all his friends in heaven. Oh, what must it be to be there!

Amos Wilson, of Wombleton, a local preacher and Wesleyan class leader, aged forty-three, has to pay £500 for the seduction of Miss Emily Wilson, of Harome Helmsley. The case

was a very cruel one. The defendant said he never intended marriage, and married another woman, ignoring a pleading letter Miss Wilson had written him as to her condition. The girl stated she put every confidence in Wilson because he was such a good man.

A striking instance of clerical boycotting is given by the Radical Rev. R. C. Fillingham in the *Daily News*. A Conservative vicar addressed a political meeting and denounced boycotting in Ireland in the very same week in which he informed Mr. Fillingham that if he spoke at a Liberal meeting he should not be allowed to preach in his church.

The Bishop of Worcester says of attempts at Christian reunion at home: "I see too much of the intense prejudice of the clergy against any co-operation with Nonconformists to be very hopeful of the success of any such scheme." The whole High Church party to a man would oppose it, he continues, and adds: "If you had only reasonable men to deal with, the plan might work." But the bishop knows well enough the mass of his clergy are not actuated by reason but by interest.

Some good yarns have been told in the service of religion. The paralysed blasphemer still turns up occasionally, generally in out-of-the-way parts of America. Dr. Thomas Beard, in his *Theatre of God's Judgments*, gave some awful instances of Divine Providence. One of the best stories of this kind is mentioned by Southey, and is said to have occurred in 1776. A party of gentlemen left the opera on Saturday night and went to a gaming house. At midnight, in the middle of a game, just as Sunday came in, they heard a thunder-clap and felt a slight shock. That didn't stop them; but presently the clubs became the color of blood, and the hearts black, when they concluded it was time to leave off. Southey does not say how many bottles they had finished.

The persistency of the blood accusation against the Jews is not so surprising in view of the fact given in the *Jewish Chronicle*, that in one of the most popular storybooks used in Roman Catholic schools in Germany no fewer than three stories are based on Jews murdering little children.

God's old favorites have imitators among the negroes of Georgia. According to a despatch from Atlanta, "Play on your harp, little David," sang the Methodist congregation of McDonough one Sunday several months ago when its colored pastor, Rev. Ben Biven, returned to the services with his two deacons, Henry Harrison and Jim Shafer. The three had been out to murder Dr. Sloan, as one of the negroes has since confessed. Detectives have arrested the trio in Atlanta. Biven, the confessor says, carried the gun and did the killing, after which the three returned to church and resumed services by taking up the collection. There are fears that they will be lynched.

It would be interesting to be able to identify those "pious and respectable women who daily pray with fervent earnestness to Almighty God that they may make 30 per cent. on the Stock Exchange!" We have the word of a Pillar of the Church that they really exist—nay, more, that they are numbered among his personal acquaintances. Such women, from a psychological point of view, would be an interesting study.

Referring to the "missionary troubles" in Uganda, the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* says "the whole story is a disgrace to Christianity," and of course it would be if Christianity could any longer be disgraced. Our indignant contemporary declares that "It would have been better for the Waganda to have remained in the darkness of their original heathenism than that they should be butchering each other in the name of the religion of peace." True. But what else could be expected from the religion of peace? Its devotees have always shown a strong tendency to butcher each other.

If the poorer classes in the archdiocese of York could read in the society papers the descriptions of the splendid garden party given to six hundred persons at Bishopthorpe by Archbishop and Mrs. Maclagan, if they could read how Bishop Moorhouse is having a month on the moors of Scotland and the Bishop of Durham a month at Cannes, they would realise the truth of the blessed apostle's words, "If a man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good thing."



## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 7, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, Manchester: at 11, "The Shelley Centenary"; at 3, Clinging to Christ"; at 6.30, "The Doom of the Gods."

August 14, Failsforth; 21 and 28, Hall of Science, London. Sept. 4, Glasgow; 11, Aberdeen; 18, Hall of Science, London; 25, Bristol.

October 9 and 16, Hall of Science, London; 23, Newcastle; 30, South Shields.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—August 7, Leicester; 14, Liverpool; 21, Manchester; 28, Grimsby. September 3 and 4, Rushden; 11, Town Hall, Birmingham; 18, Birmingham; 25, Hall of Science. October 2, Hall of Science; 9 and 16, Birmingham; 23, Glasgow; 25 and 26, Belfast; 30, Edinburgh; 31, Aberdeen. November 1 and 2, Aberdeen; 6 and 13, Birmingham; 20, Sheffield; 27, Hall of Science, London. Dec. 4, Hall of Science; 11, Manchester; 18 and 25, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent direct to him at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.

A. KNIGHT.—Copies of *Freethinker* forwarded. See that Lady Craig has one. Glad to see the paragraph in the *Edinburgh Evening News*.

J. WILLIAMSON (Glasgow), a working man, takes an extra copy of the *Freethinker* weekly, and gives it away with his own copy after he has read it. He is against raising the price, thinking it would injure the sale, and promises £1 to the Sustentation Fund.

A. J. H.—Deut. xxiii. 2 reads, "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord." Jokes always welcome.

R. O. SMITH, hon. treasurer, London Secular Federation, begs to acknowledge:—Collections, July 21: Hall of Science, £1 14s. 4d; Finsbury Park, 10s.; Regent's Park, 2s. 3d.; Battersea Branch, 7s.

N. JOHNSON, who subscribes to the Sustentation Fund, says—"I should feel quite benighted in this city (York) of cathedral and churches without the *Freethinker*."

G. E. SMITH.—Your cuttings are always welcome. We note your suggestion, "Raise the price to twopence and print on toned paper."

E. SMEDLEY.—Your "questions" are disguised arguments. We do not attack "the good" in Christianity. All that is good in it belongs to Humanity.

R. G. LEES.—We have not seen the "brutal attack" you refer to. The paper containing it always goes into the wastebasket unopened. Glad to hear you are trying to promote our circulation at Camberwell.

J. O. GOODFELLOW.—We cannot print *political* letters on the Irish question; that aspect of the question must be discussed in political journals; otherwise we should have gladly inserted your well-written letter.

S. DENNY.—When we tell you that the newsagents who sell the *Freethinker* are mostly unknown to us, and that probably not one in a hundred belongs to our party, you will see that the suggestion is unworkable.

R. SKIPTON.—James Marchant was for a very short time connected with the West Ham Branch. Nine out of every ten *Freethinkers* were once Christians and have "changed their opinions." Ask your clerical friend to digest that fact. Thanks for your promise to take two copies of this journal in future.

M. CHRISTOPHER subscribes to our Sustentation Fund and promises another donation if he sees "the names of one hundred subscribers within a month."

G. W. B. will pay the newsagent one penny for this journal and remit another penny to the editor, for two or three years if necessary. He thinks a large number of readers might do the same.

A FRIEND (per G. J. Holyoake) sends £3 for "Mr. Foote's Holiday Fund." W. Bailey also sends 10s.

T. HOPKINS.—Thanks for your generous letter and enclosure. A cover to the *Freethinker* would be expensive, and ordinary advertisers won't look at a Secular journal. We wish it were otherwise, but facts are facts.

G. C. PAOLI (Chicago).—There is hardly enough interest in Bjornsen in England, though it is growing. Readers would scarcely follow the eulogy. Our compliments to your talented wife. Mr. Foote does not publish his lectures. His writings are advertised on our last pages.

G. FISH.—Do not fail to inform us if the bigots do their worst. Meanwhile pray do not tax yourself. Leave it to the wealthier ones.

W. CABELL.—We fancy the matter is clear enough. The names of the subscribers are printed. It is difficult to name a lump sum to be raised. Some can give at one time and some at another. Besides, if the circulation improves sufficiently the Sustentation Fund will be dropped.

T. BADEN POWELL will subscribe £4 a year to our Sustentation Fund. Other friends who can afford it should go and do likewise.

KILBURN *Freethinkers* should support the open-air lecture-station at Salisbury-road, and help to check the disorderly element.

J. BUXTON.—There are no "original" documents of the Bible. The oldest manuscript of the New Testament belongs to the fourth century; the oldest manuscript of the Old Testament to the tenth century. What God's inspired scribes really wrote—if they ever wrote—God only knows.

ADMIRER.—We believe the *Priest in Absolution* has been unobtainable for many years. Pleased to find a working man ready to make sacrifices for the organ of his principles.

A. J. GIBSON.—There is no way of evading the Vaccination Act except removing or defying the law. You might be fined once, but magistrates are becoming indisposed to inflict cumulative fines.

YOUNG FREETHINKER.—We shall not raise the price if the Sustentation Fund is reasonably supported. Mr. Foote's health is greatly improved, but not quite re-established.

G. E. C. NÆWIGER, secretary of the Hull Branch, knows several *Freethinkers* who could afford to take four or six copies of this journal, for distribution, but only take one. Mr. Næwiger never returns unsold copies; however many they are he bears the loss himself. "If you charged twopence for the paper," he says, "I would gladly pay it, and think I had my money's worth."

TOM TAYLOR.—Our best respects to your wife and the friends who subscribe at Lancaster. Are you the Tom Taylor we knew many years ago at Shipley? We note that you have taken two copies weekly for a long time, and that you will continue to do so even if the price be raised to twopence. Mr. Foote wishes he could accept your kind invitation.

W. HICKS.—We do not pretend to answer legal questions. Litigation is costly, and often disappointing. You are a working man and cannot afford expensive luxuries. Better try to forget the slander.

ALPHA (Kettering) says—"The whole of the readers of the *Freethinker* in this town are prepared to pay twopence rather than lose the paper, which we count on every Friday."

W. BAILEY.—Thanks for your sympathetic letter with enclosure. Our tongue and pen will earn us a modest subsistence if we are not taxed to maintain a paper which should maintain us. Much work for nothing is what a *Freethought* leader must expect; the trouble comes when you have to pay in cash for the luxury of doing it.

S. HOLMES.—We are obliged for your generous letter.

H. COURTNEY.—Glad to hear that the squabble did not occur at the West London Branch's station. At open-air meetings it would, as you say, be well for the speakers to keep at a good distance from each other.

A FREETHINKER of fifty years standing wants an offer for the *National Reformer* from January 1868 to December 1891, complete and in good condition. Also *Secular Review* and *Secularist* from its commencement; only two or three numbers missing. Address—"Freethinker," c/o J. Judge, 6 Coubourg-street, Leeds.

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Liberty—Ironclad Age—Progressive Thinker—Independent Pulpit—Secular Thought—Western Figaro—Flaming Sword—Clarion—Glasgow Herald—Natal Advertiser—Echo—Liberator—Twentieth Century—Lucifer—Northern Echo—Beverley Recorder—Rochdale Observer—Star—Northern Guardian.

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.

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.

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.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

It was frightfully hot work lecturing at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening. Mr. Foote had a Turkish bath—without the shampooing. The audience was a good one for such a holiday. Mr. J. Brumage took the chair. To-day (August 7) Mr. Foote delivers three lectures in the Secular Hall, Manchester, and hopes to get through the heavy task without distress. He will be glad to see as many as possible of his South Lancashire friends at the meetings.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake should have a good audience at the London Hall of Science this evening (Aug. 7). He is to

lecture on Thomas Cooper, and as he is able to speak from long and intimate acquaintance with the late Christian champion, who was once an advocate of Scepticism, the discourse is sure to be extremely interesting. Mr. Holyoake is never happier than on such occasions.

The holiday somewhat affected Mr. Charles Watts's morning and afternoon audiences last Sunday in Newcastle, but in the evening the hall was filled. At all the meetings the utmost enthusiasm was manifested, and Mr. Watts was invited to make a return visit as early as possible. Mr. Watts lectures to-day (Aug. 7), afternoon and evening, in Leicester.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Mrs. C. Bussie, £3; A Friend (per G. J. Holyoake), £2; N. Johnson, 5s.; M. Christopher, 5s.; G. W. B. (Worcester), 5s.; J. Albright, 5s.; H. R. D., 5s.; S. Holmes, 1s.; Miss Parkinson, 1s.; Mrs. Taylor, 1s.; Tom Taylor, 1s.; A. H. H., 2s. 6d.; T. Hopkins, £1; G. Fish, 1s.; Admirer, 2s. 6d.; S. A. K., 10s.; W. Brierley, 5s.; J. Brierley, 5s.; Young Freethinker, 1s.; S. Holmes, £1 1s.; W. Bailey, 10s.

Mr. George Anderson, whose name will be familiar to most of our readers as a generous friend of Freethought, writes to us as follows:—"I should be sorry to see the *Freethinker* stopped or the price raised, for its general contents speak to a larger audience than any other paper I know. If some of those who can afford it, and care for the rising generation being armed with reasons for discarding the prevalent superstition, would guarantee a stated sum, payable, say, every three months, for one year—I would be happy to be one, subscribing £5 per quarter. But I would only do this on condition that you can show other subscriptions likely in amount to effect the object." This is a noble offer on Mr. Anderson's part. We hope it will stimulate the generosity of our wealthier readers.

Aberdeen is as far north as a Jew can go with any chance of profit. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Aberdeen Branch is the first to hit upon a good device for aiding our Sustentation Fund. Mr. John Harkis, the secretary, informs us that the Branch is having a box put in a conspicuous place in the hall, and labelled "*Freethinker* Sustentation Fund." It will be opened quarterly and the contents forwarded to our office. Mr. Harkis suggests that other Branches should follow the Aberdonian example. "Although the sum realised by each Branch should be small," he says, "the aggregate might amount to a fairly round sum."

Our ever-genial and witty friend, the veteran G. J. Holyoake, sends us the following characteristic epistle:—"Dear Mr. Foote,—It would be a pleasure I am sure to many of your readers to learn that you were able to get near the sea breeze, and that you had sufficient funds for your paper. A valued friend of mine, who takes great interest in liberal things, and who in various ways has rendered generous aid to them, sends me £5 to apportion as I think well on your behalf. I therefore send you £3 towards the Sea Breeze Fund and £2 to the *Freethinker* Fund. I make this division, as I think it more important that the Editor should have health than that the readers should have articles.—Yours with good wishes, G. J. HOLYOAKE."

Mr. E. M. Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*, in a letter introducing Miss Susan H. Wixon, now on a visit to England, says: "I hope you will be over here next year representing the Freethinkers of England. I assure you the heretics here will be glad to welcome you." We rather think of giving them the opportunity.

Our London readers, or many of them, will have this copy of the *Freethinker* in their hands before Thursday evening, August 4. We beg to remind them of the Shelley Centenary meeting at the Hall of Science. Even if they have no desperate love of poetry they should make a point of attending the celebration, and do honor to the memory of a great Atheist, whose beautiful spirit and burning words have inspired many of the leading English reformers of this century.

Last Sunday evening a new station was opened by Messrs. Guest, Olifton, Leekey, and Baker at Park-street, Canonbury, where the Y.M.C.A. have been giving open-air addresses. It

is intended that the meetings shall be continued, and Freethinkers in the neighborhood are invited to attend.

"Several influential persons" protested against including the works of Mr. Herbert Spencer and Professor Bain in the books provided for the senior students in the Training Colleges for schoolmistresses. The ground given was that their writings might possibly prove hurtful from the religious point of view. In deference to these zealous pietists, it was made optional whether teachers should be examined in Spencer's work or Locke's *Thoughts on Education*. Mr. Fitch considers it very significant that advantage was taken of this freedom of choice in one only out of the twenty-six residential colleges for schoolmistresses, besides the two Catholic colleges, and that in all the remaining twenty-three the authorities deliberately preferred Mr. Spencer's book.

The National Sunday League announce that on Aug. 7 the Exhibition of the Society of Portrait Painters, Princes Hall, Piccadilly, will be opened from 2 till 6 p.m. The Duke of Westminster has kindly consented to open Grosvenor House on Sundays, Aug. 14 and 21, during similar hours. Tickets may be had by forwarding stamped address envelope to Mr. Henry Mills, Secretary, 221 High Holborn, W.C. The date and hour for which they are required should be stated.

The *Cosmopolitan*, of Calcutta, opens with an article in which it contrasts the interested character of Christian morality, done with a view of eternal reward, with the *niskarma dharma*, or righteousness without desire, of the Brahmins, taught long before Jesus Christ is alleged to have been born. It also reprints from our columns an article very suitable to its Indian readers, that on "Christianity and the Heathen," by Mr. Wheeler.

The *Moralist*, of Byron, Illinois, gives a portrait of E. dos Santos, of Port of Spain, Trinidad, an energetic Freethinker, and one of the members of the N.S.S.

Many Freethinkers are co-operators. For their sakes, at least, we note that a National Co-operative Festival will take place at the Crystal Palace on Saturday, August 20. The program is a very attractive one. No doubt there will be a big gathering. The general secretary is Mr. W. Broomhall, 49 Bedford-street, Strand, W.C.

Mr. Stanley Jones is going West at the end of October, and will be glad to book engagements for Cardiff, Merthyr, Aberdare, Newport, etc. Perhaps the friends in those places will communicate with him.

Mr. Symes seems to have plenty of work on hand always. The *Liberator*, which reports a debate with a Mr. Grant, announces a forthcoming one with Mr. Isaac Selby.

We have received from Dublin the first number (August) of the *Ethical Echo*, an organ of the Dublin Ethical Society. The little paper has several thoughtful articles, and may do something to leaven Irish Society with Freethought. We hope it will be carefully maintained as a palm tree in a desert.

Tyneside Freethinkers should remember the N.E. Secular Federation's annual picnic, which takes place to-day (Aug 7). Durham market-square is the place of rendezvous. The Newcastle contingent starts from Eldon Hall at 9, proceeding to Durham in brakes. Return tickets (adults 2s. 6d.; children 1s.) can be obtained of Mr. Peter Weston, 77 Newgate-street, or of Mr. Joseph Brown, 86 Durham-street, Bentineck.

At the last meeting of the N.S.S. Executive, Miss E. M. Vance was appointed as clerical assistant to the Honorary Secretary. Miss Vance is also the paid secretary of the National Secular Hall Society, Mr. Forder having done the work gratuitously through the period of the Society's formation. Miss Vance is a woman with a head and business aptitudes. Her appointment is a new departure, but women should have their share in the work and honors of our movement.

Psalmist: "Why do the heathen rage?" Cynic: "Probably because so little of the money subscribed for their conversion ever reaches them."

PARNELLISM AND PRIESTCRAFT.

THE internal struggle in Ireland is so interesting and important from a Freethought standpoint that, now the elections are over, a review of the subject may not be altogether out of place in this journal.

Many English Liberals, vexed perhaps at such events as the loss of two of the Dublin seats—one directly by the split, the other by apathy caused by the split—have cursed this insane quarrel of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, as they think.

But Nationalist Ireland is irrevocably divided into two camps—to say nothing of course of the various factions which are said to constitute the so-called anti-Parnellite party. Now this difference is deeper and more real than the superficial observer imagines. No doubt a sense of devotion to Mr. Parnell's memory, the attraction of a great personality which even from the grave appeals to the hearts of Irishmen, may count for something. The memory of Napoleon was strong enough, after more than thirty years, to help a scoundrel to the throne; and we believe, though it may sound extravagant, that Mr. Parnell swayed Ireland more than Napoleon did France.

But there is no doubt that deeper and more important than personal considerations are the political principles involved on either side. Whatever may have been the origin of the controversy; whether Mr. Parnell was right or wrong in his course of action in December, 1890, the question to-day is not one of persons, but of principles. Every day brings further proof that the struggle in Ireland is between the Church and the spirit of independence and freedom. On one side there is a party backed by every bishop and archbishop, with every pulpit a political platform, and every priest an organiser; on the other, there is a party banned by every cleric, and denounced and slandered from every altar. If anyone questions this, let him look up the files of the Irish press. But one example may be taken from among many. In the *Irish Daily Independent*, of July 4, there was published the text of a pastoral addressed to "the clergy and laity of the diocese of Westmeath," by the Most Rev. Dr. Nulty. This precious document fills three columns of a newspaper. It sets out by declaring that the issue before Ireland "is by no means wholly and purely political."

"Parnellism," we are told, "like many of the great rebellious movements which heresy has, from time to time, raised against the Church, springs from the foul root of sensualism and sin," a statement which, of course, one is not surprised at from a bishop. Then follows a long dissertation on the crimes of theft and adultery, the relevancy of which it is somewhat difficult to see. Mr. Parnell, with all his virtues and his vices, is gone; his body lies under the cold clay of Glasnevin. No one can now support or oppose his leadership. What, then, is the object of raking up this old story? The reason is this. By continually pushing forward Mr. Parnell's crimes, it is thought to turn ignorant prejudice against the hated Parnellites. But even this dissertation is curious. Here is one passage: "A criminal, vicious, and reckless class of miscreants exists in human society in all countries, who . . . will not be controlled or restrained by any respect for God's laws or the fear of his justice, whose hand can be tied, and whose vicious instincts can be effectively held down only by the mortal terror inspired by . . . human punishment." In other words, man succeeds where God is impotent!

Soon, however, the Bishop reaches the real point. "But," he says, "I must confess that I have stronger, deeper, and much sterner antipathies and dislikes to the anti-Catholic and anti-National character of the living organisation, or party, into which Parnellism has developed." And then the bishop somewhat incoherently remarks that "the doctrines of faith, of heaven, hell, purgatory . . . could never be discovered, proved, and accepted as certain by the reason and intelligence of man, in any possible form of human inquiry." Now that is straight. No juggling with reason here, at any rate. "God alone know these great truths," we are told, and we are tempted to remark the world would have been better if he had kept them to himself. Dr. Nulty says that "the Almighty was therefore bound, by his own divine ordinances, to furnish the facilities and opportunities that were not only sufficient, but abundantly sufficient, to bring within every man's reach that divine knowledge, without which he could not believe and be saved"; in which case, of course, the Almighty broke

"his own divine ordinances." What about the millions to whom these "abundantly sufficient facilities and opportunities" have never been offered, and who know nothing of "these great truths"?

"Parnellism strikes at the very root and saps the very foundations of Catholic faith," says Dr. Nulty; and the people are bound to accept the bishop's dictum, for Dr. Nulty points out that "if the bishops can mislead or deceive their flocks on this particular doctrine, what is to prevent their doing exactly the same, in the case of any of the other doctrines which they are continually teaching?" which is the same as if a man, charged with stealing a watch, were to reply, "Well, if I stole this particular watch, what is to prevent my doing exactly the same in the case of any other watch?"

Again, we are informed that "Parnellism, like Paganism, impedes, obstructs and cripples the efficiency, and blights the fruitfulness of the preaching of the Gospel," which is awful. It would seem Parnellism doesn't use the old methods, "which failed the Pagans so egregiously." It has got new, patent methods. In fact Parnellism is, so to say, "Paganism up to date." "Its newspapers and its orators are now doing their utmost by calumny and falsehood, by scorn and ridicule, to decoy and run them [the bishops] down and to bring them into contempt, odium, and unpopularity."

And then, in conclusion, Dr. Nulty appeals to fear. "The dying Parnellite himself will hardly dare to face the justice of his Creator till he has been prepared and anointed by us for the last awful struggle, and for the terrible judgment that will immediately follow it," and then a dreadful picture is drawn of the day, should it ever come, "when the Catholic religion, purpled and hallowed as it is by the blood of our forefathers, will be radically extirpated out of this country," and yet "this is the natural tendency, and will be the inevitable result, of Parnellism."

We have dealt somewhat lengthily with Dr. Nulty's letter, but it is only a sample of the language used in the churches throughout the country. And behind the public harangues in the churches is the insidious intimidation carried on in the homes.

On the other hand, the Parnellites, on the platform and in the press, make no mistake as to the nature of their foe. In fact, the Parnellites are coming to be called the anti-clerical party in many papers. The *Dublin Evening Herald*, in a leader on "Clerical Intimidation and Parnellite Hope," in its issue of July 11, says, speaking of the clerical methods: "Under such an unfortunate, blighting, despotic system, what is the use of talking about liberty? . . . The clergy resolve that the country is to be of a particular political hue, and they make it so by force of religious intimidation. To-day they wish the country to be McCarthyan; next time they may prefer to have it Tory. . . . Since they [the ignorant voters] are persuaded by their priests that God will be specially pleased if Mr. Tim Healey and Dr. Tanner are returned to Parliament, and that God will regard as mortal sin the voting for Mr. Redmond or Mr. Pierce Mahony, there is no room for political discussion."

Now we have amply shown the nature of the struggle and the issues involved. It may be interesting, therefore, to look at the result. The Parnellites, of course, have lost a great number of seats; it was to be expected. But their successes have been as remarkable as their losses. They have won three out of the four Dublin seats, and would have won the four but for the split vote. The clericals have, therefore, been unable to get a foothold in the metropolis. The Parnellites have held Waterford city, north county Dublin, the two divisions of Clare, and a couple of other seats. The following is the total voting in the Irish boroughs—Nationalists boroughs (Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Limerick, Kilkenny, Galway, and Newry):

Parnellites	21,324
Anti-Parnellites	15,067

In other words, the Parnellites, or anti-clericals, have a majority of three to two in the boroughs. And, of course, these are the constituencies where the power of the priest is weakest, and the intelligence of the people strongest.

The voting for the whole of Ireland, boroughs included, is as follows:—

Anti-Parnellites	102,097
Parnellites	67,557

Of course, it should be remarked that all the uncontested seats are held by Anti-Parnellites. But, as far as the

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returns go, it means that out of every five Nationalists, two belong to the anti-clerical party. Nor must it be forgotten that many Parnellites, in constituencies where their candidate had no chance of winning, are admitted to have voted for his Nationalist opponent, sooner than allow a Unionist to capture the seat.

Now this, it seems to us, gives great hope for the future. "Out of evil comes good" Mr. Parnell said the split had brought to the surface all that was rotten in the National movement. We need not go so far as that. But if the split has brought to the surface a strong and powerful anti-clerical party, it has not been an unmixed evil, and it may be that, out of what seemed almost the wreck of Ireland's hopes, a new and a better Ireland will arise. Here we see that when Home Rule comes, as come it must, there is a large and powerful minority in Irish politics, a minority that may easily become a majority, which will stand out against the political pretensions, at any rate, of the Church, and which will show that Ireland is not *altogether* what some alarmists would have us believe—a nation of priests and slaves.

F. RYAN.

### PRIESTS AFRAID OF RIDICULE.

[Written by Thomas Gordon, in the "Independent Whig,"  
October 12, 1720.]

WHEREVER the priests have the most power, religion has the least. Being neither appointed by the law of Nature, nor the law of Christ, they are only intruders into the affairs of religions; which is therefore under a usurpation, while it is under them. So that their foundation being false, they are in most countries reduced to support it by false facts and deceitful appearances. And as they are thus obliged to cover fraud with fraud, and support one violence by another, it is no wonder that we find it often so carefully hidden under inventions, and deformed by absurdities; and all those inventions and absurdities defended by cruelty and a strong hand.

This strange jumble of fictions they have the front to call by the holy name of *religion*, and gravely to create faith out of lies: And with the groveling multitude, whose eyes are in the earth, all this passes off well enough. They have fearful hearts and simple heads, and so stand always prepared to be frightened or deluded at the priestly word of command. But because the craft lies subject to daily detection from rational and discerning men, its champions have raised loud cries and strong prejudices against the two principal weapons, by which their cause is most annoyed; I mean the weapons of reason and ridicule; the former of which discovers truth, and the latter exposes fraud.

What civil treatment these reverend *seers* afford to reason, I have shown elsewhere; and shall handle in this paper, the business of *ridicule*, which they always represent as impious and profane, whenever it meddles with the cassock; and yet always exercise it according to their talents, without mercy, when the waggish grave creatures are pleased to be arch upon Dissenters or Freethinkers.

To them is no doubt owing, that frequent but false saying, now in the mouth of every ignorant; namely, that it is an easy matter to make a jest upon religion or the priesthood, which, whether they are aware of it or not, is saying that their religion and its priests are a jest. For he, upon whom the jest is made, does, in effect, make the jest; otherwise it is none. Religion and virtue cannot be ridiculed; and whoever attempts it, by showing himself a villain, raises horror instead of laughter, which is the end of ridicule. But the vending of grimace for religion, and setting up for piety without virtue, are the natural subjects of jeer and merriment.

Whoever fears ridicule, deserves ridicule. He is conscious of a weak side, and knows that he cannot stand a laugh. This is the case of sacred grimace, or gravity, which men of sense see to be only a studied restraint laid upon the muscles of the face, and the joints of the body, and teaching them to move, not by the impulses of nature, and the motions of the heart, but by design, either to attract admiration, or obtain credit, or gain followers. And therefore sacred grimace dreads men of sense. However, it is never to be set aside; for this same affected demureness, ridiculous as it is in itself, is a solemn bait to catch the mob, whose respect always follows their wonder. The vulgar are caught, like woodcocks, by the eyes, and led, like calves, by the ears; show and sound lead their fat

heads captive. It is therefore no wonder, that in popish countries, a showy chancel, a curious tall steeple, gilded organs, and a delicate ring of bells, keep the many on the parson's side, make them all good churchmen; and always get the better of a plain religion, that has its abode only in the heart, and wants all the above-mentioned marks of the true church. Besides all this, there is more mirth and more holy days in their orthodox faith, than in the contrary scheme, which obliges men to earn heaven with the sweat of their brows, and take pains to be saved.

These, however, are but small instances of ridicule, taken from the force and grimace of an external religion. I shall here give instances much more considerable, as well as much more ridiculous. Do we not see the pretended successors of the apostles, at home and elsewhere, instead of making tents, or converting the world, living voluptuously, and promoting the excise? Do we not frequently see the ambassadors of God, sent to promote virtue and peace, and the observance of his laws, promoting strife, frequenting debauched houses, rooking after wealth, and plaguing and reviling their neighbors? Do we not see holy men, who have the call of the spirit, rioting in all the works of the flesh? Do they not buy livings with money, and then claim them by divine right? Do they not chop and jockey away poor parishes for such as are richer, and yet pretend to have upon their hands the cure of souls; though, by such vile bargaining, they show that they value as little those souls which they have just bought, as they do those which they have lately sold? Do not many of them, though they are void of all merit, yet demand great respect; and though ignorant, pretend to teach and to reveal God's will which is already revealed, and yet live as though there were no God? And do they not, without obeying God, set up to command men? Do they not seek honor from their cloth which yet they dishonor; and do they not for the blackest crimes claim sanctuary from the church, which church is the people, which people they abuse and deceive? Do they not pretend to mend others, but in truth more idle and proud than all others; two qualities neither suited to the welfare of religion nor of human society? Do they not flatter and support the worst of tyrants, plague and distress, and often destroy the best of kings; and in both cases, do they not belie the Holy Ghost, and pervert his meaning? Do they not pretend to be appointed for the good of mankind, and yet always make mankind, wherever they have power, thoroughly miserable, base, poor, ignorant, and wicked? And finally, do they not invent vile lies for vile ends, and then blasphemously make God Almighty to father them?

Here is such a motley mixture of opposite principles and practices, as will always render those who are chargeable with them, the contempt or abhorrence of all men who have eyes and understanding. Jest and scorn will subsist as long as their causes subsist; and clergymen, of all others, will be most exposed to them, while they continue to deserve them, because more modesty, truth, and consistency may be expected from them than from any others. It is but a piece of justice due to religion to ridicule those who, as far as they can, ridicule religion, though they set up for its defenders. Ridicule, when it has no longer matter to feed on, will die of itself; and the clergy, to avoid it, have no more to do but not to deserve it; but to go on complaining, without amending, is to nourish raillery and satire, by their own actions.

### A MIRACLE.

Upon a priest's table one morning there stood,  
Amidst an array of the choicest of food,  
A bottle of sparkling and as rich a red wine  
As e'er gladdened the heart of a pious divine.

The bottle so crimson, the poor priest so pale,  
To mark the sad contrast no person could fail;  
But strange, e'er we parted—what happen'd, you think,  
The bottle turned pale, and the priest became pink!

### HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.

## BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL.

[Mr. George Anderson, having resigned as a director of the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company, asks us to publish the following copy of his letter to the Chairman, explaining the reason of his resignation—EDITOR.]

DEAR SIR,—In answer to yours of the 4th inst., it appears you have misunderstood my letter of resignation.

I did not write it was your letter, or any point in it, that caused me to resign, but your letter coupled with circumstances that had impressed me during the last six months, and I have no objection to specify so much of these as will satisfy the Directors as to the causes leading up to my resignation.

1. I never had any hope that less than £10,000 or £12,000 could accomplish our object on a freehold site in a suitable locality, and this you more than confirm in your letter of June 28, where you state that a recent site near a worse position sold for about £1 per square foot, which would be £12,550 for the site you were proposing to purchase.

2. When I met the Directors on the proposed site on June 27, I found them unanimous in purchasing if the site could be had at £5,000 to £5,500. I also found them prepared to reconstruct the old chapel on it, and they produced the estimate of a surveyor amounting to £3,000.

3. My views were adverse to these, which I explained sufficiently in my letter to you of June 28.

4. With the money at our disposal I did not think that we were warranted in entering upon so expensive an enterprise, nor did I agree with the proposal to spend £3,000 in alterations and repairs, but rather that we should construct a new structure in the forecourt, which is now waste ground.

5. I did not wish to divide the Directors, nor did I wish to be one of them, believing that the scheme would fail, therefore I resigned.

I have been informed since, that at the auction this place was bought in by the auctioneer at £9,400, which should convince those who look upon a freehold site as indispensable that they are attempting what is wholly beyond our means.

At the present time "there are two Richmonds in the field"—the Freehold Site party and the Hall of Science long leasehold party. The latter will not require one-third of the money the former will. Which, therefore, is most likely to succeed?

The Hall of Science must continue to be memorable of Charles Bradlaugh, where so long he lectured.

We propose as soon as we have funds, to rebuild the front and have two separate entrances, and I invite the freehold party to join us that we may sooner accomplish this object.

I do so also in the interest of the party. Let us have even no semblance of disunion, which the present state of things is apt to lead to. I am certain were Mr. Bradlaugh present he would advise the course I am advising; and those of the Secular party who believe that the shades of the departed take an interest in what goes on here after they have left us—who know the straight manly character of Mr. Bradlaugh—must feel that Mr. Bradlaugh would say: "What was good enough for me is good enough for my lieutenants; the best memorial you can make of me is a united phalanx of intelligent and bold men, spreading the principles for which I worked so hard. Don't split on the question of bricks and mortar and where they are to be. There is no immortality in them, but there is in principles. Keep your forces together and imitate as far as you can the bold front that I did to all I thought inimical to mankind."

I invite the Directors to call a conference of their shareholders to consider this question before harm is done to the cause, and I will be pleased should the Directors come here, that we may in a preliminary meeting consider the matter.

No one can blame you for wishing for a freehold site; I too would prefer it; but the question we have to consider is not what we should prefer, but what we can accomplish.

I trust you and your brother Directors will give the matter your serious consideration, and let me trust with the hope that we may act in unison in the desired object we all have at heart to commemorate the memory of Charles Bradlaugh.

—I am, dear sir, yours,

GEORGE ANDERSON.

Parson Hardshell: "I hopes, Bre'er Amos, dat you ain't gwine to do nollin wid dat pole dis Lawd's day." Amos: "Oh, no, I hain't gwine ter use it. I jes' gwine ter hold it in my hand down by the ribber. If any fool fish gits cotted on de udder end ob de string, sarve dem right fer bein's nootin' round on de Lawd's day."

## TWO SOULS SAVED FROM PURGATORY.

Italian papers report that a gentleman of means and a Freethinker was attending service at a church. A priest went around with a plate making the collections and saying to the people that the proceeds were to go toward the redemption of souls from purgatory. When he came to the count and told him of the poor souls to be saved, the count placed a gold piece on the platter. "There," cried the priest, "one soul is saved from purgatory."

The count gave another gold piece. "Glorious," cried the priest, "another soul saved from purgatory." "Are you quite sure of the fact?" asked the count. "Absolutely sure, my lord," replied the priest. The count put his hand into his pocket as though he intended to take out a third piece of gold, and asked: "You are sure the two souls are out already?"

"Absolutely sure, my lord," repeated the priest, holding out his plate for the third twenty-franc piece. "I am glad they are," said the count. "Then there is no further need of my money, and I may as well take it back;" and with a rapid move he seized his two gold pieces and put them back into his pocket, and without waiting for an outbreak of rage from the discomfited priest, rapidly retired.

## SUNDAY MEETINGS.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]  
Secretaries may send in a month's list of lectures in advance.

## LONDON.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): Monday at 8, entertainment and dance in aid of Benevolent Fund (tickets 6d.) Thursday at 8, committee meeting.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 8, members' special meeting.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 5.30, debating class impromptu speaking; 7.30, B. Hyatt, "The Design Argument" preceded by Tennyson's *Grandmother*.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 7.30, G. J. Holyoake, "Thomas Cooper: Wesleyan, Chartist, Sceptic, Secularist, and Saint." The Minor Hall will be open to members at 9 p.m.

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, H. Snell, "Is Civilisation Due to the Cross?"; 7, A. Johnson, "Christianity and the Rights of Man." Bethnal Green (opposite St. John's Church): 11.15, R. Rosetti will lecture.

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, B. Hyatt, "The Good Old Patriarchs."

Clerkenwell Green: 11.30, a lecture.

Columbia-road (near Columbia Market), Hackney-road: 11.15, Mr. St. John will lecture.

Edmonton (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen will lecture.

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, J. Fagan, "How I Became a Secularist and why I Remain one"; 3.30, H. Snell will lecture.

Hammersmith (corner of The Grove): Thursday at 8, C. J. Hunt, "Is there a God?"

Hammersmith-bridge (Middlesex side): 6.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "After Death."

Kilburn—Salisbury-road (near Queen's Park Station): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Behold I bring you Glad Tidings."

Lambeth—New Cut (corner of Short-street): 11.30, a lecture.

Leyton (open space near Vicarage-road, High-road): 11.30, T. Thurlow will lecture.

Mile End Waste: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Gospel of Free-thought."

Old Pinnico Pier: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Bible Ladies."

Plaistow Green: 7, C. J. Steinberg will lecture.

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 3.30, C. J. Hunt "The History of the Inquisition."

Victoria Park (near the fountain): 11.15, C. Cohen will lecture; 3.15, W. Heaford, "The God Idea."

Walthamstow—Markhouse Common: 6.30, W. Heaford, "A Better Creed than Christianity." Thursday at 7.45, C. Cohen will lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers-hill: 11.30, J. Rowney, "Holy Moses and Company."

## COUNTRY.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: J. Rogers, "John Wycliff and his Times."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 7, S. H. Alison, "The Bible and Modern Thought."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: J. M. Robertson, 11.30, "The Collapse of the Old Testament"; 2.30, "The Irish Problem"; 6.30, "The Christ Hallucination."

Hull—Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street: 6.30, a meeting.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 11.30, committee meeting; 7, L. Small, B.Sc., "Mind and Body."

Manchester N. S. S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: G. W. Foote, 11, "The Shelley Centenary"; 3

"Clinging to Christ"; 6.30, "The Doom of the Gods."

Plymouth—100 Union-street: 7, a meeting.

Rochdale—Secular Hall, Milkstone-road: 6.30, Sam Standing, 11, "Jonah, and other Tales."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Bingley—Main-street: 3, J. Grange, "Moses v. Darwin; or the Crumbling of Creeds."  
 Bradford—Upper Godwin-street: 6.30, H. Smith, "Secularism Better than Christianity."  
 Chatham—New Brompton-road (High-street end): 11, S. H. Alison, "Satan: his Origin, Greatness, and Decadence."  
 Hull—Corporation Field: 3, J. Sketchley will lecture.  
 Rochdale—Town Hall-square: Sam Standring, 11, "The Bible and Labor"; 2.45, "Faith, Hope, and Charity."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 28 Rivercourt-road, Hammersmith, London, W.—Aug. 14 and Sept. 11, Hall of Science.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Aug. 7, m., Battersea a., Finsbury Park; 14, m., Westminster; a., Regent's Park; 21, m., Camberwell; 28, e., Camberwell. Sept. 4, m., Mile End Waste a., Victoria Park; 11, m., Bethnal Green; a., Regent's Park; 18, m., Wood Green; 25, m. and e., Camberwell.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—All mornings booked to September.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Aug. 7, Camberwell; 14, Southampton; 21, Westminster

C. COHEN, 154 Cannon-street-road, Commercial-road, E.—Aug. 4, Walthamstow; 7, m., Bethnal Green; e., Edmonton; 11, Walthamstow; 14, m. and a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 18, Walthamstow; 21, m., Mile End; a., Regent's Park; e., Edmonton; 25, Walthamstow; 28 m., Battersea; a., Victoria Park; e., Walthamstow.

SAM STANDRING, 106 Oxford-road, All Saints' Manchester.—Aug. 7, Rochdale; 14, Hull; 21, Blackburn; 28, Manchester.

C. J. STEINBERG, 103 Mile End-road, E.—Aug. 7, m., Midland Arches; e., Plaistow; 14, m., Columbia-road; 28, m., Bethnal Green.

S. H. ALISON, 52 Chant-street, Stratford, E.—Aug. 7, m. and e., Chatham; 14, m., Bethnal Green; e., Walthamstow; 21, m., Victoria Park; 28, m., Wood Green. Sept. 4, m., Columbia-road; 11, m., Lambeth; e., Swaby's; 18, a., Finsbury Park; 25, m., Bethnal Green.

T. THURLOW, 34 Wetherell-road, South Hackney.—Aug. 14 and Sept. 11, mornings, Kingsland Green.

J. GREVZ-FISHER, 78 Harrogate-road, Leeds.—Aug. 14, Ilkley.

STANLEY JONES, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.—Aug. 7, e., Hammer-smith; 14, a., Tottenham; 21, Halstead; 28, m., Lambeth.

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