

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## TOLSTOI AND CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

(Concluded from page 2.)

LOVE is poetical, and love is elevated. Let the Christian ascetic, Tolstoi or another, denounce it as he pleases. Nature and common sense are too many for him. Poets will never cease to sing of it; and the greater the poet—as, for instance, Shakespeare, who was greater and wiser than a hundred Tolstois—the more he understands it as the pivot on which the world is always turning. Nothing else ever satisfies. Orlando would not be “cured” by the disguised Rosalind. He preferred the malady of love to any remedy. He felt what Dryden expressed in one of his great moments—“All other pleasures are not worth its pains.”

Tolstoi himself would have said Amen to all this once, but he is past it now. He reprobates and despises every kind of love.

“The attainment of union with the object of one’s love, whether with or without marriage, however it may be idealized in poetry, is an aim as unworthy of a man as is that of procuring for oneself dainty and abundant fare, which to many people appears supremely good.”

Behold how extremes meet! See the sensualist and the ascetic fascinated by the same object! All that either perceives in love is lust. It reminds one of Swift’s unquotable epigram on the difference between a coquette and a prude.

Tolstoi goes on to declare that union with the object of one’s love, either in marriage or apart from it, is a hindrance to the higher life. “It never facilitates,” he says, “but always impedes the attainment of an aim worthy of man.”

We assert that this is rank heresy to nature and a contradiction to truth. It is the fashion of those who sneer at love, or at least at marriage, to cite the disorderly or unhappy lives of certain men of genius. But many of the very greatest poets and artists have been helped and not hindered by love and marriage. We often hear cackle about Shakespeare’s sad experience of wedded life, yet it is nothing but foolish or malicious gossip, without a shadow of support from fact. Byron married unhappily, but that was because he married mistakenly. A good woman, less malignantly virtuous than Lady Byron, and less frozen in saintliness, would probably have steadied and improved his genius as well as his character. Wordsworth, who in everything but passion and wit was Byron’s superior, was entirely fortunate in his marriage. Browning’s genius certainly did not suffer by his union with the greatest woman-poet of the century. Tennyson’s marriage was the most auspicious event in his career. “The peace of God passed into my life,” he wrote; and the theological cast of the expression need not prevent a Freethinker from appreciating its meaning.

Let us be frank and honest. A man of genius may make a mistake in marriage, as he may make a mistake in friendship, or in any other noble or useful connection; but this is no argument against marriage, any more than it is an argument against friendship or social intercourse.

In the region of statesmanship Tolstoi’s contention is singularly infelicitous. Bismarck and Gladstone are generally recognised as the two greatest statesmen in Europe, and both have been devoted husbands. Instances might easily be multiplied; in fact, they crowd upon us as we glance over modern history.

Tolstoi is clearly wrong, but facts are lost upon him. He is not only an ascetic, but a dogmatist. He is ready

to wind-up the whole creation sooner than confess his mistake. Of course he sees that forswearing love, in or out of marriage, means the speedy annihilation of the human race; but he faces that consummation with the complacency of St. Augustine. “With scientific men,” he calmly remarks, “it is an inevitable deduction from observations on the cooling of the sun” that all life must eventually cease on this planet; while the end of mankind on earth “is an article of faith with religious people.”

This is rich enough, but the cream of the joke is to come. Tolstoi says that those who raise this objection “confound two different things—a rule, or precept, and an ideal.” Chastity—that is to say, abstinence from all sexual relationships—is not a rule or a precept; it is an ideal, or “rather one of the conditions of the ideal.” And the ideal would cease to be an ideal “if we could picture to ourselves its realization.”

Now, if this means anything at all, beyond a dialectical subterfuge, it means that Christ’s sexual teaching is impracticable, and is like all the rest of “The Impossible Creed.” All we can ever do is to work towards it. But that is not much, for the ideal, being unattainable, is like the horizon, always the same distance in front of you, however fast or far you travel.

Tolstoi perceives that men and women will get married as surely as leaves and grass sprout in the spring, or corn and grapes ripen in the summer. Having anything to do with each other is “a fall”; but, having fallen, they must make the best of it by rearing and educating their children—that is to say, as many children as their fallen nature brings them, for Tolstoi denounces all limitation of families. Having begun the sinful business of procreation, they must pursue it to the bitter dregs, unless they avail themselves of the one means of escape, which lies in “changing sexual love into pure relations of brother and sister.” When husband and wife arrive at this stage of stultification they are fit for the kingdom of heaven. It is to be presumed that Tolstoi has reached it already; but when we recollect his riotous youth, and by no means ascetic manhood, together with his present time of life, this fact is not exactly surprising.

The “brother and sister” maggot got into the head of John Storm, the Christian hero of Mr. Hall Caine’s latest novel. It led him to propose to the hot-blooded Glory Quayle that he and she should marry and then live together as brother and sister among the South Sea lepers. We once heard a famous preacher recommend this little arrangement between husband and wife as the ethical way of solving the population question; and, as we looked at the well-pronounced back of his head, we formed a strong opinion as to the likelihood of his punctual observance of his own remedy.

Common sense and religion are usually at variance. The Christianity of Christ (to use the jargon of the day) in particular is a mass of sentimentalism. Whatever definite ethical teaching is advanced by Christian divines is really borrowed from Pagan sources. Monogamy, for instance, was the law and custom of civilization before Christianity arose. What the Church found it adopted, and then declared to be its own offspring, although there is not a monogamous text in the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

So far as the language of the New Testament is definite or intelligible, Tolstoi is right in maintaining that it is opposed to sexual affection. Saint Paul distinctly says that virginity is superior to marriage, which he only allows

on the ground that it is preferable to fornication. Christ is more vague, but all his utterances on the subject tend in one direction. Not only did he not establish marriage; as Tolstoi says, he "discouraged it." The great Russian contends that "the institution of marriage has no basis whatever in the true Christian teaching." From the Christian point of view it is "a fall" and "a sin."

We like to see Tolstoi pounding this fact into the mind of Christendom. It emphasizes the incompatibility between Christianity and civilization. And when the editor of the *New Age*, in which Tolstoi's article appears, speaks of his "failure to comprehend the Christian idea of marriage," we smile at the familiar spectacle of two earnest men deriving opposite doctrines from one and the same inspired book; which demonstrates the absurdity of trying to base our ethics on the loose and self-contradictory language of revelation.

Shut your Tolstoi, reader, and open your Meredith. Anywhere will do, for it is all sweet and sound. But if a selection must be made, take (say) the glorious twentieth chapter of *Richard Feverel*. Read that and forget the nonsense of Tolstoi. G. W. FOOTE.

### GRANT ALLEN'S "IDEA OF GOD."

"Cette religion des morts paraît être la plus ancienne. Avant de concevoir et d'adorer Indra ou Zeus, l'homme adora les morts; il eut peur d'eux, il leur adressa des prières. Il semble que le sentiment religieux ait commencé par là. C'est peut-être à la vue de la mort que l'homme a eu pour la première fois l'idée du surnaturel, et qu'il a voulu espérer au delà de ce qu'il voyait? La mort fut le premier mystère; elle suit l'homme sur la voie des autres mystères."—*Fustel de Coulanges, "La Cité Antique," p. 20.*

"This religion of the dead seems to be the oldest. Before men conceived or worshipped Indra or Zeus, they adored the dead; they feared them, and addressed them prayers. It seems that the religious sentiment began thus. Perhaps 'twas the sight of the dead that gave man first the idea of the supernatural, and the hope to be beyond that which he saw. Death was the first mystery, and it led men on the track of other mysteries."

It is the busy man who finds time to do substantial work. Mr. Grant Allen is a very busy and a very versatile man. In the intervals of writing newspaper criticism, magazine articles, scientific treatises, long stories and short stories, hill-top and hell-deep novels, he has produced a solid and bulky work on the central problem of theology, and on some fundamental issues of the anthropology which is going to explain and supersede it. Mr. Allen says in his preface: "I have been engaged upon collecting and comparing materials for more than twenty years." Although the reviewer makes no such claim, he has been hovering around the subject in desultory fashion for quite as long. When he differs, as he occasionally does, from the author, it need not be supposed that he assumes to pooh-pooh off-hand the conclusions compelled by years of study, but he simply writes as one who, having gone, as his *Footsteps of the Past* shows, over much the same ground, has seen things in a somewhat different light.

I shall get on so much better in expounding Mr. Allen's important work if I first tackle him on our chief differences, that I shall do so at once. It seems to me that, instead of tracking the various roots of the god-idea, as one might expect from his title, Mr. Allen has simply traced one of the main stems of religion, meaning thereby worship and sacrifice; and to me that is another thing. With Mr. Allen's chief thesis I am in agreement. Man is ever nearest to man, and the germ of the god-idea may be found in that of the ghost. Christianity, as Mr. Allen appropriately reminds us at the outset, retains as a central feature the cult of the Deified Man. Without death there had been no such religion as any we know. But it seems to me that all of us, in seeking to explain early faiths, are tempted to give a reasonable account of what was essentially irrational. We are tempted, too, to make that moral which was essentially immoral and brutal. We go astray whenever we forget that religion arose among unreasoning savages. It is in our emotions, rather than in our intelligence, that we must seek for religious origins. Faust says: "*Gefühl ist Alles*" (Feeling is all). This, the last word of this century's intellect on the question of God, is also the first word of early faith. But the deepest feeling is fear. The child is more emotional

and more timid than the man, the savage than the civilized. To the child and to the savage, God is a powerful man. But beyond the human aspect there is that of a vague mystery—a power not ourselves which is smartest brought home to us when it makes for our evil. This power must be interpreted in terms of man himself. The lowest god and the highest are alike in this. They must be endowed with the thoughts and feelings of man, their creator. He has no other to give them. To early man other animals, thunderstorms,\* or hurts are connected in his mind with a will like his own, and his attitude towards these is similar to that towards those around him. The Hindus who placed on the grave of an English officer they dreaded the brandy and cheroots which he loved in life, well illustrated the beginning of a cult when it begins to assume a rational aspect by making provision for the future.

Mr. Allen will not explicitly admit fear as one of the foundations of the god-idea. He says (p. 21): "I am not concerned to deny that many mythological beings of various terrible forms do really so originate." He gives up to Mr. Clodd the whole pandemonium of devils, and thereby, in my estimation, gives up the case, for it is certain that polydemonism preceded polytheism, as that preceded monotheism. All the early gods are ugly devils, and some of the latest come in the same category. Sir John Lubbock says of savages: "The beings they worship are evil rather than good." Dr. Tylor, whose authority I am sure Mr. Allen will not question, says: "It is quite usual for savage tribes to live in terror of the souls of the dead as harmful spirits." Herbert Spencer, another master, says: "The primitive belief is that every dead man becomes a demon, who remains somewhere at hand, may give aid or do mischief, and is continually propitiated." Yet Mr. Allen says of devils: "They have no more to do with religion, properly so called, than the unicorn of the royal arms has to do with British Christianity." "A god," he says, "as I understand the word, and as the vast mass of mankind have always understood it, is a supernatural being to be revered and worshipped. He stands to his votaries, on the whole, as Dr. Robertson Smith has well pointed out, in a kindly and protecting relation." Now, I do wish that Mr. Allen, instead of going to erudite arm-chair theologians like Prof. W. R. Smith and Dr. F. B. Jevons, would just take us to the human savage. I venture to say that Browning, in his *Caliban or Setebos*, though that, too, has a suspicion of the poet's arm-chair, comes a good deal nearer the truth when he makes Caliban describe his god as a despot, "making and marring clay at will." Dr. Jevons's claim, that only friendly powers were gods, is unsupported by fact. Even the Jews acknowledged the Moabite Chemosh as a god, though an unfriendly one. William Watson well describes the Bible deity:—

A God like some imperious king,  
Wroth, were his realm not duly awed;  
A God for ever hearkening  
Unto his self-commanded laud;  
A God for ever jealous grown  
Of carven wood and graven stone.

A God whose ghost, in arch and aisle,  
Yet haunts his temple—and his tomb;  
But follows in a little while  
Odin and Zeus to equal doom;  
A God of kindred seed and line;  
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine.

Some hold that in the Semitic tongues the very word for god means strong, mighty, fearful. In Aramaic *dachla* means either a god or fear. Of course hope and fear are ever mixed, but to see their relative importance in religion just turn to the Bible and note how often the fear of the Lord, and how seldom hope, is mentioned. Wilhelm von Humboldt said: "We hope, we fear, because we wish"; and naturally, as the idea of a protecting power grew able to supply human wants, worship would tend to displace propitiation. But I hold that in going back to the origins of religion it is devils we have to deal with rather than deities, and, for friendly powers, rather with goddesses than gods. The first protector is the mother. Ancestor-worship is not primal. The fact that all savage tribes have, or show, traces of maternal descent indicates this. The earliest gods appear to be the totems of clans, where the only parent known is the mother. It is true that the totem

\* *The Idea of God: An Inquiry into the Origins of Religion.* By Grant Allen. (Grant Richards.) 447 pp.; 20s.

\* Even dogs exhibit symptoms of piety at thunder. My "Spot" runs in terror not to his bed, but to the corner where he first ran when a stray dog, and was fed by my wife.

is conceived as a guardian-spirit. Early man had so many enemies he needed something as a refuge from terror. Perhaps this was first found in some object, which seemed lucky; but this fetish would give place to a tangible protector like a weapon, and this again to the sign of the clan from which the individual's main protection was derived. With the belief that the ancestral spirit possesses the totem grows the belief in the speaking of the God through his votary. What we call frenzy and madness, is to early man the voice of another being—God, or demon, speaking through the individual. Inspiration and insanity are one, and the supposed oracles of God have often been the utterances of the partially demented.

It is doubtless in the observances that gather round the dead man that we may trace the beginnings of religious worship. But beside and beyond this is the conception of powers not ourselves acting through storm and flood, forest and rock, earthquake, disease, and sex, and animating earth, sky, fire, and water. Some of these may be identified with the spirits of the dead, but I do not think invariably and necessarily so.

Colonel A. B. Ellis, in his *Ewe-Speaking Peoples*, says (p. 24):—

"On the Gold and Slave Coasts sacrifices and appeals for aid are sometimes made to the dead, but the dead are certainly not considered gods by the natives. The fact that they are shadowy-men, or ghost-men, appears to me to be never lost sight of, and they are in an entirely different category to the gods of natural features. They seem to be considered as guardians or protectors; while the primary idea concerning the gods of natural features was, and with regard to the great majority of them still is, that they are beings who must be propitiated in order that their malignity may be averted."

The early gods invariably delight in ferocity and bloody sacrifices. The powerful among them, too, generally possessed "wives" dedicated to their service, the union being, of course, consummated by the priests of the gods. Mr. Allen notes how early religion was unmoral; but, viewed from modern eyes, much must be classed as distinctly immoral.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

## THE NEW YEAR.

We have just entered upon another year, surrounded by conditions which are not calculated to evoke a high degree of happiness in reflective minds. Abroad we have wars, with all their devastating adjuncts, and barefaced attempts upon the part of "Christian" nations to obtain that which does not belong to them by force, instead of relying upon the powers of those moral principles which constitute the basis of all true civilization. At home we have so much mental misery, physical suffering, and cruel starvation that the wish of a happy new year, when applied to the wretched and neglected poor, seems the parrot echo of idle words or the bitterest mockery. Here we have in this "Bible nation" thousands of poor helpless creatures to whom happiness is impossible. Under the very shadow of the cross there are those who live in wretched lodging houses, where the broken windows are stuffed with rags, and the rusted grates are fireless; in foul underground dens, where human beings live like rats, and sleep, suffer, and die upon straw which rots upon the muddy floors; in the parks, the fields, the streets, where to be houseless and penniless is to be a vagrant, and to be a vagrant is criminal; under dark arches; beneath the shelter of waggons and carts in London markets. To such unfortunate beings happiness must be a stranger. The change of seasons, genial as it may seem to some of us, too often brings pain, cold, and hunger to the homeless poor, who are driven to the workhouse door to be humiliated and insulted, to the pauper's bed to suffer, and then to the parish dead house to await the usual custom of a coroner's inquest, previous to their being conveyed to their final resting place, where no pain is felt—no misery endured.

Let the bishops and archbishops, with their wealth, think of these things; let the deluded victims of an impracticable theology ponder over the failure of their faith, and then ask themselves the following questions:

If Christ lived upon this earth two thousand years ago, what advantages have been derived through his advent? Have peace and love among nations been established? Has poverty with its blighting influence been diminished? What means the four months' "special crusade among the men of London," which is now going on, against "gambling, drink, and impurity"? Even the churches have failed to command the attendance they once did, while doubt and unrest permeate the leaders of the "national religion." The *Rock* newspaper, in its issue of December 3, frankly admitted that among the teachers in our public schools are to be found those "who agree with Dean Farrar in repudiating considerable portions of the Old Testament as purely mythical, and with Professors Driver and Cheyne in making mince-meat of the Pentateuch, and writing down the Prophets as cool forgers, deliberate liars, and persistent perpetrators of pious (!) frauds." Thus the new year opens with conditions that reflect no credit upon Christianity as a power for good. It may therefore be serviceable at this period to once more remind our readers of the nature and function of Secularism as a reforming agency.

Secularism is a militant system in so far as it seeks to remove from society superstition, ignorance, and vice. Notwithstanding the progress that has been effected during the present century, we still find superstition powerful, ignorance widespread, and vice too often triumphant. To combat these evils is one of the principal objects of Secularism. Of course, in this conflict Secularists have to fight against tremendous odds—as St. Paul says, "against principalities and powers." They find superstition, as it were, enshrined in the land. The cry is not now, as of yore, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," but rather "Great is the theology upon which is founded the greatness of the British Empire." In the performance of its work Secularism does not attack persons, but systems; its weapons are keen and powerful; its arsenals as wide as the world's literature. Science, philosophy, history, criticism, and common sense—these should be the only weapons with which it must wage its war. It is sometimes asked: "How is it, then, that Secularism does not at once overthrow superstition?" The reply is, because superstition is so bound up with the system of daily life of the higher and middle classes. It is identified with the Government; supported by the landed interest; and the ministry (especially in the State Church) is the sphere of livelihood and means of support of many of the younger sons of the nobility, and of many ambitious young men in the middle class. Only a violent revolution could at once subvert this; but Secularism, deprecating violence, seeks only to educate the people to a frame of mind in which State religion would not be tolerated, and which would be able to dispense with all theological systems. True, the work is slow; it is, however, undeniably certain.

Secularism seeks to remove ignorance by acting itself as an educational agency; by favoring and advocating the diffusion of secular instruction; by creating a sound public opinion in favor of secular knowledge; and by opening the popular mind, as no other system attempts to do, to the fact that the most painful and degrading of all ignorance is the want of knowledge of the great truth that every form of theology is purely of human invention.

Secularism proposes to work with a view of freeing society from vice. It plainly recognises and teaches that orthodox systems have signally failed in this respect. The recognition of this fact is of so much value that it may be said to go far towards providing a remedy. The truth is, society does not adequately grapple with vice and criminality, because it looks to a fictitious remedy to cure them, and to render them impossible. If Secularism can open man's eyes to the fact that dependence upon alleged spiritual aid is a mistake, then society will begin to consider whether or not, by the exercise of human effort and material means, it can arrest the evils of life. Theology points men to the physician of souls; Secularism directs them to the healer—the scientific healer—of bodies. Theology says evil is of divine predestination, and can be conquered only when the "elements shall melt with fervent heat"; Secularism says that evil is too frequently the result of man's own wrong-doing in the past and in the present, and that it is a result which must cease when the acting causes are removed and altered. Theology says the poor shall never cease out of the land;

Secularism says there need be but little poverty if men will learn self-reliance, and to use wisely their own powers, morally, politically, and socially. Theology says: "Trust in God in faith," and temporal blessings shall be added unto you; Secularism says: "Trust only in man, in his potentialities. It is by earnest work alone that any blessings can be secured. Hercules does not take the cart out of the ditch; the driver himself must do that."

It may be asked, What balm has Secularism to offer for all the ills and woes with which the world is rife? We reply that Secularism has the truest balm to offer when it provides men with stimuli to ward off such ills, and inspires them with motives of philanthropy which are calculated to remove every form of injustice, and to wage unceasing conflict with error and wrong. True, it cannot tell its adherents aught respecting "a glorious hereafter"; but, at the same time, it has nothing whatever to do with threats of an eternity of misery. It assures its adherents of what they should do in order to secure a beatitude, as far as possible, upon earth; and when Christian religionists disparage it because it has no promise of another life of reward and recompense, they would do well to bear in mind that it is also happily devoid of those life-withering denunciations which have implanted the most enervating terrors in the human mind, and caused man but too often to refrain from plucking the fruits of the tree of knowledge lest he, too, should, like the Adam of Genesis, incur the anger of the Deity, and become a prey to the malignity of Satan.

In this age of hollow pretensions and lack of mental honesty Secularism has a great work to perform in the inculcation of sincerity and fidelity to profession. With the old faiths, which to a large extent it ignores, it should leave behind the old customs, many of which are not only absurd, but positively injurious. In striking out a new path in the field of thought, it should open up new principles in the domain of action. If our conduct be no better than that of our fellow-men who have not the advantages of our light, nor the aid of our principles, it is a poor recommendation of our system to mankind in general. Fidelity to principle is necessary in all conditions of life, and under all circumstances. Not only is truthfulness essential to the well-being of society, but it really forms the basis of morality. Earnestness is greater than genius, and more powerful than any amount of ambition; while sincerity is the test of true heroism. The great men of the past, who have influenced the destinies of the world, may be judged by this standard. We cannot help admiring the sincere man, even when he is in error; true fidelity to principles is sometimes most difficult. Heavy penalties have frequently to be paid for the practise of integrity. Still, they must be paid, and in all ages they are paid by the few, which few are indeed the salt of the earth. Winged falsehoods, foul persecutions, vile slanders may attack them, but they remain firm in the consciousness of having done their duty; and in the end their character is vindicated by the power of fidelity.

The mode of advocacy adopted is also of very great importance. While we claim for ourselves the right to think and speak freely, we must concede the same ungrudgingly to others. We may deem their views erroneous, but we should never forget that they probably look upon ours in the same light. Injudicious advocacy has often done more harm to a good cause than open antagonism. Gentleness is one of the greatest of virtues, and to advocate our views in what is conventionally, but very appropriately, termed a gentlemanly manner is to give them the stamp of amiability. Rash and reckless speaking is a most objectionable feature in the promulgation of principles. To make extreme statements and wild assertions is to play in our opponent's hands. It avails nothing to say that our antagonists do the same. Doubtless they do; and it injures their cause as the same conduct on our part would injure ours. Destructive work must, of course, be done; but a man need not put himself into a passion to do it, and, especially, he should not do it in that wild manner which, while being deficient of method and tact, strikes at random and wastes its forces. We want to make Secularism a great power, and this is only to be done by placing our views in an attractive light, and showing ourselves superior to our opponents, by avoiding the errors into which they have fallen.

CHARLES WATTS.

Theology is ignorance of natural causes.—*D'Holbach.*

## THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

### XVIII.—THE CRUCIFIXION.

THE Gospel stories of the arrest and trial of Christ being, as we have seen, undoubtedly unhistorical, it is in the highest degree improbable that the account of the alleged crucifixion is of a different character; and this, upon examination, we find to be the case—they are all alike fictitious. It is, of course, quite possible that the historical Jesus, if he set up as a prophet in Palestine in the time of Pilate, may have been taken and crucified by order of that procurator; but this would have been done off-hand, without all the absurd and impossible circumstances described in the Gospels. The narratives in those books are obviously fabrications. I will now briefly glance at some of the absurdities we are asked to believe.

1. Jesus is stated to have been scourged and illegally mocked and beaten. According to the four Gospel writers, Christ suffered either the one or the other no less than seven times. These are given as follows: (1) He was mocked and beaten by his captors *before* he was examined by the Sanhedrim (Luke xxii. 63); (2) He was spat upon, buffeted, and smitten by the members of the Sanhedrim themselves (Matt. xxvi. 67; Mark xiv. 65); (3) He was mocked by "Herod and his soldiers" before he was condemned (Luke xxiii. 11); (4) He was scourged by Pilate before that procurator had passed sentence upon him (John xix. 1); (5) He was also mocked and beaten by the Roman soldiers before he had been condemned (John xix. 3); (6) He was scourged *after* his condemnation when he was "delivered to be crucified" (Matt. xxvii. 26; Mark xv. 15); (7) He was mocked and beaten by the Roman soldiers *after* being condemned and scourged (Matt. xxvii. 30; Mark xv. 19).

That a wise and good man, who went about healing all kinds of diseases, should have been subjected to such infamous treatment before, as well as after, his condemnation, and this by people who knew him to be innocent of any crime, is very improbable indeed; so much so that, without full and convincing evidence of the fact, no rational person can be expected to give credence to the story—and of such evidence there is not a scrap. The only one of the four evangelists who professes to have been present at the trial and execution of Jesus—viz., the author of the Fourth Gospel—records but one scourging and one mocking. That we are compelled to reject his account on other grounds only shows that in his case, as with the others, we are dealing with fiction, and not with history.

Also, when on the cross, Christ is stated to have been mocked and reviled by no less than four different parties—viz.: (1) "They that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads" (Matt. xxvii. 39, etc.); (2) The chief priests, elders, and scribes mocked him "in the same manner" (Matt. xxvii. 41, etc.); (3) The two robbers crucified with him "cast upon him the same reproach" (Matt. xxvii. 44, etc.); (4) "The soldiers also mocked him" (Luke xxiii. 36). Here, again, the one evangelist who professes to have been present at the crucifixion, and to have been standing near the cross, records no mocking or reviling of the crucified man. It becomes obvious, then, that we have not to do with history at all, but with unauthenticated Christian legends, originated by nobody knows whom.

2. Next, with respect to the bearing of the cross to the place of execution, we have two conflicting accounts. In the three Synoptical Gospels it is stated that "they compelled" one named Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross instead of Jesus. This is denied by the author of the Fourth Gospel, who says: "They took Jesus therefore; and he went out, *bearing the cross himself*, unto the place called.....Golgotha, where they crucified him" (xix. 17). When it is borne in mind that this writer had seen the original account which Matthew, Mark, and Luke followed, the significance of this contradiction becomes apparent. Possibly, the Fourth evangelist may have intended to show that the story told by some of the early Christians of the Cyrenian being crucified instead of Christ, was devoid of foundation; for it was part of the punishment of crucifixion that the condemned man should carry his own cross—and no reason is assigned by the Synoptists for Christ not having to do so.

Gospel harmonizers endeavor to reconcile the accounts by asserting that Jesus bore the cross part of the way;

and, then being too weak to carry it farther, Simon was made to bear it the remainder of the journey. But this is pure misrepresentation. The Synoptists do not say that Christ carried the cross a single step, and they clearly imply that he did not. Thus Luke says: "But Jesus he delivered up to their will. And when they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and laid on him the cross to bear it after Jesus" (xxiii. 26). On the other hand, the Fourth evangelist says that Christ carried the cross the whole distance—"bearing the cross himself, unto the place called Golgotha, where they crucified him." Believers can thus take whichever account they please; but no one except a Christian evidence man can believe both.

3. The accounts are also conflicting with regard to the time when Christ is stated to have been crucified. Mark says: "And it was the *third* hour, and they crucified him" (xv. 25). This would be at nine o'clock in the morning. According to the author of the Fourth Gospel, however, "it was about the *sixth* hour" (i.e., twelve o'clock, at noon) when Jesus stood uncondemned before Pilate (xix. 14). Believers can, again, take their choice of the hours mentioned, and those whose brains can stand the strain can believe both. Christian commentators, as might be expected, endeavor to reconcile the two statements. They say (of course, without evidence) that the Fourth evangelist used a different computation to the Synoptists, or, if he did not, some transcriber of his Gospel has erroneously written "sixth" instead of "third." The earlier hour is taken to be correct, for all three Synoptists represent Christ as having been some time on the cross at the sixth hour. But it has to be borne in mind that the author of the Fourth Gospel differs not only as to the *hour* of the crucifixion, but also as to the *day*. Jesus, according to this writer, was being tried by Pilate at noon on the day preceding the passover (i.e., the paschal lamb was to be eaten the same evening). But, in the three Synoptical Gospels, Christ was tried by the Roman procurator early on the morning following the eating of the passover, and he was sentenced, led to the place of execution, and nailed to the cross, all by nine o'clock in the forenoon. Hence, no reconciliation is possible. If we take Luke's account, we have an example of what has been aptly termed "a rare morning's work." The Sanhedrim assemble after daylight (say six a.m.) at the house of the high priest; Christ is brought before them, false witnesses are sought, Christ is examined, condemned, spat upon, buffeted, and smitten, and then taken to Pilate. Pilate hears the accusations, and then taken to Pilate. Pilate hears the accusations, interrogates Jesus, and sends him under guard to Herod. Herod questions the prisoner, "sets him at nought," and mocks him, and has him conducted back to Pilate. Pilate resumes his examination, wrangles with the Jews, tries his utmost to release Jesus, fails, releases Barabbas, and finally condemns an innocent man. Christ is then scourged and delivered over to be crucified; he is mocked by the soldiers, conducted to Calvary (an unknown place outside Jerusalem), stripped, and nailed to the cross—all before nine o'clock in the morning. Those who think it likely that all this happened within the hours mentioned are, of course, free to believe it; but, if they do, they must at the same time reject the account in the Fourth Gospel. To believe both accounts would be almost too much even for the Christian evidence man.

4. The next matter upon which the narratives are contradictory is the inscription which is said to have been placed upon the cross. This is given as follows:—

Mark....."The king of the Jews."  
 Luke....."This is the king of the Jews."  
 Matt....."This is Jesus the king of the Jews."  
 John...."Jesus the Nazarite the king of the Jews."  
 Peter....."This is the king of Israel."

The author of the Fourth Gospel tells us that this "title" was written "in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek"—a statement we may at once dismiss as too absurd for serious consideration. These five versions of a short inscription furnish us with a clear proof that the accounts were not written by eye-witnesses. If we wish to know which of these versions was, in all probability, the original, we need but note how Christ is addressed when on the Cross. In Matthew (xxvii. 42) the priests, elders, and scribes say: "He is the *king of Israel*: let him now come down," etc. In Mark (xv. 32) the priests and scribes say: "Let the Christ, the *king of Israel*, now come down," etc. In Luke

(xxiii. 37) the "soldiers" say: "If thou art the king of the Jews, save thyself." In the Fourth Gospel there is no mocking; no one says anything. We know, also, that Luke in almost every instance has taken more liberties with the original text than Matthew or Mark. It is evident, then, that in the primitive Gospel the inscription was that preserved in the Gospel of Peter—"This is the king of Israel"—and here, for a wonder, Luke's version most nearly approaches the original.

In this case Gospel harmonizers attempt to reconcile the contradictions in two ways: (1) It is asserted that only the author of the Fourth Gospel gives the exact words of the inscription (which he calls the "title"), and that the other three evangelists do not profess to do so, but merely state the "accusation." But, as a matter of fact, the three Synoptical writers *do* profess to give the exact words. Thus, Mark says: "And the *superscription* of his accusation was *written over*, The king of the Jews" (xv. 26). Luke says: "And there was also a *superscription over him*, This is the king of the Jews" (xxiii. 38). (2) It is stated that Matthew gives the Latin version of the inscription, Luke the Greek, and John the Hebrew; while Mark has omitted a portion of one of them. This reconciliation, if not ingenuous, is at least ingenious; but since we have five Gospel versions, there ought to be five languages. Where are the other two? This reconciliation is, in fact, nothing but a silly assumption, and it is the more absurd, since all five versions of the inscription are written in Greek. It is also needless to say that the fact stated would not account for the variations. The name "Jesus," for instance, though written in different characters, would be in each inscription, and should appear in each of the Gospel versions. No reconciliation is of course possible.

5. Matthew says that after the priests and elders had mocked Jesus, "the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach" (xxvii. 44). Mark, following the same document, says: "And *they* that were crucified with him reproached him" (xv. 32). Luke, however, makes one of the two thieves a believer in Jesus, and represents him as rebuking his fellow, and as saying: "And we indeed [suffer] justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss" (xxiii. 41). It would be interesting to learn how this thief had found out that Christ had done "nothing amiss." In the Gospel of Peter it is stated: "But one of the malefactors rebuked them (i.e., the Jews), saying, We have suffered this because of the evil deeds that we have done; but this man, who has become the Savior of mankind, what harm has he done you?" Luke represents these words as addressed to Christ, and adds (apparently on his own authority) that the believing robber said: "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom"; and that Christ replied: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"—that is, in Hades, the place of departed spirits—a truly great reward for believing a man to be God without, and against, evidence.

We have in this incident of the believing thief (who, apparently, was not suffering anything worth mentioning) a fair sample of the manner in which the Gospel narratives were concocted. Gospel-makers, it would thus appear, did not so much create new material as adopt, adapt, readjust, incorporate, and add to the pre-existing accounts. This is the reason why no one ever saw any of the originals of the canonical Gospels. No such originals ever existed. The first crude, primitive Gospels, after undergoing all the processes named, became gradually transformed into our present Synoptical Gospels. By the end of the second century, however, these Gospels had become so well known that, probably, few fresh alterations or additions to the text could be made. Their composition was then attributed to apostles or companions of apostles. As to our Fourth Gospel, this was simply a forgery, the author having himself composed the speeches he has put in the mouth of Christ, besides inventing many of the incidents he has recorded. And of such Gospel-makers and forgers is the kingdom of heaven—and, as the hymn says, "What must it be to be there!"

Several other matters which require to be noticed must be postponed to the next paper. ABRACADABRA.

## A CHRISTMAS ADAPTATION OF NUMBER TEN OF "SONGS OF LOVE AND DUTY."

(With apologies to E. J. Troup.)

### ANTI-CARMEN.

WATCH, let us watch, for the year has run !  
Joyously, joyously watching !  
Sorrowing not for the dying sun,  
With dark'ning days departing.  
Watch, let us watch, for the year has run !  
And the new-born sun is rising,  
Joining the young in frolic and fun,  
For sunnier days are coming.

### CARMEN.

Sing, let us sing, with a right good will !  
Cheerily, cheerily singing !  
Helping new year with joy to fill,  
With pleasant voices ringing.  
Sing, let us sing, with a right good will !  
Kindly feelings bringing,  
Love and goodness round us still  
While old year is winging.

Work, let us work, with a steadfast mind !  
Earnestly, earnestly working !  
Trying our best to help mankind,  
Our duty never shirking.  
Work, let us work, with a steadfast mind !  
Hardships may be lurking  
In the new year ; we must find  
The strength that comes from working.

Love, let us love with a fervent heart !  
Tenderly, tenderly loving ;  
So we'll take our humble part  
In needless ills removing.  
Love, let us love with a fervent heart !  
Ever, ever proving  
How gentleness may heal the smart  
That's past all other moving.

Live, let us live with the noblest aim !  
Patiently, patiently learning  
With lofty thought to keep the flame  
Of high endeavor burning.  
Live, let us live with the noblest aim !  
Selfishness still spurning,  
Till we can see that guilt and shame  
To love and peace are turning.

ALTHEIA.

## THE WRONG BASIS.

THERE is a weakness in the theological sanction of morals which the rise of science has created, and which she is destined to increase as time goes on—viz, the liability of the mind towards doubt and disbelief in the fundamental hypothesis of theology. The moral code—as theology puts it—rests entirely on the assumption that God is a man-like being ; and its only sanction is the expectation that this God will reward those who by good conduct please him, and punish those who displease him by bad. It is evident that every shade of doubt which passes over the theological mind as to the truth of the theological dogmas must diminish the efficiency of such a sanction, and that total disbelief must entirely destroy it. Those persons educated in the belief that the foundation of the moral code is the existence of a man-like God, and that its only sanction is his pleasure and anger, if this belief be once lost, are left without any motive for choosing good conduct and avoiding bad. The nature of things, of course, in time corrects this error. But how many young people are miserably wrecked before they are aware of having left the safe and true course of conduct ? Nature is a stern and relentless teacher ; those who come into collision with her laws are ground into powder. The lesson is taught that the theological idea of the possibility of breaking the laws of the universe is a terribly false one. In how many instances does this teaching—that we may act and escape the natural consequences—involve the individual who accepts it in destruction !

The moving finger writes, and, having writ,  
Moves on. Nor all your piety and wit  
Can lure it back to cancel half a line,  
Nor all your tears wipe out a word of it.

—Torch of Reason.

The gods are dead, and to the gods succeeds humanity.—  
M. de Constant Rebecque.

## ACID DROPS.

Poor Engineers ! They have suffered a lot lately, but this is the unkindest cut of all. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have taken to praying for them—which is adding insult to injury, for saying "God help you !" generally means it is all over with you.

According to the Bible, a certain widow's larder in a time of famine was miraculously manipulated by her lodger, who was a prophet, and a prevailing man in the praying line. Let York and Canterbury imitate that old fellow's performance, and we will give them credit for being the genuine article, and not mere counterfeits. The Engineers would stand a better chance against their employers if prayer could make their larders elastic, so that the more they consumed the more there would be left on their shelves.

The Anglican clergy in Australia were invited to attend a mass meeting in aid of the Engineers' Strike Fund. They intimated through their spiritual head that "they had not yet decided which side they would espouse." As if there could be a doubt !

The year opens with unrest and anxiety, thanks largely to Bobadil Billy, who has taken advantage of the opportune murder of two German missionaries to bounce China out of one of its fine harbors and increase the German navy, leading the other Powers in the same direction of aggression on China. It is easy, however, to see that England is the real objective of Billy's naval schemes, which will lead to increased expenditure among all the leading Powers. It is all in the name of the Prince of Peace.

It is an open secret that the Liberals would have been dished by a Conservative measure for Old Age Pensions but for the difficulty of saying where the money should come from. It has often been pointed out that one of the purposes of the tithe fund was to provide for the poor, and that to take a fourth of the income of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would be merely restoring misappropriated funds to their original use.

Under a Freethinking Ministry, New Zealand, without any established and endowed Church, has passed a measure for providing Old Age Pensions which will probably serve to attract many to their shores.

Under Bobadil Billy no fewer than 4,407 persons received 4,965 sentences for *lèse majesté*, or speaking against his sacred person, during the last seven years. The average period of imprisonment for the offence has been 175 days. The law has been vigorously enforced, but is powerless to attain the end desired. Even in king-deluded Germany there are still men who will speak out, and the young ones seem most disposed to rebel. Between 1890 and 1895 seven children under fifteen years of age were condemned to terms of imprisonment ; forty-eight between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, and 183 youths aged from eighteen to twenty-one. That is to say, about five per cent. of the persons condemned for *lèse majesté* were minors. In the year 1893 forty-nine persons under twenty-one years were punished.

Rev. Frank Smith, minister of Manvers-street Baptist Church, Bath, issues a type-written monthly, *News and Notes*, the January number of which lies before us. Mr. Smith complains that people don't come to church as they ought to—at which we are not afflicted. Under the head of "Science Jottings," he reminds his readers that Sunday rain is just the same as Monday rain, and doesn't give you a cold any sooner. People might as well get wet in going to church as in going to a concert. Mr. Smith doesn't reflect that people run greater risks for a greater enjoyment. And who shall blame them if they prefer a good concert to hearing Mr. Smith's imitation of "all the sobs of the Savior over Jerusalem" ?

It is a good sign that there is a less demand for churches and more for public baths and washhouses. During the past year some very large ones have been opened in London, notably those in the Kennington-road, said to be the largest in the kingdom. Second come the Hornsey-road Baths, and in the same district those in the Caledonian-road have had to be enlarged, and other large public-baths have been built in the Clapton-road, Hackney. In this respect London is certainly improving.

The rector of an Episcopal church in Jersey City has started a dancing-class of his own, where young men and maidens are taught for a shilling a month not to emulate David clad only in a linen ephod, but to "dance amid proper surroundings and in a proper and decent way." The parson is to be personally present, but should he be called

away—say, to assuage his thirst—then, as the comic song has it, "when his back's turned, then you know—Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!" Boys will be boys, and girls girls, even in Puritan New Jersey.

The Victoria Institute of old women, who seek to reconcile modern discovery and the Bible, opened their New Year with a paper read by the Rev. J. Tuckwell on "Early Civilizations." Mr. Tuckwell did not pretend to say how long Adam came after the civilizations found in ancient Egypt and Babylonia.

At the monthly dinner of the Article Club the subject of debate was "Science in its Relations to Commerce." Among the speakers was Mr. Hiram H. Maxim, who incidentally remarked that about the best machine for introducing commerce into the odd corners of the world was the Maxim gun. A missionary once told him that he had had great trouble in introducing religion among savage races, and suggested that perhaps a Maxim gun would be a good thing to spread religion as well as commerce. He replied: "My friend, you are quite right; get a Maxim gun, and the savages will never find any fault with your religion; they will take it holus bolus."

The *Transvaal Sentinel*, of Krugersdorp (December 11), has a long article on "The Cruelty of Missions," in which it exposes the folly of devoting money to Christian missions. It says: "In a few years' time, supposing all of it does not stick to pious fingers, that money will have been the means of taking certain happy and contented natives from their kraals to a mission-station, where they will be taught the questionable privileges of wearing slop-made trousers, and collars an inch too small. Their brains will be muddled by a hazy jumble of Christian theology, including the Immaculate Conception, the puzzle of the Trinity, and such trifles as predestination, the origin of evil, and other profound conundrums that Christians have been cutting each other's throats over for generations. This unsophisticated nigger will be supposed to have swallowed and digested all this in a few months, in spite of the fact that it has taken the civilized white eighteen hundred years to fail to understand it, and abandon disputation."

The result of this veneer of Christianization, says the *Sentinel*, is to make the black man a leper among his own people, whom he is taught to despise, and also among the whites, who will not associate with him. Yet this brutal work is justified under the title of Missionary Endeavor! It is the wickedest and cruellest form of human suffering that can be inflicted, for it means consigning otherwise happy creatures to a life of misery that they would have escaped but for these zealots and pharisees, who, in spite of the presence of five hundred rival sects, and the seas of blood shed by their dissensions, still egotistically insist that they alone have all the righteousness, and spend their money in making other people as narrow and bigotted as themselves.

The North American Indians, after having been well-nigh exterminated, are being so looked after both by Government and missionaries that their improved condition has so stimulated marriages between white men and Indian women, and Indian men and white women, that pure-bred Indians, it is feared, will be soon extinct. One Governor says: "Those fellows are not Indians, but mighty smart Yankees tanned a little."

It is a lamentable fact that the negroes around the white settlements on the West Coast, who possess some hazy idea of Christianity, are generally cowardly, drunken, idle, and expert thieves, excepting always the Kroomen, who, however, are heathen. Wherever the Negro has come into touch with the Arab, a race of soldiers results. Any Negro with a trace of Arab blood in him is invariably a Muslim, and the Mohammedan black is generally head and shoulders above either heathen, or, it is to be regretted, Christian (or semi-Christian) Negro, in the qualities of sobriety, courage, and fidelity. Almost every frontier soldier, armed policeman, and Government soldier, from the Gambia to the Niger, is a Mussulman.—*The Gentleman's Magazine*.

The *Church Times* for December 31 tells of a minister in a parish in Sussex in 1840, who, seeing a paper on the vestry table, read it. It ran as follows:—"Peter sat on a gate crying, and the Lord Jesus came by and said, 'What aileth thee O Peter?' 'Lord, I have the toothache,' said he. Jesus said, 'Be healed.' God grant that anyone having the toothache reading these lines may be likewise healed." "What is this?" he asked. "A charm," said the clerk. "Do you get anything for it?" "They give me five shillings for it," said the clerk. On a threat of being reported to the Bishop he promised not to do it again.

The *Licensing World* for December 11 reports that at a

dinner of the York Licensed Victuallers' Association, held at the De Grey Rooms, the Rev. G. H. Hewison, M.A., said: "As to the relationship of the clergy to the Licensed Victuallers, he knew that the feelings of the clergy were very kindly towards the trade." The miracle at Cana was not worked for nothing.

The *Crescent* claims that Moslems fed six hundred starving Christians in Liverpool at Christmas without making an attempt to proselytize these poor creatures. It says: "Islam scorns to reach a man's heart by means of his belly! Unless a person will become a Muslim because his reason actuates him so to do, let him for ever remain a Christian, Jew, Buddhist, or any other creed he likes to profess." Christian missionaries may buy poor famine-stricken Hindus for a few handfuls of rice, or outcast Jews by the offer of employment. Islam declines to stoop so low.

During the day the Mosque was visited by representatives of the Press. One of the reporters, standing on the platform and surveying the assemblage from that point of vantage, said to the Sheikh-ul-Islam: "But, surely, these hundreds of poor persons are not all Muslims?" "No," replied the Sheikh, "not one of them is a Muslim. They are all Christians. The Muslims are the gentlemen in the fez-caps who are feeding them." "It is an object-lesson," then replied the journalist.

Dr. Horton, the evangelist orator of Hampstead, delivering a "National" sermon, said: "If they lived in godliness, the nation would meet with the fate of other great nations of the past, such as Imperial Rome and Papal Spain." This is rather rich. We should say that Papal Spain, at any rate, was afflicted with a superfluity of godliness.

Spain, Russia, and Turkey are among the most religious countries in the world. They have got God in the constitution of every one of them. Spain has Cuba; Russia has Siberia; Turkey has Armenia; and God has all the glory. God comes handy to bear such burdens. We need him every hour.—*Torch of Reason*.

It is godly Scotland which pays its female binders worst, their wages being but from four to ten shillings a week. Of course the Bible Societies send their binding where labor is cheapest, and then boast of their supply of cheap bibles.

The cheap Bible controversy reminds us of some excellent verses by an early contributor to the *Freethinker*:—

"Sold under cost!"—who pays the loss?  
Subscribers? Did men see the gloss  
The margin of your Bibles wear,  
You would not sell—you would not dare!

How is that binding cheaply done?  
By contract? was its cheapness won?  
And, ere the contract had been made,  
Who asked the wages that were paid?

How would your rich subscribers fare  
On the mean, miserable share  
A woman earns to spread abroad,  
At "less than cost," the "love of God"?

Say, would they keep themselves from stain  
Mid want and heartache, toil and pain?  
And would tired fingers be quite clean  
That fold the tale of Magdalene?

Some of the noble evangelists who make the neighborhood of Finsbury Park hideous have been fined. They delight in considering themselves as martyrs for religion.

What beautiful things can be done in the name of religion is exemplified in Russia, where young children are torn from parents who do not conform to the orthodox faith. The police in dissenting districts usually make their visits in the middle of the night, take the children out of bed, and carry them off in the cold night air, in spite of the frantic entreaties of the parents. Many peasants have lost their entire family in this way. It is a debated point whether Jesus was divine or insane. If he was able to foresee the crimes done in his name, he had ample cause for insanity.

A new appeal has been issued on behalf of the Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral which is to be opened on June 29, 1900, the fiftieth anniversary of the restoration of the hierarchy in England. Over £64,000 has been already subscribed, and another £18,000 is promised. But this is a very small moiety of the estimated expense. Subscribers are promised a reward in heaven, and "the additional advantage of actually watching their gold and silver transformed into the very tabernacle and dwelling place of the Living God." When the Living God requires a new dwelling place, it is always his faithful people who have to put their hands in their pocket to provide it.

Father Wyndham points out in the *Tablet* that, although the Masonic Grand Lodge of England has ceased to recognise the Grand Orient of France, the Grand Lodge of Ireland recognises the Grand Orient of Italy; and the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Rite for Scotland, receiving a representative from the Supreme Council for England, accredits representatives to Belgium, France, Italy, and Spain. The conclusion is, that Masons who isolate themselves simply "don't know where they are."

It seems that Joan of Arc is now on the high road to sainthood. Five cases of cure through her intercession have already been certified before the Pope, who hopes to live to carry out the canonization of the woman once burnt as a witch.

The *Academy* (January 1) gives, side by side, extracts from the writings of two Anglicans—one Canon Knox-Little of the High-and-dry, and the other Prebendary Webb Peploe of the Low-and-slow Church. One believes in Apostolic Succession, Prayers for the Dead, etc.; the other denies them. The *Academy* asks: "May not those Dissenters, who are invited to unite with the Church of England, reasonably ask which set of doctrines it is they are asked to accept?"

A young lady, just married in Sydney, is daughter of a rich and worthy widow, known as Queen of Porkopolis, in a Melbourne suburb devoted to pork and bacon-curing. She was mainly instrumental in building the finest local church, known as "the Cathedral." A preacher was got one Sunday morning quite ignorant about the pork business of the locality. He dilated on the miracle of the devils being driven into the herd of swine, and justified it because of the diseases engendered by pork-eating.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

Rev. E. Walton, a Tasmanian delegate to Victoria Baptist Union, thinks the unions in all the provinces should have a uniform method of admitting candidates for orders, so as to keep out of the ministry mental incapables, wily adventurers, habitual drunkards, and immoral men of other descriptions. He proposes that candidates should be required to pass an educational examination, and supply references as to character. If, as is to be naturally inferred, this hasn't hitherto been the case, much of the milk in the clerical cocoa-nut is easily accounted for.—*Bulletin*.

Perhaps as a remnant of missionary times, the Wesleyan Church in Australia has a decidedly anti-Malthusian rule in the shape of a grant of eight pounds increase of stipend for every fresh child. The system is found to work as a greasing of the fat sow, and the big-salaried men keep tacking on these eight guineas with a persistency which dismays the laymen, and the childless and unmarried pastors, who are beginning to question the wisdom of the rule.

The argument that the rule tends to the increase of Wesleyans is seriously advanced by the rev. official particularly identified with the fund, who says that Wesleyans "never will tolerate an enforced childless ministry," and bandies sarcastic expressions like "married celibates" and even "eunuchs." It is curious that it is celibate Roman Catholics who have put forward the hope of regaining ground for the Church by preaching "increase and multiply," while the Pagans are restricting their population. But there is a further question, whether small families with economic advantages will not tend to displace large families with poverty and much infant mortality. Anyway, we don't want the population of the world left to Catholics, Wesleyans, and fools.

The Sunday opening of the British Museum, the National Gallery, etc., was very well patronized during the summer; but there has been a decided falling off at the former place during the winter, leaving some of the attendants to say that the place is only kept open for Jews, Freethinkers, and Sunday Leaguers. The truth is, there is little to attract the average working man. If the authorities really wish him to attend museums, they should provide guides and cheap refreshments.

A writer to the ever-lively *Bulletin*, of Sydney, suggests: "Re clergymen acting as advertising mediums for boot-makers, there's a clock in Melbourne St. Patrick's Cathedral which bears in bold characters on its dial the donor's name and address, which suggests a regular bonanza for poverty-stricken clergymen. To make a church self-supporting, why not let out the interior to advertising-agents, and then, during the sermon, the congregation could inform its mind about the virtues of Jones's corn-plaster, Brown's Bavarian bolus, and so on? In no place is the mind in greater need of a little wholesale distraction than in church, and, as for profanity, we'd never hear a word about that once the parsons caught on to the solid oof there is in the business."

A popular suburban parson was lately approached on behalf of a book-publishing firm with a view to pulpit references to certain productions. The parson's duty was to read any book sent, and, if he liked the book, to refer to it in commendatory terms in his next sermon, for which service the Sydney agent of the publishers agreed to pay £1 per sermon. The uses of the pulpit as an advertising rostrum appear to be woefully neglected.

Barnum's arena at Olympia boasts of being the biggest show on earth. But, with all his freaks and curious animals, there are no such attractions as a speaking serpent or ass, or as a saline woman, three incombustible fire kings, and a walker on water. We must go back to old times yet for the really wonderful prodigies.

Dr. Horton says of the book of Esther: "The story is fictitious, but the inspiration is real." But the inspiration palms off the fictitious story as real history, and it is only modern criticism which discovers that it cannot be squared with actual facts.

The latest from the Indian frontier announces that the Hindustani fanatics will join the opposing tribes. These fanatics are from India, and are not Hindus, but Moslems, every one of whom is pledged to lose his life at the earliest opportunity in conflict with the infidel. Religion is still a great power for evil with untutored savages.

London, Ontario, has been the scene of a terrible disaster to a crowd attending an election meeting at the City Hall. The floor caved in, precipitating some two hundred persons into a funnel-shaped death-trap, where twenty-eight were killed and over a hundred injured, some very terribly. Believers in Providence may have an explanation of such accidents, but their reconciliation with Theistic assumptions is not quite obvious at first sight.

Christian science is responsible for the insanity of Leo Weil, and also for the suicide of Jacob Weil, his father, a Chicago capitalist.

Here are three items of religious intelligence taken from the *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago: "Rev. B. Breakfell, of Oskaloosa, Kan., convicted of horse-stealing, has been sent to the penitentiary for one year.

"Rev. C. L. Berry, Presbyterian pastor at Pawnee, Oklahoma, has just been sent to the penitentiary for three years for wholesale fraud and swindling.

"Rev. Charles Green, pastor of a Baptist church at Quincy, Ill., has been found guilty of unseemly conduct on the street, and was fined \$75."

The Rev. F. S. Ross, vicar of Trevelyn, cannot allow that John Wesley was an unmixed blessing. He says that "his misguided followers, in express contravention of his wishes, have rent anew the seamless robe of Christ." This means that the Church finds Methodism a formidable rival in Cornwall.

The *Church Times* winds up its obituary for 1897 with the words: "May they, with all other Christian souls, rest in peace." Does it really credit that restless ghosts go wandering about? and if it believes in ghosts, why not be anxious that non-Christian souls should "rest in peace" also?

We receive from the Ideal Publishing Union *The Vegetarian* (weekly) and the *Vegetarian Messenger* (monthly). They are now both under the same control. Both give gushing religious papers from Mr. A. F. Hills, the pious plutocrat of the Movement. The *Vegetarian* has some well-written articles, notably one on "Matter and Mind" by a doctor, and "Ascetic or Aesthetic" by H. S. Salt, who claims that vegetarianism is the latter, not the former. In an epitome of vegetarianism we read: "As Count Tolstoi has pointed out in *The First Step*, paganism made provision for the possibility of morality, and treated the matter of ethics from a logical and scientific standpoint. As the Christian dogma of *No Salvation by Works* became more and more accepted, and more and more misconstrued, man gradually accustomed himself to a relaxation of all physical and human aids to morality, relying solely upon Faith and the Atonement."

Lord Crewe contributes to *Literature* an account of the entry made by Shelley in an inn album in the Vale of Chamone, in which the poet describes himself in Greek as "a lover of mankind, a democrat, and an Atheist." It seems that some later traveller (probably a sky-pilot) wrote in Greek beneath the polite words of Ps. 53, 1.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

*Sunday*, January 9, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints', Manchester, at 11, subject, "The Philosophy of Hamlet: Glimpses of the Thought of Shakespeare"; 3, "The Devil to Pay"; 6.30, "The Evolution of the Idea of God."

January 16, Liverpool; 23, Camberwell; 30, Athenæum Hall.

February 6, Athenæum Hall; 20, Glasgow.

**TO CORRESPONDENTS.**

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—January 9 and 16, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road; 23 and 30, Birmingham; 25 and 26, debate at Birmingham; 31 and February 1, Derby; 6, Shoffield; 13, Camberwell. May 1, Glasgow.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

E. A. DAVIS.—We remember the occasion, though not the date. See paragraph.

W. SIMONS.—Thanks for copy of the eleventh annual balance-sheet of the Ball's Pond Secular Sick and Tontine Society. It is a healthy document.

J. ROBERTS (Liverpool).—We note the fact that Mr. Foote's lectures on January 16 are to be delivered in the Oddfellows' Hall. Kindly forward copy of any bill you issue. Thanks for your good wishes.

T. BELLAMY.—There seems to have been a misunderstanding somewhere. Miss Vance will write you.

C. WRIGHT.—"Money, Oh money, thy praises I sing!" appeared in the *Freethinker* June 11, 1882, and was reprinted in the *Freethinker* series of tracts.

T. J. THURLOW.—Joke will appear in due course.

J. JONES, an octogenarian, who is highly pleased with the conduct or management of the *Freethinker* by its able editor and most valuable contributors, promises, if life permits, to contribute ten shillings for the current year by two half-yearly instalments of five shillings each to the Treasurer's Propaganda Fund.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—R. Axelby, 5s. (p); J. Oram, 2s. 6d. (p); J. Kimberley, 5s. (p); J. Boorman, 2s. 6d. (p); F. Symons, 2s. 6d. (p); F. Booker, 2s. 6d. (p); W. Kimberley, 2s. 6d. (p); W. H. Franklin, 5s. (p).

W. J. ROGERS.—Not without merit, but scarcely good enough for its length. Some items are excellent, and some indifferent.

A. E. DAVIS.—We will inquire into the matter, and, if necessary, guard against a repetition. Certainly it behoves Secularists to listen quietly to opposition when it is invited, and as a rule they do so. Even if an opponent is insulting, it is best to leave him to the lecturer, who is generally able to administer suitable correction.

H. PERCY WARD.—Shall be happy to hear from you occasionally when you meet with any experiences you think worth recording. We wish you all success.

ISAAC MAKIN.—Sorry we cannot answer your first question definitely. The report of the Catholic Congress appeared in several English newspapers at the time. Colonel Ingersoll's reply to Judge Black can be obtained from R. Forder, publisher, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. Ingersoll has not replied to Father Lambert. He does not think him worth replying to—nor do we. It is absurd to suppose that a public man is bound to answer everybody who attacks him. When the opponent is big enough, Ingersoll is always ready for the arena.

J. H. F.—Anonymous letters cannot be inserted. Name and address are always requisite, though not necessarily for publication.

MRS. KNOWLES.—Inserted. Thanks for your New Year's good wishes.

E. H.—We do not understand why you are always troubling your own head, and trying to trouble ours after, with the putrid nonsense of the very lowest Christian Evidence journalism. Can you for a moment believe that the wretched Walton Powell was a certificated member of the N. S. S.? If so, you are past praying for. We repeatedly warned our readers against the scoundrel; as you ought to recollect if you are a regular reader of the *Freethinker*.

G. WALLACE (Bolton).—The *Breviary of the Brave* is an invented title for an imaginary book of selections. The "extract" given was written by the sub. Thanks for paper.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Vegetarian—Vegetarian Messenger—Transvaal Sentinel—People's Newspaper—Burnley Gazette—L'Etoile Socialiste—Progressive Thinker—Two Worlds—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Adult—Der Arno Teufel—Freidenker—Free Society—Conservator—Blackburn Times—Friatankar—Torch of Reason—Liberty—Clarion—Sydney Bulletin—New York Public Opinion.

It being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

THE National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

**SUGAR PLUMS.**

MR. FOOTE opened the new session for the Birmingham Branch on Sunday, and the committee are highly pleased with the day's proceedings. The morning and afternoon audiences were good, and the hall was terribly crowded in the evening. By energetic packing a record meeting was got into the building. The lecturer was in very best form, and in the evening especially the excitement was phenomenal. More than once a pause was necessary to give the audience time to recover. Mr. Partridge did good business at the bookstall. Of the *Freethinker* 135 copies were sold, and more were in demand.

The Manchester Secular Hall has been closed during the holidays. Mr. Foote re-opens it to day (January 9) with three lectures, which will doubtless be well attended.

Mr. Charles Watts had capital audiences last Sunday at Leicester, where, as usual, he received an enthusiastic reception. An interesting debate followed each lecture. Two gentlemen, strangers in the town, spoke well in opposition to some of the statements made by Mr. Watts. There was some good singing before and after the evening's lecture.

This evening, Sunday, January 9, Mr. Watts lectures at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, taking for his subject "The Decline of Paganism and the Dawn of Christianity."

We recently quoted a eulogy of Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword* from the pen of Mr. A. E. Fletcher, the editor of the *New Age*. It is now quoted in *Humunity*, the monthly organ of the Humanitarian League, and commended to the attention of "those papers which boycotted Mr. Foote's pamphlet as the work of a Freethinker." This boycott was referred to by us, but its mention by the Humanitarian League places it beyond question, for the League publishes the pamphlet and watches the press notices of all its own publications.

The *Literary Guide* (Watts & Co.) for January begins what is to some extent a new departure. Henceforth it will contain some articles of an expository character, illustrating the "attitude of sober Rationalism." We wish it all success in this fresh effort, and hope for its own sake it will not lay too much stress on the "sober." The January supplement is an admirable summary of Mr. J. G. Frazer's splendid work, *The Golden Bough*.

Mr. H. Percy Ward informs us that he is making Hull a centre, whence he intends to work the Northern Branches until April, after which he will return to London for the open-air lecture season. His present address is 6 Wawne-grove, Alexandra-road, Hull.

Our esteemed friend and colleague, Mr. A. B. Moss, who lost his first wife nearly three years ago, has just taken a second plunge into matrimony. Mr. Moss is a "good fellow" who deserves to be happy as well as useful. The latter he can always be by his own volition; the former we wish him most sincerely. Here's a health to the new-married couple!

The Finsbury Branch has the use of the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, on Sunday evening, January 23, for a social gathering. A good program has been arranged, including music, readings, and some dancing. Mr. Foote has promised to hurry back from Camberwell and give a reading before the party breaks up. The tickets are one shilling each, and can be obtained from the Branch secretary, Mr. H. Brown, 61 Patshull-road, N.W.

Local Secularists willing to take part in organizing the open-air lecture work at Ridley-road, Kingsland, are invited to attend a special meeting at the Bradlaugh Club this morning (January 9).

This is our last announcement of the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, which takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday evening, January 10. The function is timed to begin at 7.30. Mr. Foote, who is to preside, will be supported by Messrs. Watts, Wheeler, Forder, Cohen, Moss, Heaford, and other well-known Freethinkers. Besides the after-dinner toast-speaking there will be some good vocal and instrumental music. We hope to see a goodly gathering on this festive occasion, for which special weather has been ordered.

## MISSIONARY JOTTINGS.

AFTER four months' wandering in different parts of England and Scotland, I am once more back in London. During that time I have delivered seventy-two lectures, over twenty of which were under the new lecture scheme. As a mere record of work done, that much is pleasant to reflect upon; but it is still better to know that my lectures have been the means of bringing a goodly number of members into the N. S. S.

A long record of seventy lectures, however, is apt to prove anything but interesting reading, particularly when one bears in mind that, in the very nature of the case, the same general features are bound to reproduce themselves with more or less regularity. It will be enough, therefore, if I furnish those who are interested in our work with a very brief epitome of my labors.

My first pause after leaving London was at Sheffield. I lectured here three times on September 5, and again on October 31, taking advantage, on the first occasion of the approaching School Board elections, to place the Secularistic view of the subject before the people. I took advantage of the same circumstance in several towns to speak upon the same subject, and was pleased to find that our position usually commended itself to by far the larger number of those present. Even religious people seem to be fast coming to the conclusion that to keep the preacher to his pulpit, the teacher to his desk, to place before children only that of which we are certain, and leave all speculative matters until they are of an age to understand them, is in the long run the wisest and most straightforward policy.

After leaving Sheffield I spent a month in Scotland. I lectured for two Sundays in Glasgow (opening the winter session for the Branch), two Sundays in Edinburgh, twice at Paisley, and once each at Dunoon, Motherwell, Greenock, and Law Junction. At each of these places I had capital audiences, sometimes—as at Motherwell—every seat being occupied, and many standing throughout the lecture.

A good audience gathered at Dunoon, graced (?) by the presence of a number of divinity students from a neighboring college. Two or three of these candidates for the pulpit opposed, and their speeches reflected great credit on the judgment of their parents in having destined them for the clergy. Young men who had evidently labored so industriously at forgetting the best part of what they had once learned, and misunderstanding the little they remembered, would have been simply wasted in another walk of life.

At Motherwell the stock opponents are a Catholic and a Protestant. The two form an interesting study. When I go for the Catholic, the Protestant beams approval, and looks round at the other with a smile of puritanical self-satisfaction at his own superiority. When the tables are reversed, the Catholic straightens himself up, audibly expresses his approval, and threatens to fracture his neighbor's ribs by the frequency of the digs given to draw attention to the discomfiture of his "brother in Christ."

The Glasgow Branch, I am pleased to see, bids fair to become one of the strongest in the N. S. S. It has an energetic committee, and the success of its efforts is seen in the steadily-rising membership-roll and the increased subscriptions. The quarter just closed is, I am informed, one of the best the Society has had for some years.

The Edinburgh people have removed to a fresh meeting-place in the High-street, resulting in improved attendances; but I am convinced that, if a larger hall in a better locality could be obtained, the strength of the Society could be increased considerably.

After leaving Scotland, I steered my course for the Tyneside. I remained in that district for three weeks, lecturing at Gateshead, Felling, Newcastle, Stanley, and West Pelton. At each of these places the audiences were most satisfactory. Newcastle tried an experiment by making admission free, instead of imposing a charge. The experiment was quite successful. The audience was much larger in number, and the contributions quite equalled what was formerly taken at the door, while six people joined the Branch at the conclusion of the lecture. Gateshead, too, showed an improvement on my last Sunday there.

At Stanley one is always sure of good meetings, but what impressed me most was the change from angry hostility, shown only a few months ago, to the sympathetic attention now displayed. I lectured here on November 16,

17, 18, and 26. Seven members joined at the conclusion of my lectures, and several more have joined since.

At Blackburn I found the branch as active and as industrious as ever. The lectures were well attended, but the discussion was very scant. Among the audience were three friends from Blackpool who were very anxious that lectures should be given in their town. Probably that will be arranged in the near future.

I lectured at Manchester on November 14 to three capital audiences. The hall, which has been newly and tastefully decorated, was quite full for the evening lecture, many being compelled to stand. Several new members were also enrolled.

Huddersfield and Birmingham were the next two places to be visited. The Birmingham Branch has very wisely given up the hall it occupied on the occasion of my last visit, and now rents one of the Board schools in one of the principal thoroughfares. Although a perfect gale was raging all day, the attendances were very fair, and I was pleased to learn that the season's lectures have more than realized the committee's expectations.

At Derby I found that bigotry had once more been at work. The Athenæum, in which I had lectured so frequently, was no longer obtainable, owing to the religious feelings of the manageress. Her bigotry turned out a blessing in disguise. We obtained the Co-operative Hall, larger, nicer, and altogether more comfortable. The audience, too, was better, both in quantity and quality, than I had had before; the opposition was limited to one man—a travelling quack—who impeached Secularism on the ground that the more a man knew the worse he became. If the reverse of this is true, my opponent must have been a paragon of morality. It is astonishing, by-the-by, how often quack medicine and Jesus Christ run together. In the majority of cases a quack is an advocate of the gospel, and generally plays to the lower orders of the Nonconformists. It is due, no doubt, to the perception that credulity in one direction is apt to promote credulity in another; so pills and piety run in double harness; and I have no doubt the medicines dispensed are often a sure road to the heaven their vendor preaches about.

Two places visited by me, Preston and Chester, were, upon the face of it, rather unpromising towns for Freethought propaganda. Preston has not yet raised itself to the level of a School Board. The schools are still thoroughly in the hands of the religious party, and a number of local financial circumstances tend to maintain that condition of things. In addition to that, Preston is the most Catholic town in England. Out of a population of 110,000, 30,000 are Catholics. However, I lectured there on December 2, thanks to the courtesy of the Spiritualists, and the meeting was in every way a success. There had been no Freethought lectures there for fifteen years, but a few Secularists in the town had always hung together. The lecture, which travelled over the main points at issue between the Secularists and the Christians, was listened to with quiet sympathy. The opposition was practically confined to one man, who dwelt at some length on the evils of Secularism, and in a stage whisper offered, if only the ladies would withdraw into a side room, to tell the audience enough of the evil effects of Secularism to kill the propaganda of Freethought at once. Fortunately for Secularism, the audience—the feminine part particularly—laughed at the suggestion, and I breathed freely at having escaped such a terrible exposure. I intend to visit Preston again at an early date, when I hope to carry further the work commenced under such favorable conditions.

The ancient city of Chester would seem a more unlikely place still for Secularism. It is an eminently pious and snobbish city, very conservative, with parsons as common as blackberries in September. I lectured there in the Corn Exchange on November 17. The audience was large, and the discussion lengthy; indeed, although the meeting commenced at 7.30, it was 10.15 before I left the platform. The success of that meeting warranted a second visit, and on December 12 I returned for three lectures. The mere fact of lectures on Sunday was enough to cause Christians to open their eyes in astonishment; but when the lectures were announced to deal with such subjects as Jesus Christ, Secularism, and the existence of God, astonishment is a mild term to express the feelings of many who read the posters that were liberally sprinkled over the city. The day's lecturing was in every way a success. The opposi-

tion was much scantier than I had anticipated, the principal opponent being a philosophical clergyman—I know he was a clergyman by his dress, and I know he was a philosopher because he assured us that he was, and “higher authority than that can no man have.” After the lecture an informal meeting was held, at which seventeen members were enrolled, besides many names of probable members being given. Since I left the city six other people have joined, making twenty-three as the result of the meetings. The Branch has an energetic secretary in the person of Mr. Fish, an able helper in Mr. C. Lewis; and unless something unexpected happens there is the nucleus of a strong Branch. I lecture there again on January 16.

I concluded my lecturing tour with a visit to Leicester on December 19. I had capital audiences, and a little lively discussion concerning the methods of Secularists as opposed to the methods of other parties.

I ought not to close without mentioning the press notices I have received. At Dunoon, Greenock, Paisley, Edinburgh, Gateshead, Stanley, Blackburn, Bradford, and Chester the local papers noticed my lectures, and in some cases the reports were quite lengthy. All this serves to show how rapidly our opinions are permeating society. Even when there is no active demand for reports of Secular meetings, they are not always received with active antagonism, and that is certainly something gained.

Altogether my last tour has been the most successful season I have yet experienced. The meetings have been good, the sale of literature excellent, and the audiences sympathetic. Owing to the new scheme of reorganization, I have been able to lecture in several places where Secularism had been dormant for many years; and, provided the scheme receives a fair measure of support, other places might be visited with equally beneficial results. The day has gone by when Freethought attracted audiences because of its novelty—the work of the Secular party during the last generation has been effective enough to render it a commonplace; but the day has arrived when we should enter upon the stage of serious organized propaganda, and thus pave the way for that complete secularization of life which is the ultimate aim of the Freethought party.

C. COHEN.

## THANKSGIVING SERMON.

BY COLONEL INGERSOLL.

*Just delivered at Chicago to 5,000 people.*

*(Continued from page 11.)*

A FEW years ago the Governor of Iowa issued a proclamation on Thanksgiving, calling on the people of the state to fall upon their knees, recounting the blessings of the year. A citizen of that state read the proclamation. Consequently he wrote one himself. He called the attention of God to the facts as they were. He said: “Iowa has not been prosperous. We have had poor crops; the price of corn and pork very low; mortgages increasing; the people getting poorer every day, and I don’t, O God, wish you to be misled by official correspondence. If you have any doubt about my statement, be good enough to send some angel in whom you have confidence, and let him report the facts.”

Now, let me to-night be understood. I do not say, and I do not think, that the Church was dishonest, that the clergy were insincere. I admit that all creeds, all churches, all priests, have been naturally produced. I admit, and cheerfully admit, that the believers in the supernatural have done some good—not because they believed in gods and devils, but in spite of it. I admit that thousands and thousands of clergymen are honest, self-denying, and humane; that they are doing what they believe to be their duty; doing what they can to induce men and women to live noble lives. This is not the result of their creeds, but in spite of their creeds; because they are human beings.

What I say to-night is that every honest teacher of the supernatural has been, and is, an unconscious enemy of the human race.

What is the philosophy of the Church? What is the philosophy of those who believe in the supernatural?

Who is this God that we are called upon to thank? Let me tell you, according to these supernaturalists. Back of all that is, back of all events, Christians put an infinite Juggler, an infinite sleight-of-hand performer, who, with a wish, creates, preserves, destroys. The world is his stage, and mankind his puppets. He fills them with wants and desires, with appetites and ambitions, with hopes and fears, with love and hate. He touches the springs; he pulls the strings; he baits the hooks; he sets the traps, and he digs the pits.

The play is a continuous performance.

He watches these puppets as they struggle, as they fail. He sees them outwit each other and themselves; he leads them to every crime; he watches the births and deaths; he hears the lullabies at cradles; he hears the clods falling on coffins. He has no pity. He enjoys the tragedies, the desperation, the despair, and the suicides. He smiles at the murders, the assassinations, the seductions, the desertions—the abandoned babes of shame. He sees the weak enslaved, mothers robbed of their babes, the innocent in dungeons, the noble on scaffolds. He sees crime crowned and hypocrisy robed.

He withholds his rain, and his puppets starve. He opens the earth, and they are devoured. He sends the floods, and they are drowned. He empties the volcano, and they perish in fire. He sends the cyclone, and they are torn and mangled, and with quick lightnings they are dashed to death. He fills the air and water with the invisible enemies of life, the messengers of pain, and he watches the puppets as they breathe and drink. He creates cancers to feed upon their quivering flesh; serpents to fill their veins with venom; beasts to crunch their bones, to lap their blood.

Some of the poor puppets he makes insane—makes them struggle in the darkness with imagined monsters with glaring eyes and dripping jaws; and some are made without the flame of thought to drool and drivel through the darkened years.

He sees all the agony, the injustice, the rags of poverty, the withered hands of want, the motherless babes, the deformed, the maimed, the leprous; knows the tears that flow; hears the sobs and moans; sees the gleam of swords; hears the roar of the guns, sees the fields reddened with blood—the white faces of the dead. But he mocks when their fear cometh, and at their calamity he fills the wide heavens with Titanic laughter. And the poor puppets who are left alive fall on their knees and thank the infinite Juggler with all their hearts.

And yet they tell us that we are supported by heaven. Let us see. But after all the gods have not supported the children of men; men have supported the gods. They have built the temples. They have sacrificed their babes, their lambs, their cattle. They have drenched the altars with blood. They have given their silver, their gold, their gems. They have fed and clothed the priests; but the gods have given nothing in return. Hidden in the shadows, they have answered no prayer, they have heard no cry, they have given no sign, extended no hand, uttered no word. Unseen and unheard, they have sat on their thrones, deaf and dumb, paralyzed and blind. In vain the steeples rise; in vain the prayers ascend.

And think what man has done to please the gods. He has renounced his reason; extinguished the torch of his brain. He has believed without evidence and against evidence. He has slandered and maligned himself. He has fasted and starved. He has mutilated his body, scarred his flesh, and given his blood to vermin. He has persecuted, imprisoned, and murdered his fellow-men. He has deserted wife and child. He has lived alone in the desert. He has swung censers and burned incense, counted beads, sprinkled himself with holy water, shut his eyes, clasped his hands, fallen on his knees, and grovelled in the dust; but the gods have been as silent as stones.

Have these cringings, these kneelings, these crawlings, these cruelties, these absurdities, these ceremonies, this faith and foolishness, pleased the gods? We do not know. Has any disaster been averted? We do not know. Has any blessing obtained? We do not know.

Shall we thank the gods? Shall we thank the Church’s God? Who and what is he? Let us be honest; let us be generous.

They tell me that their God is the creator and preserver of all that has been, of all that is, of all that will be; that

he is the father of angels and devils, the architect of heaven and hell; that he made the earth and man and woman; made the serpent who tempted them; made his own rival; gave victory to his enemy; that he afterwards repented of what he had done; that before he did it he knew he would repent, and that he sent a flood and destroyed all the children of men with the exception of eight persons; that he tried to civilize the survivors and their children—tried to do this with earthquakes and serpents, with pestilence and famine, but he failed; that he intended to fail; that he was born into the world, preached for three years, allowed savages to kill him, then arose from the dead, and then went back to heaven; that he knew he would fail; that he tried to fail; that he knew he would be killed; that he had pre-arranged everything, and brought everything to pass just as he had predestined it from an eternity. All who believe this will be saved, and those who doubt will be lost. Made his own enemy; supported his own rival, the one that he knew would destroy his work, the one that he knew would make it necessary for him to come and die.

Has this God good sense? Not always. Not always. He creates his own enemies; he plots against himself. Nothing lives except in accordance with his will, and yet the devils do not die.

(To be continued.)

### THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices, 377 Strand, W., on December 30; the President, Mr G. W. Foote, in the chair. Present:—Messrs. E. Bate, C. Cohen, S. Hartmann, G. J. Warren, A. Brown, C. Watts, H. Brown, J. M. Wheeler, W. Heford, J. Neate, P. Sabine, W. Leat, E. W. Quay, C. Masala and the Secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. The auditors were present, and reported that the balance-sheet, now being prepared, and which would be presented at the January meeting, would give a detailed account of the financial position of the Society. The sub-committee's minutes were then read, discussed, and adopted.

The President reported his attendance, in company with the other delegates, at the public meeting called by the Moral Instruction League at the St. Martin's Town Hall, and that it had been decided to elect a Committee, and to call a further meeting in January. A long discussion ensued, which ended in a definite expression of opinion in regard to the attitude of the N. S. S.

The final arrangements for the Annual Dinner, which takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on January 10, were left in the hands of the officers.

The Manchester Branch reported the expulsion of E. G. Taylor.

Cheques were drawn for printing account and rent, and the meeting adjourned. EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary.

### Obituary.

A VETERAN Republican, Freethinker, poet, and artist has passed away in the person of William James Linton, who died on December 30, at his residence in New Haven, Connecticut. Born in London in 1812, he became a wood engraver, and was at the very head of his profession, working for the *Illustrated London News*. A Chartist in early life, he was intimate with Mazzini and other political refugees. He contributed to the *Oracle of Reason*, edited *The National* and also *The English Republic*. In 1848 Mr. Linton was deputed to carry to the French Republic the first congratulatory address of British workmen. He was one of the contributors to *The Leader*, and edited *Pen and Pencil*; wrote a *Life of Paine*, a memoir of *James Watson*, some volumes of poems, a history of wood engraving in America, and *Masters of Wood Engraving*, and was a member of the American Society of Painters in Water Colors.

ADA ASHWORTH, daughter of Ralph Ashworth, a staunch member of the Blackburn Branch of the National Secular Society, died on Christmas day after a long illness. She was well-known as a Freethinker herself, and her genial disposition made her a general favorite. The coffin was covered with floral tributes, and there was a large gathering of mourners at the grave. The Secular burial service was read by Mrs. Knowles, and made a deep impression on the listeners. The deceased young lady's family have the sympathy of a wide circle of friends in their sad bereavement.

### BOOK CHAT.

FROM Gomer Williams's account of *The Liverpool Privateers* we gather that at the beginning of the eighteenth century Bristol had about sixty ships, and London more than a hundred, engaged in the slave traffic. "Shipped by the grace of God," the bills of lading ran, so many "prime negroes," so many "negro women," "all in good order, numbered and marked as per margin," the marking being done with a red-hot iron. Liverpool, however, outdid the rival ports, and possessed in 1792 126 slave-ships. It has been estimated that the net profits made by the Liverpool slave-trading firms from 1783 to 1793 amounted to a yearly average of £1,117,647. A generation earlier there were, as has been calculated, twenty thousand negro slaves in London. The buying and selling of slaves on 'Change was not uncommon. Yet the Christian Evidence men tell us that Christianity brought freedom!

Mr. Williams tells us that branding-irons, leg and arm chains, thumbscrews, iron collars, and all the necessary equipment of slave vessels, were exposed for sale in the Liverpool shop windows, side by side with household furniture and New Testaments. The public knew that from thirty to sixty in a hundred slaves perished in the hell of the "middle passage"; that if water and food ran perilously short, and the ship was disabled, the slaves would have to "walk the plank"; that on board ship slaves were constantly attempting suicide, and that if a too powerful enemy hove in sight the cargo of slaves, men, women, and children, would perhaps be thrown overboard, or shot, to prevent them from enriching the captors. But all these were accepted as incidents in a trade that in itself was legitimate, and which was countenanced by the Bible.

The Rev. John Newton, vicar of Olney, Cowper's bosom friend, Cowper's collaborator in the Olney hymns, rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, London, and humanitarian to the backbone, was in his pre-clerical days a stout a slave-skipper as ever kept "niggers" under hatches. Mr. Williams writes a capital account of the reverend ex-captain's extraordinary career, quoting many curious passages from his diary. "Sweet communion with God, during my last two trips to Guinea," writes Captain Newton. "He is no sooner at sea," Mr. Williams remarks, "than down in his diary goes the expression of his earnest desire to live wholly to the Lord." We hear the captain, as he walks his quarter-deck, praying for a "blessing on the day." Every day this honest skipper had religious service on board, himself officiating.

The *Sydney Bulletin* says of Caine's *Christian*: "The book is well sauced to suit a pious public. Cant alternates with lust, religious-mania with sex-mania—which is just, since these are obverse and reverse of the same medal."

George Shelley Hughs, of 1,227 Twelfth-street, Des Moines, Iowa, has published a big and well-got-up volume on *Ancient Civilizations*. Mr. Hughs has evidently given much time to the subject, and he has some original views. But we doubt his competency for dealing with so large a subject. He does not seem to have read Max Duncker, and he assumes that the world has always had a growing and decaying civilization, and that the course of growth has ever been westward. He does not explain how this can be applied to Chinese civilization. There is some attempt at rational dealing with Jewish history, but it is vitiated by a too ready acceptance of the Bible stories. Altogether the work gives us the impression of an attempt to grapple with too big a subject. The work is clearly written, well printed, and, instead of pages, has the number of sections dealt with, with marginal references to other sections bearing on the same points.

*The Faith of Centuries* is a series of Addresses and Essays delivered in East London. Canon Newbolt says: "True that at Baptism original sin was washed away; true that God has given us a new nature." If the East Londoners can swallow this, they need not pause at transubstantiation.

The *Athenaeum* has just been celebrating its seventieth birthday. The age is a good one for any literary journal, and in this case the reputation of youth is well sustained in maturity. The number for January 1 has an able review of Dr. Crozier's *History of Intellectual Development*.

Mrs. Browning, in her letters, mentions that once, when the reader of the Athanasian Creed in church substituted the word condemnation, "Damnation!" exclaimed the bishop. A correspondent of the *Athenaeum* says it was Bishop Phillpot's invariable habit to correct this substitution of a milder word: "I myself have seen him rise up in his pew, and emphatically utter the word 'damnation' when 'condemned' had been used instead of it, and that, too, when he was not in his own diocese."

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## FREEWILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Thanking you for inserting my letter on the above in your issue of December 5, I now beg a like favor of you, not because I am at all desirous to continue the discussion, but because Mr. Watts, in his "Reply to the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström" (December 19), not only criticises my statements temperately and ably, but asks me certain questions. To ignore these might seem discourteous, so I reply as briefly as I can, and am very well content to leave the last word to Mr. Watts, as I expect he will have something more to say in comment on this. The only thing I ask of your readers is that they will well weigh both sides, reading and re-reading what each writer says.

As Mr. Watts seems to think I did some injustice to him and his arguments by not dealing with his "remarks upon the man's responsibility," and also his "reasons for rejecting the Christian doctrine of 'freewill'" in his article, "The 'Freewill' Fallacy" (November 28), I will make that article the basis of my reply, not omitting reference to the second article, especially when it breaks new ground.

(1) I cannot here discuss the question whether man is responsible to God. To do so would be to discuss the whole subject of religion. But I may observe that ever since I saw it I have always admired and endorsed Bishop Christopher Wordsworth's statement in his Commentary on Romans, "It is also 'God's Will that every man should have Freewill.'" I do not see that the Articles of the Church of England, which are remarkably free from Calvinism—considering the time when they were framed—at all impeach that moderate theory of "freewill" which I advocate. I must believe in the Fall of Man, because I see its effects in myself and in others, and I think man quite incapable of saving himself. I believe, further, that the very power of exercising freewill is immensely weakened by the Fall, but not destroyed.

A man at the bottom of a well may be utterly unable to clamber out, and his senses may be dazed, as well as his muscles numbed, by his fall; but he may still have capacity, mentally and physically, to fasten round his waist the cord let down to draw him out; and he is responsible for remaining at the bottom, if he is too proud or too lazy to avail himself of the proffered aid. Man's efforts to rise out of sin are most laudable till the impossibility of doing so unaided is perceived; and it is only a new direction of those efforts to place himself in the way of God's salvation, when he learns he cannot save himself, but God can. Further, I think that what I have just said very fairly agrees with the great body of Christian teaching from the earliest times, and is in very special harmony with the views of those great theologians of whom the Church of England is justly proud.

(2) So much for the religious aspect of "freewill." I come now to those I set forth in my first letter, and my starting-point shall be what Mr. Watts says about not punishing a stone, but punishing a man. His statement seems to be that punishment exercises exactly the same sort of restraining influence over a man's mind that muscular force, arresting the falling of a stone, does over gravitating matter. That is a very clear application of the theory of Determinism: the stone is arrested from injuring somebody, the man is restrained from doing a hurtful action. What the "freewill" advocate adds is that, if that be all, "virtue and vice" stand on exactly the same footing as the goodness and badness of any unconscious object. That is Mr. Watts's view of "virtue and vice"; it is not mine, nor can I understand how anyone, brought up as a Christian, can level down to mere utility what are connoted by "right and wrong."

Mr. Watts says to a little girl, "You are a naughty child," and he punishes the child. The child, wishing to escape the punishment in the future, does not repeat the naughty act; and, if I understood Mr. Watts rightly, that is all. The little girl, according to his view, could not possibly help doing the past action; yet Mr. Watts says she was naughty. Does the child understand that, though she could not help being naughty, yet Mr. Watts scolds and punishes her, as if she could have helped it. Will Mr. Watts tell her so? Will he explain to her that her actions are like the effects of a "parallelogram of forces"; that her naughtiness before was the necessary result of so many forces, and her goodness after of those forces, with one more (i.e., the punishment) added? Will Mr. Watts, as a truth-loving man, point out to the child that she is really as much a machine as anything which is unconscious? Will Mr. Watts, in narrating the lives of Nero and Washington, insist that each did what he did because he could not possibly help doing it, and that the only meaning of "wretch" and "hero," applied to the Roman Emperor and the First President of U.S.A., respectively, is that one was compelled by one parallelogram of forces to do injurious acts, and the other by another parallelogram of forces to do useful acts? And will Mr. Watts further enjoy her that she is no longer to use those words, "virtue and vice," in the sense in which nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a

thousand have always used them, and in which, I feel sure, Mr. Watts himself always uses them—except when setting forth his theory?

I may sum up the above attempt, to make quite clear Mr. Watts's theory of fact and what I have suggested should be his practice in education, by quoting the very amusing yet deeply philosophical story once told by Mr. Beerbohm Tree: "My little daughter was punished for flying a kite in Piccadilly. In a bad temper she broke a window. 'That was wicked of you, my daughter,' I said, sternly. She looked at me reprovingly, and said: 'No, father, it was not wickedness, it was heredity.'" Will Mr. Watts tell me which was right—Mr. Tree or his daughter?

The young lady was a practical Ibsenite; she should philosophically have added "environment" to "heredity," but she knew instinctively that "brevity is the soul of wit," and that an epigram is worth oceans of argument, especially when punishment is impending. I am unfortunately compelled to be more precise; and I should therefore say that her naughty act was the result of heredity, plus environment, plus—from the first dawn of her power to exercise it—the gift of "freewill" choice. Of course, our "freewill" is limited by heredity and environment, and I am a little surprised that Mr. Watts should regard Dr. McCann's acknowledgment of that limitation a concession.

(3) Mr. Watts discussed at length "volition" in both his articles. The main thesis of my first letter was, that any attempt to eliminate "freewill" is to give the lie to what is fundamental in consciousness. He cites Calderwood, Müller (not wholly a determinist), Karl Pearson, Professor Ribot, Buckle, Graham. Supposing I were to reject all their views and arguments, on the ground that the laws of thought are untrustworthy—for certainly, if these cannot be trusted, no argument is valid—he would reject the supposition as insulting and absurd. But we hold the laws of thought to be trustworthy on precisely the same grounds as those which make us all feel that "right and wrong" mean "right and wrong." Lest I should be misunderstood, I must explain that I am not referring to the belief that *this or that action* is right or wrong. The laws of thought are not untrustworthy because people constantly argue badly, or hold wrong opinions, mistaking error for truth. And the fundamental recognition of what underlies all moral judgment is in no way invalidated by our mistaking a right for a wrong action. Indeed, that mistake arises rather in the intellectual, than in the moral, sphere. Finally, I don't ask Mr. Watts to understand how "freewill" can be; what I do ask is that he will accept it as a fact.

(4) As regards the results of Mr. Watts's theory, if thoroughly grasped by all and practised by all, I don't suppose that Robert Owen's pupils at New Lanark were indoctrinated with it in the thoroughgoing form in which we have stated it. However, let it be granted that they were. Then I presume that Mr. Watts really holds that, if some greater than Napoleon could make the whole world a New Lanark, he would, in a generation or two, bring in the millennium. That is an interesting view of human life! As to a death-bed repentance, if it be sincere, I do not see why Mr. Watts should wish the sinner to be punished; but I can assure him that I and many others hold any easy-going views on that subject in the deepest reprobation. But it is impossible for me to go thoroughly into that subject at the close of a letter, which has already far exceeded the limits I aimed at.

C. LLOYD ENGSTRÖM.

## PROFANE JOKES.

A SKY-PILOT, Wood Green way, has what he calls a praying-wheel. It is rather rickety, and he never gets on it for a ride without praying for a safe return.

A grandiloquent prelate and a very fussy dean were showing the sights of their cathedral city to a party of Americans. Giving way to his grandiloquent failing, the prelate exclaimed: "In presence of yonder grand monument of our ancestral pisty everything is tintured with our holy religion—yea, our very gutter children play at religion. Just see?" This was said as the party were enjoying a good view of the above venerable structure. Addressing a group of gutter children, playing with dirt by the wayside, the bishop asked: "What are you making, my dears?" Little Tommy—"A ca-fec-dral, preeze, sir." Prelate (giving a "told-you-so" glance at his party, and touching a small pile of dirt with his cane)—"What is this, my little man?" Little Tommy—"A pulpit, preeze, sir." At this point the fussy dean intervened with—"And where is the Lord Bishop of your cathedral, my clever little boy?" Little Tommy (quite innocently)—"Peeze, sir, we're going to make one when we gets enough muck."

"Who is Bill Jones?" "Oh, he's been dead some years now, and to-day I received a bill for him with a request to forward it." "What did you do with it?" "Put it in the fire, of course."

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

### LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Decline of Paganism and the Dawn of Christianity."

BATTERSEA ETHICAL SOCIETY (Central Library, Lavender-hill): Jan. 7, at 8, F. H. Perry Coste, B.Sc., "The Influence of Religion on the Natural Affections."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, W. J. Ramsey, "God so Loved the World."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, A lecture; 7.30, O. Cohen, "The Case for Secularism."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (King's Hall, 83 and 85 Commercial-road, E.): 6.45, E. Pack, "Protestant and Papist Persecution."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion, "What is Liberty?" opened by G. A. Storrar; 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Ethical Aspect of the Sunday Question."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, John A. Hobson, "A Rich Man's Dilemma."

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): 11, W. J. Russell, "The Tory Colonial Policy"; 7, A. Scrimshire, "Recital of Shakespeare's 'Julius Cæsar.'"

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, Stanley Jones, "Religion and Society."

HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Annual Meeting.

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, H. Snell, "Athens, and Greek Civilization," with limelight illustrations.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. P. Swan, "Is Man a Religious Being?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote—11, "The Philosophy of 'Hamlet': Glimpses of the Thought of Shakespeare"; 3, "The Devil to Pay"; 6.30, "The Evolution of the Idea of God."

NEWCASTLE (Newbridge-street): January 11, at 8, Members' meeting.

OX-HILL AND STANLEY SECULAR SOCIETY (Co-operative Halls, Stanley and Pelton-lane Ends): H. P. Ward (afternoon), "Charles Bradlaugh: Atheist"; (evening) "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secular Platform." January 10, "Christianity the Faith that Failed." January 11, "Jesus the Infidel." January 12, "Shall we Live after Death?"

January 13, "What will you Give us in Place of Christianity?—A Secularist Answer."

STAFFORD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science Rockingham-street): 3, Robert Lax, F.G.S., "What Great Britain was Like in the Carboniferous Period"; 7, "Extinct Monsters of a Bygone Age." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting; 7.30, An address.

### Lecturers' Engagements.

O COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—January 9, Camberwell; 16, Chester; 23, Sheffield; 30, Manchester. February 6, Manchester; 13 and 14, Birmingham; 20 and 27, Liverpool. March 6, Liverpool.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—January 16, Birmingham; 23, North Camberwell Club and Institute.

H. PERCY WARD, 6 Wawne Grove, Alexandra-road, Hull.—January 9 to 13, Mission to Stanley; 23, Newcastle. February 20 to 27, Manchester. March 6 to 11, Mission at Derby; 13, Birmingham; 20, Sheffield. April 17, Glasgow.

## POSITIVISM.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—Church of Humanity, St. Mary's-place. Service and Discourse every Sunday evening at 7.

SUNDERLAND.—Church of Humanity, 23 Blandford-street. Service and discourse every Sunday afternoon at 2.45.

WEST HARTLEPOOL.—Druids' Hall, Tower-street. Meeting for inquirers, conducted by Mr. Malcolm Quin, second Wednesday of every month at 7.30.

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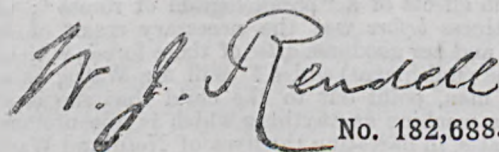
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