

# Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XIX.—No. 41.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1899.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## Fighting Christians.

JESUS CHRIST is most frequently called the Savior. Whether he will save us, or any of us, somehow and somewhere, in the next world, if there is a next world, is a matter of pure speculation. Whatever we find out on this point, we must die to do it. Meanwhile, it is pretty certain that he has not saved us in this world. All the salvation we get comes from the progress of science and civilisation. England is a Christian country, and is well to the front in the race of progress. Abyssinia has been a Christian country ever so much longer, and is just as far behind. The difference between them is due, not to Christianity, but to secular causes. And the same rule applies in all cases. Every nation that has an advantage over other nations owes it to natural conditions, such as soil, climate, position, material resources, education, and good government. Of course the most advanced nations still profess and call themselves Christians. But profession is one thing and practice another. It seems to be generally admitted that real Christianity is only possible—if it is possible at all—on off-days, like Sunday, when business is suspended, and people are free to indulge in all sorts of sentimentalities, without the least hindrance to their prosperity. Indeed, an English bishop has openly declared that any State which tried to carry out the Sermon on the Mount would be ruined in a week.

Another inappropriate name of Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. This is not only inappropriate, but positively facetious. Jesus himself said that he came not to send peace, but a sword; and this prophecy, at any rate, has been amply fulfilled. One can hardly find in all history a religion which has been so cantankerous and quarrelsome as his. All religions have been more or less bitter and contentious, and causes of discord and division. According to the Bible itself the first quarrel in the world was a religious one. Cain worshipped God in one way, Abel in another; they settled the dispute by one knocking out the other's brains; and this is the way in which religious disputes have been settled ever since. But the religion founded—whether in reality or only in repute—by Jesus Christ has been the most fruitful in hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. It has always been marked by bigotry, arrogance, persecution, and cruelty. Never has it truly served the cause of peace. Even if it aimed at doing so it has signally failed. The history of Christendom is a long record of war, bloodshed, and conquest. The map of Europe has always been adjusted on battlefields. And the fighting power of Christian nations is simply overwhelming. The late Mr. Gladstone, indeed, cited this fact as a proof of the divine origin and character of Christianity. Christian nations build all the battleships, manufacture all the guns, rifles, and explosives, drill and maintain all the great armies, and carry the arts of destruction to the highest pitch of perfection. Christian nations, wherever war is going on they are in it. Even when

China and Japan have a set-to the Christian nations look on longingly, and soon arrange to take part in any future quarrels in that locality. The commonest, two-penny-halfpenny Englishman talks about "our empire" and "the soldiers of the Queen," and quotes odds and ends of Kipling; and our kinsmen across the Atlantic have just been going mad over Admiral Dewey, because he performed the by no means miraculous feat of smashing up a number of ineffective Spanish ships in the bay of Manila. Millions would not have turned out to welcome the greatest genius who ever contributed to the world's highest civilisation—to its science, its arts, its literature, or its industrial development. They go wild over gunpowder and glory. Yet the vast majority of them are Christians, and are ready to talk by the yard (on Sundays) about the Prince of Peace. No doubt they think Dewey a far greater man than Ingersoll. Perhaps if Jesus Christ himself had turned up during the Dewey celebrations they would have voted him a nuisance and sent him to Sing-Sing.

Not long ago the Czar's Love-Feast was sitting at the Hague. The Christian nations, including the United States of America, were all represented there. Ostensibly their object was to promote peace. Really their object was to diminish the cost and risks of war. It was like a Conference of Burglars discussing how they might reduce the expenses of their profession. Even the expressed horror of Dum-Dum bullets, and new explosives, was not really humane. Christian rulers want to keep up armies and navies, and they see that war will cease altogether if science is allowed to make it too deadly. So they want to construct a ring, and have a good set of international Queensberry rules, in the interest of the noble art of slaughter. Anyhow, the chairs upon which the Hague Conference sat are hardly cold before another war is threatened. And of course it is the dear, good, peaceable Christians who are at it again. They have put the Prince of Peace in a cupboard in the joss-house, and have brought out and trimmed up the Lord of Hosts. Boers and Britishers are both worshipping this deity. The Boer has a Mauser rifle in one hand and a Dutch Bible in the other, while the Britisher has weapons in both hands and a Bible behind his back. Each relies upon the God of that book. Each prays to the God of that book. Each informs the God of that book which side he ought to take in the quarrel. And what does this God do? He sits silent in heaven and does nothing. He lets both sides take his name in vain. He reads them no lesson in honesty and charity; he does not bid them try justice and mutual toleration instead of fighting; he simply goes to sleep and leaves word for the victor to call him when the fight is over. Such a God is only fit for a museum. Some will say he is hardly fit for that.

It may be said that Christianity is not responsible for the fighting disposition of Christian nations. But this is a confession of its moral impotence. It means that Christianity must be supplanted by another regulating power—the Religion of Humanity. G. W. FOOTE.

## Do Dissenters Believe in Disestablishment?

THE Ritualist agitation has had at least two good results. It has brought into prominence the powerlessness of Protestantism to check the advance of Rome, and directed fresh attention to the question of disestablishment. And it has also shown, if unconsciously, that the only cures for the underhand practices that do undoubtedly exist in the Established Church are a complete severance of religion from State patronage and a more diffused education. An ill-educated public will always be the easy victim of religious extravagance or imposture, whether it be the ceremonialism of Rome on the one side, or the emotional extravagance of evangelical Christianity on the other; and, from the standpoint of a sane sociology, it is difficult to say which is the more objectionable.

And so long as it is believed to be part of the business of the State to patronise religious opinions, either directly or indirectly, so long must we be subject to outbursts of the nature of the present ridiculous "crisis." To the Secularist, the whole question of religious beliefs lies completely outside the legitimate sphere of State action. It is not the business of the State to set itself up as a fire insurance agent for eternity. The concern of the State should lie wholly with matters connected with this side of the grave; it has no more legitimate concern with a man's religious speculations than it has with his ideas concerning the inhabitants of Mars or the climatic conditions on the planet Jupiter; and, until this simple truth is recognised, we are bound to have hypocrisy in matters of religion—or even worse. Of course there will still be hypocrisy connected with religion, even when it is definitely divorced from the State; but such a measure would reduce it to a minimum, by placing all opinions upon an exactly equal footing.

Yet, outside the ranks of Secularists, who is there that believes in the disestablishment of religion in a thoroughgoing manner? Certainly the Nonconformists do not. They are the very first to appeal to the State to uphold a narrow Sabbatarianism, to suppress Romish practices in the Church, or to smile approval upon all legislation that tends to hinder the spread of non-religious opinions. Nonconformists, as a body, no more believe in the severance of religion from the State than do members of the Episcopalian Church. I know that the divorce of religion from the State is generally regarded as the principal plank in the Dissenters' platform, but when one looks at the matter closely it is easy to see that all that they mean by disestablishment is the removal by the State of the Episcopalian Church from its present position, or an equal share in the spoils secured from all sections of the community, and not the abolition of the State patronage of religion.

As a proof of this, one need only consider (a) the different means by which the State may support religion, and (b) the assistance given by the State to Nonconformists, in common with the Episcopalian Church. There are two ways in which the State may support religious opinions—positively by actual assistance in the shape of grants of money or otherwise, and negatively by placing obstacles in the way of anti-religious propaganda, and thus hindering the growth of non-religious opinion. How do Nonconformists stand in relation to these forms of State patronage? Not only is no objection ever raised, but agitation is constantly on foot for their extension in all directions. It is impossible within the limits of a single article to detail all the different means by which dissent is supported by the State in common with that form of Christianity by law established; it will be enough to give instances of both cases.

First, apart from actual grants of money, all places of worship in this country are free from the taxation that is levied upon other classes of property, and when the house of the attendant minister is connected with the church by a covered way, this is free from taxation likewise. Now, it surely requires but little reflection to see that this exemption from taxation is as much a grant of money from the Government as if it had given the amount of the taxes in hard cash; and among all the writings that

have issued from the offices of the Liberation Society have failed to observe any protest against this form of endowment, or any recognition of the injustice involved in sending up the taxes of all classes of the community in order to relieve Dissenting places of worship of their legitimate part of the public-burden. Not only is there no repudiation of this form of State assistance, but Dissenters actually crave for more. By law Episcopalian churches are relieved from the rate levied upon all owners of property for the repair of the footway fronting their property. In a great many parts of the provinces this relief given to the Established Church by law is extended to Dissenting churches by courtesy; and where this relief is not given, efforts are always being made to obtain it; while only quite recently a resolution was passed by the London County Council recommending that the same privilege should be extended to Dissenters in the metropolis.\* And in all instances the action of Dissenters, instead of taking the form of a protest against burdening owners of property with the Church's legitimate obligation, takes the form of a demand that they too shall share equally in plundering the pockets of the community.

But greatest of all the positive help given by the State to all forms of Christianity is, of course, the four million pounds voted annually for the maintenance of voluntary schools. This is not only a clear endowment of religious opinion, since the giving of definite religious instruction is the sole reason for the maintenance of such institutions, but it is an endowment of the most vicious description. Here the most elementary principles of a scientific education are completely disregarded. Speculative ideas are made the basis of action and belief, instead of *versu*. A body of men whose office carries with it conditions of the most discreditable character are allowed to completely control the intellect of the rising generation, to drive that intellect into the narrow channels of sectarian partizanship, rather than the advocacy of those broad humanitarian principles that rise superior to all sects or class, or race, and to force beliefs upon children with the full knowledge that they are altogether unprovable, and that a large number must surrender them before they arrive at maturity. The withdrawal of this one form of endowment, the determination to keep the State quite clear from religious instruction in elementary schools, would do more harm to Christianity than the withdrawal of all the other State endowments put together. And all bodies of Christians know this as well as we do, while the Nonconformist bodies in upholding such a condition of things are guilty of the grossest inconsistency, if not hypocrisy. They declare that the State has no right to undertake the religious instruction of the people; and yet, while refusing the right of the Government to place religion before adults, who at least have some sort of protection, inasmuch as they are at liberty to refuse it if they feel so inclined, they uphold the right of the Government to place religion before children, who have no form of self-protection, and who are liable to place the unverifiable speculations of a barbaric age upon the same level as the verifiable results of modern scientific teaching.

And almost as powerful are the negative helps which the State gives religion. Of these one need only mention two: first, the laws regulating the observance of Sunday; second, the laws hampering the diffusion of heretical opinions. By the former, a number of restrictions are placed upon all those unconscious influences that otherwise might play such a large part in breaking down the influence of religious beliefs. Museums, libraries, art-galleries, and all the various secularising influences of modern life, are suppressed, or partly suppressed, in the interests of religion, and the normal effects of advancing civilisation checked.

There is little need to dwell upon the enormous assistance given by the State to religious opinions by the maintenance of blasphemy laws. Mr. George Jacob Holyoake once said that, to his knowledge, over three quarters of a million sterling had been lost to thought during his lifetime, owing to the relative position of Freethought and Christianity in Great Britain. Instead of have been had these laws been non-existent. Instead of a handful of poor men fighting an army of persons

\* I am writing this away from home, and am unable to give the precise date or the exact terms of the resolution.

nearly 50,000 strong, with an annual revenue of millions behind them, Freethought might have had a large and powerfully-equipped army in the field, ready to meet its rivals on something like equal terms. How many of the Nonconformists raise any objection to this form of State support? What difference is there between the State directly supporting religion and the State placing obstacles in the way of the development of those forces that make for the disintegration of religious ideas?

The plain fact of the matter is that Nonconformists do not object to Establishment at all. All that they really object to is the establishment of any other form of religion than their own, or that any other Church shall receive a larger share of public funds than themselves. There is a world of difference between a desire to disestablish the Episcopalian Church and a desire to separate the functions of Church and State. The Dissenters may desire the former; they certainly do not desire the latter. None clamor louder than the Nonconformists for the State to enforce laws preventing the desecration of the Sabbath, and none give less help towards the removal of those restrictions upon Freethought propaganda. Here and there, of course, may be found bright exceptions; but, in the mass, Dissenters are as fond of State help as any body of people can well be.

Historically, each Christian body has tried its hardest to get the support of Government, and has only denounced the union of Church and State when that union has favored its rival. And to-day I am firmly convinced that, by sharing its patronage equally between all Christian bodies, the Government could at any time buy up the Disestablishment party, so far as the Dissenters are concerned.

The moral of the whole matter is this: For Freethinkers to speak of Dissenters as being with them on the question of disestablishment betrays a sad lack of insight into the real nature of the forces at work. They are with us only in our fight against the present position of Episcopalianism; they are not with us in our desire to keep the State altogether free from helping or hindering religious speculations. We alone occupy a clear, definite, and consistent position on this matter. We have had to fight a lone hand right through, and, so far as the Nonconformist world is concerned, must continue this solitary fight until the end of the chapter.

C. COHEN.

## Human Advancement.

LAST week, when noticing in these columns the proceedings of the recent meeting of the British Association at Dover, we drew attention to certain facts which indicated the rapid progress that had been made during the past hundred years in the various fields of science. We quite agree with Sir Michael Foster in the view which he expressed in his Presidential address—namely, that "in science there is only progress," and that wherever such progress is found the results are beneficial both individually and nationally. "Beyond all doubt science has greatly lessened, and has markedly narrowed, hardship and suffering; beyond all doubt science has largely increased, and has widely diffused, ease and comfort. The appliances of science have, as it were, covered with a soft cushion the rough places of life, and that not for the rich only, but also for the poor." It is true, as Sir Michael observed, "the touch of science makes the whole world kin." It is almost impossible for us to estimate how much human effort has been aided by the discoveries of science. It is certain that our modern industrial system owes a deep debt to the revelations of chemistry and geology. In fact, the rise of art manufactures and numerous productions of exchangeable value date from the application of the discoveries mentioned. Commercial progress is not the result of having "an open Bible," but rather of bringing into operation the powers that had so long been hidden in water, coal, and iron. It is not too much to hope that nationality, custom, and creed will cease to impede the progress of man in his endeavors to establish rational relations among the human race, guided and helped by the light and force of science. To whatever cause it may be attributed, man, as a social being, indulges the hope that there is in store for him a better condition of society than the one in which

he is now placed. Many great servants of humanity have been inspired by the anticipation of blessings which they trusted would be realised in a more enlightened age than their own.

The term "progress," as it is understood to-day, is comparatively modern. Taking the meaning of the word to be an indication of an advance in the improvement of the human mind and of society in general, we recognise but few marks of its existence before the present century. Of course, as indicating merely change, it may be identified in the history of the world for many ages; but change is not necessarily advancement. No doubt what lies at the foundation of the idea of progress appeared at the first dawn of civilised existence. For when men once realised that they were not born for themselves alone, but that they were objects of interest to others, they in turn deemed it their duty to consider the good of their fellow creatures. E. L. Bulwer has somewhere remarked that in the portico of a Greek sage the word "Commonwealth" received its true interpretation as signifying "the sense of the common interest." As the world advances, men certainly take more interest in each other, because they find united effort to be a mutual advantage.

It is manifest that man is endowed by nature with a knowledge of the value of experience, and that it is a law of his nature to advance and improve upon what has gone before. The well-informed mind will profit by the accumulated experiences of former ages. Man thus obtains by comparison new ideas and fresh views of the relation of things—physical, mental, moral, and mechanical. The test of the value of progress will henceforth no doubt be, how far has it tended to increase the supply of what humanity requires to support life, promote health, and augment its comfort and joys. That which increases the good and decreases the evil of existence will be accepted as a mark of human advancement. It is no longer necessary for each man to depend upon, and draw only from, his own stock of reason and experience, for there is now a world's bank of information fully available to the humblest members of society. The great truth, which we hope to see generally recognised, is that human advancement is of interest to every member of the community. Wisdom that is practical, and philosophy which can be applied, are no longer the exclusive possessions of Roman, Greek, or Hebrew nations, but they are the heritage of all civilised countries. We desire to see the growth of a community where right and justice shall prevail, whether the head of the nation be King, Kaiser, or President. The hope of the true reformer is to witness the inauguration of a universal rule that shall secure the good of one and all.

It will be seen that our idea of human advancement is that it began in a social state in which mutual aid was recognised as an essential element of progress. We propose now to state what, in our opinion, some of the elements of progress are. We assume that our readers believe that it is both possible and desirable to have some happiness in this world of ours. Moreover, it must be patent to all thinking people that the New Testament teaching, "to love not the world nor the things of the world," is futile and absurd. If God made the world, as Christians allege, it is not very complimentary to him to teach the people in it to despise the work of his hands. Believing that the world is capable of improvement by the genius, skill, and labor of man, aided by science and philosophy, the following appear to us to be the prominent elements necessary to the advancement of the human race.

The first requirement of progress is the possession of knowledge. Brougham, in his memorable Glasgow discourse, stated that useful knowledge was the forerunner of intellectual refinement and of moral improvement. It is knowledge, when wisely used, that will hasten the coming of a "brighter day," and "chase away the lazy, lingering mists, even from the base of the great social pyramid." The excellencies of knowledge have been extolled for many generations, but its general diffusion has only been effected in comparatively recent times. Our Board-school system is doing much to place knowledge within the reach of all classes of the community, but we doubt if true education is properly understood by the majority of those who have the control of the instruction of the young. It cannot be too

often repeated that knowledge of itself does not constitute real education. A truly educated person is one who not only possesses knowledge, but who has the ability to use it with credit to himself and with advantage to others. Thus, mental training becomes a positive necessity, so that knowledge shall be methodically employed in regulating human conduct. Hence, no restrictions should be placed on its acquisition, and no impediment should be offered to its legitimate application. This fact should remind the friends of progressive views how essential to intellectual advancement is the freedom to write and publish our thoughts, for without such liberty thought would be of little social value.

In the past it was not generally held that mental culture was indispensable to moral conduct. We, however, urge that knowledge and wise judgment are required for right doing. Men should not only know what is right to be done, but they should be so trained that they will be inclined to do it. Reason and experience tell us that a safe standard of correct conduct is the aim for the good of all and the injury of none. Now we can only expect a general recognition of this where knowledge and intellectual discrimination permeate the human mind. The chief impediment to the advancement of mankind is the absence of rational views as to life and its duties. It is, therefore, an act worthy of the highest intellect and the greatest courage to endeavor to discover, and then spread, a knowledge of new truths, which are the most efficient lever, when properly applied, to raise the standard of human conduct. Human advancement implies a departure from the errors of olden times, the refusal to submit to the dictums of priests and the snares and absurdities of theology. It means the honest acceptance of truths born of modern thought and intellectual freedom. As Secularists who discard the teachings of the Churches, we deem it to be our duty to foster those principles which reason and experience have demonstrated to be the great factors in promoting human advancement.

CHARLES WATTS.

### "Do You Love the Lord?"

It was to one of our grand old men that the Bible Woman addressed this question: "Do you love the Lord?" He had fallen under a sudden stroke of illness. Never was there a braver, stronger, or sunnier type of Freethought than his. I have met many such in the Midlands, though, happily, the Midlands have no monopoly of the stock. They cannot command the graces either of deportment or of expression, but Britain has no honester sons. In workshop or factory, in the club-room or in the allotment garden, they bear their homely testimony to the power of the new Humanism. They are soldiers without the scarlet and gold. They are architects with names unknown. They are heroes to whom poets will dedicate no flowery lines. They are plebeians who have the same Rationalist sincerity as the imperial Marcus Aurelius. Old Dan (the name is but a thin disguise) worked at the bench with laborious hands which the pressure of seventy-nine years could not force into indolence. He had no real need to toil, but the courageous eyes flashed from under the grey brows a challenge to all the fates, and told the independence of the old man's soul. He smiled equally at priestly and medical dogmas. From this, that, and the other pamphlet or book he had picked up and pieced together a code of serviceable facts and rules for the preservation of health, and disease had never clogged a pore of old Dan's skin. When, a few weeks ago, he was taken ill, no nurse was at once available. In the bustle of searching, one of us desperately ran to a district Bible Woman. Her duties would have been very simple—to administer food, to ease the couch, and to watch by night. Old Dan had been slightly touched with delirium, and, when the Christian deaconess entered his room, he lay in a kind of stupor. The Bible Woman approached his pillow, and asked, with an inane simper:—

"Do you love the Lord?"

Fortunately, a more business-like assistant was found, and the Bible Woman vanished, and is now, presumably,

worrying other invalids with cross-examination on the state of their affections. As mere buffoonery, this Bible Womanism is enough to make a cat laugh. Anybody but a Bible Woman—or a vicar—must see the stupidity of applying theological tests to the sick or dying. Either Dan loved the Lord or he did not. If he did, the proper course was to let the error be, just as surgeons refuse to extract a bullet from the brain of a patient who is in danger of succumbing. I do not suppose any Agnostic would ever dream of trying to convert a dying Christian to Secularism, or to give him lessons on Biblical criticism. And if Dan did not love the Lord, what superlative idiocy it must be for a Bible Woman to seek to alter the convictions of a man of seventy-nine. If, in drowsiness and weakness, the old Freethinker had been inveigled into a profession of belief in Christianity; if, in consequence, he had been ushered, after death, into the Bowers of Bliss, and introduced as a Saved Sinner, the sturdy spirit would have broken out into indignant protest: "For all the years of my manhood I have deliberately rejected the idea of an all-wise and all-merciful Providence, and I decline to take the credit of one miserable weak of conversion."

After the vanishing of the Bible Woman, the old man gradually recovered. He had lain near enough to Death's door to hear the creaking of the hinge. The Doctor assumed a professional melancholy, and people said it would be a miracle if Dan's constitution came out victorious. Nevertheless, the miracle was wrought. Not the least factor in the recovery was the patient's helpfulness of his stepdaughter. Though not at all robust herself, she kept almost ceaseless vigil over the wasted frame. The stars looked in at the midnight window, and discovered her as she kept the midnight watch. When the morning sun arose, it saw her pale face turned to the old man who had guarded her youth. Sometimes I visited the sick-chamber. I looked at her natty figure in the grey dress, with the snow-white tapes of the apron crossed over her shoulders, and, as she bent silently over him that was stricken, I thought of Watts's picture of "Love and Death." In that great picture you see the pleading Love-child as it gazes up at the ghostly foe, and you know that in the tragic exchange of their glances there is a battle and eternal defiance.

The Love-child has not pleaded in vain. As I write, old Dan is fast mending. We knew the fire of life was regaining its normal glow when a work-mate from the factory called in one morning to inquire after the patient's progress, and to bring greetings from the "hands" who regretted the absence of the veteran's familiar form. Dan had his cheery message:—

"Give my love, brother [he had a way of calling people "brother"], to all the lads."

"Yes, Dan."

Then he added with a twinkle:—

"And to all the girls."

We smiled. The old man had looked in at the sepulchre, and returned to the sunny earth; and, like the wholesome soul that he was, he uttered no word of praise to God, but only a greeting to his comrades.

Praise to God, forsooth! I would sooner sing a *Te Deum* to a dimpled babe whose beauty delighted me than to a remote and invisible spirit. Wondrously perverse is man. He worships the Far, and neglects the splendor of the Near. Man has had a supposed Revelation of Moses, a Revelation of Jesus, a Revelation of St. John the Divine. All these unsatisfactory visions will be eclipsed by the last and greatest Revelation of the Trinity of the Home. This Trinity is the father, mother, and child. In this Trinity are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater or less than another."\* The father stands for conquest, creation, world-order; the mother for love, domestic genius, and social culture; the child for regeneration and progress. Not an imaginary Lord, but these three persons are the only beings that deserve our affection; or, if we will be generously minded, let us widen the limits so as to include those faithful dumb animals that minister to our needs and pleasures. Within this brilliant triangle of love, of which the points are the man, the woman, and the babe, is encompassed the

\* Athanasian Creed.

whole of true religion. "Do you love the Lord?" What a paltry and irrelevant question! Of a geometer I would ask, "Do you understand Euclid?"—of an astronomer, "Do you know the constellations?"—of an engineer, "Can you calculate strains and forces?"—of a statesman, "Do you comprehend human nature?" And so of a man I would ask, "Do you love and respect woman?"—of a woman, "Do you love and respect man?"—of parents, "Do you love and respect the child?" So imperfect is our civilisation, and so crude our ethics, that we have not realised that men, women, and children are worthy of the deepest love and respect we can offer. These words will sound wild; they suggest blasphemy. People will object: "Oh, but how can the finite and the defective be worthy of our deepest love and respect? Let us rather find a perfect Being to admire and study." Well, you cannot get your perfect being. Every God yet invented has been found open to criticism. There are dissenters from every theology, and that is another way of saying that no God has yet succeeded in gaining universal homage. And then the so-called perfection is but a piecing-together of the best qualities of men and women. The noblest God yet created is but a mosaic composed of human fragments. I prefer the original humanity to the secondary deity. As well might you try to put off the youth with a picture of Venus when he asks for a living maid. The second-rate loves the second-rate. Lean souls love the Lord. But they whose blood is natural and whose life is full and vigorous and honest will love their fellow-creatures. We will kiss no shadows. Our lips are for the wife, the husband, and the kinglet in the cradle.

F. J. GOULD.

### A Converted Parson.

The journals have been entertaining their readers lately with the story of the "conversion" of an Anglican minister to the Church of Rome. Catholic literature is throbbing exultantly; Protestant literature maintains a sad and sullen silence; common daily journalism makes quite a little romance out of the occurrence. Indeed, on reading some of the journalistic versions of this latest clerical sensation many a simple-minded Freethinker may be moved to sympathy with the seceding minister. Certainly we Freethinkers are not unused to the idea of suffering for one's convictions, and we are ready enough to acclaim heroism of that kind in whatever institution it may be found. Hence there is some interest for us in these stories, which circulate periodically in the journalistic "dry" season, of conscientious withdrawals of Anglican ministers from their comfortable rectories, and secessions to the Church of Rome.

In the present instance, which has invaded even the columns of the *Star* to an important extent, I happen to be acquainted with certain circumstances which detract very materially from the romance and the pathos of the story, and cast no little suspicion upon the whole category of these conscientious "secessions" to Rome. The legend which has appeared in the London dailies, and which is a correct superficial report of the facts, runs as follows: On the 18th of last month the curate of the parish church at Hethersett, near Norwich, mysteriously disappeared. He had asked leave of absence for a day from his rector. He drove into Norwich with his utterly unsuspecting wife, parted from her at the station "for a day," and took the train for London. Later in the day the poor woman received a telegram, directing her to search for letters in a certain drawer. She found three letters—one for herself, one for the rector, and one for the bishop. The purport of the three letters was that Mr. James Waring had left his home, his wife, and his child for ever, and had, as the *Daily News* correspondent puts it, "returned to the bosom of the one true Church." Later reports added that Mr. Waring had probably sailed for Australia in order to join a brother of his, who has recently been ordained Roman Catholic priest. It was also discovered that Mr. Waring had formerly been a Roman priest himself, had seceded from Rome on account of mental difficulties about the Confessional and Transubstantiation, had been received by the Bishop of St. Asaph into

the Anglican ministry, and had married immediately afterwards.

To the Roman Catholic mind, and probably to many other unbiassed Christian minds, there is something edifying and refreshing about such a story. It proves that the power of grace is not extinct in the nineteenth century; it still avails to overcome the most powerful of our natural impulses. No doubt the rival sectarian and the pagan Freethinker would cavil at the desertion of wife and child—who were thoughtfully provided with £30 that the seceder had borrowed from his rector. That the Catholic will condemn as a narrow and unspiritual view of the case. He will picture to himself the struggle in Mr. Waring's breast between the awakened voice of conscience and the merely human love of wife and child. He will applaud the heroism that could trample the strongest human feelings underfoot at the bidding of religion.

One does not like to crush the optimism of the religious mind in this (for him) ever-darkening age; but it is my painful duty to cast a new and not very romantic light on the case. In the first place, there is a glorious element of uncertainty in the efforts of the Norwich journalists to give the details of Mr. Waring's career. It is quite true that he was formerly a Catholic priest. He was attached, not many years ago, to the Passionist monastery at Highgate, under the name of Father David. Messrs. Chapman, Hall, & Co., and their reader, Mr. George Meredith, will probably remember a manuscript which he submitted to them, containing a violent exposure of that institution and the order to which it belongs. Unfortunately, the literary defects of the work precluded its publication. But there is one interesting stage in Mr. Waring's career which has escaped the reporter, and which will, indeed, come as a painful revelation to the authorities of the Church of England themselves. Mr. Waring did not pass directly from his living in Leicestershire to his curacy at Hethersett. If his ecclesiastical superiors had searched for him at that time, they would have discovered him—in a tweed suit and Newmarket, earning his living at Liverpool in the very secular occupation of auctioneer. That employment did not prove remunerative, and J. W. turned to the ministry once more, after a thoughtful interval at Buenos Ayres.

It is related that Father David seceded from Rome on the very sufficient ground of the immorality of the Confessional and the absurdity of Transubstantiation. In point of fact, Mr. Waring told me that when the Bishop of St. Asaph asked him why he had seceded from Rome he was non-plussed for a moment, and boldly objected to the Council of Trent. However, let that pass. It will be asked what has become of Mr. Waring's objections to those two dogmas, and it is here that I feel constrained to offer evidence. I will not be so bold as to attempt to describe the state of Mr. Waring's conscience on the morning that he deserted his family. Having been a Catholic priest at one time, I know well how very strange is the operation of "divine grace." The difficulties may have vanished in a single night, and left Mr. Waring only the heroic course of tearing himself from the arms of his wife and child, and reverting to the chilly shades of St. Joseph's monastery. This only I know—that I have before me a letter I received from Mr. Waring *one week* before he deserted his wife, in which he speaks strongly enough of his old difficulties. For a long time he had urged me to give him literary assistance in writing a most violent criticism of the Church of Rome and the High Church. In the sketch of the work which he forwarded to me he laid strong emphasis on the immorality of the Confessional—its corruption of priest, penitent, and home—and the absurdity of Transubstantiation. That sketch was drawn up a few months ago. Last month he wrote, laying even greater emphasis on the immorality of the Confessional, and so late as the 8th of September he wrote to urge me to commence the work on the lines he had laid down. Ten days afterwards he wrote the three letters which told how conscience had driven him back to the bosom of the one true Church!

I leave the readers of the *Freethinker* to make their own comments on these facts: the letters are still in my possession. But I cannot refrain from adding this. When I first opened Mrs. Waring's letter, announcing her sad plight, I read it, "has left me for ever and gone

over to the *Mormons*." Thereat I smiled; but, reading a second time, I perceived it ran, "has left me for ever and gone back to the Romans." Thereupon an ejaculation escaped me which, I fear, did not so easily escape the attention of the Recording Angel.

J. McCABE.

### Ingersoll's Methodist Friend.

*A Story Vouched for by a Woman Resident of Pennsylvania.*

THE incident was related by a Bradford lady who requested that her name be not mentioned in connection with it.

"It was in Pittsburg," she said, "I believe in the Library Hall, where I first heard Colonel Ingersoll speak. There was a large audience gathered there, among them being clergymen and the cream of professional life of the city. Colonel Ingersoll's speech was magnificent from an oratorical standpoint, but his attack on religion and the Bible was blasphemous. However, the man's powers as an orator and as an actor made a deep impression on his hearers, and seemed to affect one man in particular, the Rev. Alexander Clark, pastor of the Methodist Church, which everyone in Pittsburg knew as the Old Home.

"At the conclusion of the lecture Colonel Ingersoll was backing from the stage in his peculiarly graceful manner, when the Rev. Mr. Clark bounded to the forum and asked to be introduced to the speaker. This formality having been gone through, the minister and the Agnostic clasped hands—the minister with eagerness, the Agnostic with a grace peculiarly his own. I well remember the pleasant, hearty, honest manner in which the great Ingersoll grasped the hand of that good minister, whose fame as a Christian of the real kind was known throughout Pittsburg.

"Mr. Clark, when he held Colonel Ingersoll's hand in his, held it tightly while he lifted his eyes towards heaven and prayed in a fervent manner that God would direct the wonderful talents of this man in another and a better sphere. His prayer was not a long one, but it was from the heart, and had its effect upon Ingersoll. The great Agnostic, looking the good Christian in the eyes, thanked him most heartily for his kindness, and solemnly added that Mr. Clark was the first Christian minister that had ever wished him godspeed. He then left the platform, and the audience slowly filed out of the building.

"The sequel, though, shows Ingersoll as he was. It brought out the great manhood of the Agnostic. Rev. Alexander Clark went West. I am not sure to what State he emigrated, but I believe it was Missouri, and there he became ill. He was at a hotel, and the Governor of the State, who had known him many years, had him removed to his home. Mr. Clark grew worse, and was threatened with death. The news came East, and Ingersoll heard it in Washington, where he was lecturing, and immediately went West as quickly as possible, and was at the bedside of the minister, and until the death of Mr. Clark was almost constantly in attendance upon him. When Mr. Clark died, Ingersoll took charge of the remains, and brought them East, to New Castle, where they were buried. At the funeral, after the officiating clergyman had concluded his sermon, the Agnostic delivered an address touching upon the grand life and character of the dead man, which moved his hearers to tears. It was one of his best efforts, and was from the heart."

—*Bradford Evening Star* (America).

### Narrow Minds.

NARROW minds have no power of throwing themselves into the minds of others. They have stiffened in one position, as limbs of the body subjected to confinement, as our organs of speech, which after a while cannot learn new tones and inflections. They have already parcelled out to their own satisfaction the whole world of knowledge; they have drawn their lines, and formed their classes, and given to each opinion, argument, principle, and party, its own locality; they profess to know where to find everything; and they cannot learn any other disposition. They are vexed at new principles of arrangement, and grow giddy amid cross divisions; and, even if they make the effort, cannot master them. They think that any one truth excludes another which is distinct from it, and that every opinion is contrary to their own opinions which is not included in them. They cannot separate words from their own ideas, and ideas from their own associations; and if they attain any new view of a subject, it is but for a moment. They catch it one moment, and let it go the next; and they impute to subtlety in it, or obscurity in its expression, what really arises from their own want of elasticity or vigor. And when they attempt to describe it in their own language, their nearest approximation to it is a mistake; not from any purpose to be unjust, but because they are expressing the ideas of another mind, as it were, in translation.

—*Cardinal Newman*.

### Acid Drops.

WE all know that Christianity is the best friend of woman—indeed, her only friend. Have not Christian ministers said so again and again? And is it possible for these holy men to lie or be mistaken? Nevertheless, these Christian ministers have been wonderfully slow in letting woman do anything but their dirty work, and especially their unpaid work. She was free to slave and scavenge for them, to visit the sick, tend the dying, superintend tea-fights, get up bazaars, cadge for subscriptions, and work the ministers' slippers. But when she aspired to a job with any remuneration attached to it, she was sternly told that she was seeking to transcend her natural functions, and that work of that kind naturally fell to the lot of servants of the Lord with whiskers, beards, and moustaches.

Someone said to us, several years ago, that Mrs. Besant might turn a Roman Catholic. We replied that we didn't think so; the Catholic Church offered women nothing but suffering and silence, and, while the former was quite in Mrs. Besant's line, the latter was out of it altogether.

The Protestant Churches, however, are beginning to wake up and turn over a new leaf. They see that they must do something to keep the women within the fold. It won't do now to echo Paul's words, "I suffer not a woman to teach." If a woman has got anything to say, she will say it. And she is now casting a covetous eye on the pulpit. She reckons she can preach as well as the men, and we guess she is right. A preacher has to be voluble and cocksure, and a woman can be that at least as well as a man. Moreover, a preacher cannot be contradicted, and the average woman is very well adapted to that condition. Yes, there is really no reason why all the preaching should not be done by women; and if they happened to be young and beautiful—though they couldn't always keep so—they would draw more men to church than are now in the habit of going. Still, we cannot expect this change to be effected all at once; but a good beginning is already made, and particularly in America, where there are scores of women preachers. Here in England the ladies creep in as sky-pilots more slowly. We learn, however, that Miss Brown, of Queen's street, Leeds, is to be ordained by the Congregationalists and to run a church at Brotherton, in Yorkshire. For our part, we receive the news with perfect equanimity; but it must be dreadful tidings to the Wesleyans, for instance, who have declined even to let a woman sit as a delegate in their Annual Conference. Some of the old fogies of that body will be inclined to beg the Lord to take them elsewhere—anywhere—before the female deluge.

The Vatican organ, the *Osservatore Romano*, in an article on the God of Battles, looks forward to England's defeat by the Boers, whom it appears to regard as very good Catholics. "With the defeat of England," it says, "Protestantism would be crushed for ever." This seems to be the next best thing to the conversion of England, which the Catholics have so long been praying for in vain. Evidently they are getting impatient, and are looking for great things from God. But we fear they will have to wait a long time for either the conversion or the downfall of England.

Jay Gould's tomb in Brooklyn Cemetery cost £10,000. This is a prodigious sum for such a structure. But it is reported that Senator Clark, of Montana, is going one better, or rather three times better. This gentleman is having his mausoleum erected while he is living. It is to cost £30,000, and is composed chiefly of the finest white granite, with fine sculpture and decorations of green marble and gold mosaic. The pedestal of this piece of vulgar ostentation weighs nearly thirty tons, and each of the buttresses weighs fourteen tons. The total weight of this millionaire's last supper-house—where he eats, but where he is eaten—must be enormous. One wonders how Senator Clark expects to rise on the resurrection morning. Will he even be able to hear Gabriel's trumpet?

Dear old Papa Pecci is beginning to look happy again. Next year is Holy Year, and it is expected that more than a million pilgrims will visit Rome and obtain the Holy Father's blessing. What is more important, they will leave behind them—or so it is calculated—about £2,000,000 in the shape of Peter's Pence.

The Labor world gave poor Tom McCarthy a grand funeral; grand, not in its display, but in the number of those who followed him to the grave, and in the representative character of those who headed the procession. Among the speakers at the graveside was Mr. John Burns, who drew on the dead man's self-sacrificing labors for the most oppressed working men, and hoped that something would be done to lighten the material loss to his widow and children.

Right under the report of Tom McCarthy's funeral and Mr. Burns's speech, in the *Daily News*, was the announcement that the Archbishop of Canterbury was going to deliver a

special address on the Church and Labor. What a sanguinary sarcasm! to use the language of Rabelais. Considering his £15,000 a year, the Archbishop must have a wonderful amount of effrontery to speak on Labor at all. Men like Tom McCarthy have a right to speak of it. But an Archbishop! Faugh!

The Primate's address on labor delivered in the Midlands does not appear to have evoked much approval. The *Echo* doubts whether it has been received with any great cordiality by those whom Dr. Temple "so ostentatiously patronised." It says "he approached dangerously near to insincerity when he vouched his belief that the poor find in the goodness of Providence a great many real compensations for what seems at first sight to be a hard lot."

By the way, the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* distinguished itself in connection with this address. It announced on its contents bill: "Speech by Archbishop Benson." This was rather good for the Church organ of the Midlands, especially considering that Dr. Benson was a Birmingham man, and that his decease might have been remembered there, even if the succession of Dr. Temple had been forgotten.

The Rev. Thomas Waugh has been discoursing at Huddersfield as "a counter attraction to the fair." His subject was "Christianity and Amusements." In his opinion, which he had arrived at after sincere and earnest prayer, people were too fond of recreation. Dancing, for instance, was not intrinsically harmful, but it was best avoided. Theatres, too, were not all bad, but many of them were, and it was best to keep away from them. Thus the reverend gentleman went on, and by the time he had finished he left the good Christian hardly any amusement except prayer-meetings and love-feasts. It would be a very interesting world for all of us if the Rev. Thomas Waugh could only regulate our pastimes.

A new sect has appeared in the State of Maine. It is the "Holy Ghost and Us" Society. Its leader is the Rev. F. W. Sanford. This gentleman, according to the *New York Evening Post*, believes he is so far differentiated from his species that the Deity and he can serve on the same committee of ways and means.

Mr. Frederic Guernsey, Mexican correspondent of the *Boston Herald*, says that the people of Mexico have a distinct objection to being disturbed by Christian missionaries. "If you tell these good people that there is a great deal of Paganism here among the poor and degraded, they reply: 'Well, do we burn negroes? Do we lynch helpless Italians; do we spend Sundays in tormenting people of colour?'"

A writer in the *Catholic Times* has had some correspondence with the Protestant Press Agency. The *C. T.* inserts it with the headings: "Two hundred sects to choose from. One hundred and ninety-nine to one against choosing the right one." The odds are hopeful for the humble inquirer in search of the true faith.

The Rev. G. Moore, vicar of Cowley, who pulled up an accountant at Bullington Petty Sessions on a charge of sending a threatening letter, now probably wishes that he had acted up to the Pagan teaching (adopted by Christianity) of "forgiving one's enemy." He had to make such admissions in a cross-examination that the magistrates at once stopped the case. Further, they expressed their sorrow that the defendant had been put to the annoyance and inconvenience of being arrested on a warrant and imprisoned at Oxford for three days.

The late Dean Alfred Stokes, interviewing an eccentric old verger, inquired: "Who, my good friend, takes the lead in Sunday-school matters in this parish?" "I do, sur," was his proud reply: "there aren't no other scholars but me and Sir John in the parish. I larns the children on Sunday arternoons; I fast reads 'em substracts from the Gospels, then I gives 'em a little catacylsm, and I generally winds up with a few interesting antidotes." But, of course, sur, I allays tells 'em in bibulous language."

Propos of the new theatres at Richmond and Balham, the *Christian* says: "There has been quite an outbreak of theatres in the London suburbs within the last few years. What will be the moral and spiritual effect it is difficult to say. They will not increase the desire to hear or to keep the word of God. They will not strengthen the spirit of devotion, or help to improve our prayer meetings. They will not induce our young men and young women to become followers of Christ and members of his Church."

Probably not; nor do we suppose they have been built with that object. There are enough Gospel shops already. When, however, the *Christian* goes further, and says "they will not diminish the stress and strain of life," the *Christian* writes himself down an ass. Besides, it is a little ungrateful thus to renounce the stage just when that pious matron of the boards,

Mrs. Kendal, has presented a font cover to St. John's Church, Filey. The vicar has not only accepted the gift—trust the Church for not refusing anything worth having, no matter from whose hands—but he has dedicated the offering in the following fulsome terms: "We praise Thee for that it has pleased thee to put in the heart of Thy servant, Madge Kendal Grimston, to make her offering, and we pray Thee to bless her family and her substance." The gushing vicar would have done well to have avoided the allusion to Mrs. Grimston's "substance," if he did not want to remind us that Madge is no feather weight now. He probably meant her worldly possessions.

The Rev. Dr. Clifford delivered what was evidently a "rousing" address to the Baptist Union at Leeds. He denounced the Catholic Church in France for its infamous conduct in relation to the Dreyfus affair, but he forgot to notice that the "remnant" who are saving France, as they have saved Dreyfus, are mostly Freethinkers. Dr. Parker's sermon in the afternoon contained a very cheap and foolish sneer at non-Christians. "It is not for us," he said, "to be hobnobbing with the infidel, the unbeliever, or the doubter, and catching the measles of his folly." Fancy catching the measles of folly from a Bradlaugh, an Ingersoll, or a Zola! Dr. Parker seems to us to have folly enough already. Otherwise he would not admit—for that is what his remark comes to—that unbelief is most likely to get the better of Christians if they only give it a chance. According to Dr. Parker, the way to keep a Christian a Christian is to prevent him from hearing anything that can be said against Christianity. For our part, we believe Dr. Parker is right; but, all the same, he is very foolish to advertise the intellectual weakness of his faith.

Dr. Parker has published his Autobiography, and this is how he writes in it of his feelings on the death of his wife:—"In that dark hour I became almost an Atheist. How could I be otherwise—my chief joy taken from me—my only joy—the joy that gave gladness to everything else—the joy that made holy work a holy sacrament? O, the Gethsemane bitterness! the Calvary solitude! I had secretly prayed God to pity me by sparing her, yet He set His foot upon my prayers, and treated my petitions with contempt. If I had seen a dog in such agony as mine, I would have pitied and helped the dumb beast; yet God spat upon me and cast me out as an offence—out into the waste wilderness and the night black and starless. 'My feet had well-nigh slipped.' Then a cruel voice said: 'Renounce Him! Defy Him! He forsook His own Son on the Cross. Hate Him, and join us, whom He derides and torments as devils! My soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.'

It would be hard to beat the ill-taste of this passage. Considering that Dr. Parker is a Christian minister—and therefore presumably a Christian—there is something shockingly blasphemous in the implied analogy between himself and his Lord Jesus Christ. He has his Gethsemane and his Calvary, like his Savior; and, finally, he uses the very words which Jesus used in his "agony and bloody sweat." As he believes that Jesus was God, his cheek is something colossal.

Why on earth, too, does Dr. Parker make such a terrible to-do about his own case? One might imagine, if one did not know better, that he was the only man in the world who had ever lost his wife. Other men have lost their wives, but that fact did not make him doubt God's goodness. When he feels the smart himself his egotism utters what his sympathy had never suggested. Really the divine benevolence is as much impeached by the bereavement of the poorest and meanest husband in England as it is by the bereavement of the pastor of the City Temple.

We do not believe in the sincerity of Dr. Parker's description of his feelings on the death of his wife. Perhaps we should say that we do not believe in its accuracy. He reminds us of those who call themselves the chief of sinners. They know they do not enjoy that distinction, but it flatters their vanity to say so. "I'm the biggest sinner on earth," cries the vain man, who hopes all the time you have a much better opinion of him. "Never sorrow was like my sorrow," cries the egotist, and soon after you'll find him laughing and joking.

Dr. Parker will pardon us for referring to that profane poet, Sir John Suckling—he who wrote that incomparable "Ballad upon a Wedding." He was not properly-speaking a great poet, but he came near to being so for once in his lines, "To lady E. C. at her going out of England." After saying that he did not weep or utter gilded phrases of sorrow at parting from her, he continues:—

Such loud expressions many times do come  
From lightest hearts: great griefs are always dumb.  
The shallow rivers roar, the deep are still.  
Numbers of painted words may show much skill  
But little anguish; and a cloudy face  
Is oft put on, to serve both time and place;

The blazing wood may to the eye seem great,  
But 'tis the fire raked up that has the heat,  
And keeps it long.

"Great griefs are always dumb." That is the jewel of this passage, and it could not be bettered. You might have sworn it was Shakespeare's. The selection of the word "dumb" is a stroke of genius. "Mute" or "still," or some such word, could have served the turn, but the sentence would not then have been perfect. Such words imply something deliberate and intentional, but "dumb" does not. Dumbness cannot speak. It is not a matter of choice, but a matter of necessity.

Suckling's great sentence rose to our remembrance in connection with Dr. Parker's outburst. And having quoted it we need say no more. The judicious reader can work out the whole commentary for himself.

A very funny mistake appeared the other evening in the *Westminster Gazette*. Sir Edward Clarke ended his speech at Plymouth by quoting a verse from Kipling's "Recessional," and the *W. G.* reproduced it with a difference—of course unintentionally. Kipling's two lines,

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget, lest we forget,

were printed by the *W. G.* compositors quite correctly save one word. *Lie* was set up instead of *be* in the first line. The Lord was thus besought to "lie" with us yet—presumably lest we should forget the way to tell 'em.

It is interesting to know that the rehearsals of Mr. Hall Caine's play, *The Christian*, are progressing satisfactorily. It excites the liveliest anticipations when we are informed that there will be a "specially-engaged" organ and a chorus of fifty to sing the hymns in the church scenes.

The genial Dagonet is full of personal recommendations, from "Tatcho" downwards. Here is his latest recipe: "If you want a day of rest for your nerves, and a quiet Sunday among scenes of the most exquisite beauty, try my Sunday from home one of these days for yourself. Leave Victoria at 11.15, lunch at the Albion, order a carriage, and let the driver take you my drive—Beachy Head, Birling Gap, East Dean, Friston, West Dean, Jevington, and Willingdon. Leaving the Albion at three, you can be back there again by half-past six, dine at seven, catch the 8.45 train back, and be in London again before eleven o'clock."

A very pretty program. But where does attendance at church or chapel come in? Dagonet, we are shocked!

"There can be no doubt," the *Daily News* says, "that theological subjects of less technical and narrow order are becoming increasingly popular. The hovering of men's minds on the borderland between theology and Secularism is an interesting phenomenon of the day."

A Southwark parson claimed a vote as a lodger, specifying his rent as "services rendered in praying for family." The revising barrister took the joke, but disallowed the vote.

More "Providence" in India. Immense destruction has been done by the landslip at Darjeeling and Kurseong, and three hundred persons lost their lives.

Five of the children killed at Darjeeling were buried by the aid of three men of God, who took successive parts in the ceremony. Over the graves of the little victims school-children sang "Safe in the arms of Jesus." Evidently the landslip was a blessing, though the newspapers report it as a calamity.

"The sole survivor of the Lee family," says a Reuter telegram, "stated that when she saw that escape was impossible Vera made them all kneel and pray. While they were praying the house was overwhelmed." What an answer to prayer!

"Nothing more depressed missionaries abroad," said the Rev. Mr. Collier, of Reading, to the Baptist Assembly at Leeds, "more than the feeling that there was shortness of funds at home." We can quite believe it.

Sunday-school scholars, seven millions strong, are invited by the Baptists to subscribe a penny a week to missionary effort. This is quite the average of their weekly pocket money. We hope they will stick to apples, nuts, and even toffy, rather than worry their poor little souls about the conversion of the heathen.

Canon Dixon led a discussion at a meeting of the clergy of the Rural Deanery of Alnwick. Amongst the things deplored were the "lamentable desecration of Sunday" and the "contempt of sermons by the laity," who get them cut down to "a few minutes." It is really shocking. At this rate the clergy will soon have to advertise for honest and rational employment.

What is the ideal of the High Church clergy? The *Daily News* sums it up admirably: "To have what they want, and do what they like."

George Watkins, who committed suicide in Blackfriars railway tunnel, turns out to have been a most extraordinary miser. He was apparently a poor working man, but he had £450 in the Savings Bank, Consols to the value of £200, life policies, etc., amounting in the aggregate to something like £1,000. He was very religious, but no one could say why he had killed himself. Perhaps this fact explains it. A small box in his room was found to be filled with papers and scraps, covered with Biblical references to prophecies as to the end of the world. Perhaps old Prophet Baxter added the poor fellow's brains for him.

The Birmingham School Board has backed down on the question of the sale of literature at public meetings in Board schools. The prohibition is not to be general, but particular. In other words, the Board will exercise a censorship and practically issue licences. Of course, the Secularists will be ruled out by this pretty little arrangement. Happily, however—if it is happily—the Socialists are admitted within the pale of respectability.

Board School religion is perhaps a fine thing in its way, but what effect does it produce on the children's minds? According to all accounts, the little ones get into a frightful muddle. We have just heard of the case of a certain four-year-old child who came home from a Scripture lesson, and gave the result in this fashion. "O mamma," she said, "teacher's been telling us all about God this morning. He used to go a long way cutting wood, and they had tents made of skins, and they took 'em with 'em, and when it rained they put 'em up and went inside." Mamma asked "Who went inside?" and the child answered: "Well—you know mamma—God and his wife." Fancy wasting a child's brightest morning hour in this ridiculous manner!

The "Atheist Shoemaker" affair has re-arisen at Bristol. A Christian open-air speaker held forth upon it, and was requested by Mr. Lang to furnish proof of the story. The said speaker applied to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes for the proof, and obtained it in the shape of a letter, which he read out triumphantly in public. This precious epistle was from Mr. Hughes's secretary, and ran as follows: "Dear Sir,—In reference to your letter, I have no doubt that the Atheist Shoemaker referred to was converted to Christ." Such is proof in Christian circles. Evidently we shall have to reprint our exposure of that Atheist Shoemaker story. Of course it is also an exposure of Mr. Hughes. But we can't help that.

Anent the discussion on whether curates should not be discouraged from marriage, the *Daily News* observes that, if many curates have not enough money to keep one wife, it is because many of their superiors have money which would be enough to keep three."

The *Weekly Dispatch* has an article on "Human Religion: Its Professors Caring More for Human Weal than for Text-slitting." It suggests that religion is becoming humanised, and that ministers are beginning to recognise that they have to perform higher duties than slinging texts and bidding people to capitulate their souls to them "or be among the brimstone-damned."

One cannot accuse the Rev. R. C. Fillingham, vicar of Hexton, of ambiguity of speech. He has recently been denouncing "idolatry in the Church of England." He declared "the worship of a senseless cake of flour and water to be even more degrading than the worship of an idol made in the image of man."

The Pope recently lost his "Fisherman's" ring, one of the priceless possessions of the Christian Church, which has been handed down by Pontiff to Pontiff, and kissed, admired, and revered by monarchs, saints, and the great ones of the earth throughout the ages. It was found by an attendant, who handed it back to Leo XIII., by whom he was thanked and promised a reward. Next day he was sent for by the treasury, and presented with twelve shillings!

Ancient *Freethinker* jokes turn up after many years in the ordinary Press. One of them is going the round just now. "Why did the priest and the Levite pass by on the other side?" asks a parson, and a boy replies, "Because he was robbed already."

The doctrines [of Jesus] have no hold on ordinary believers—are not a power to their minds. They have a habitual respect for the sound of them, but no feeling which spreads from the words to the things signified and forces the mind to take them in, and make them conform to the formula. When ever conduct is concerned, they look around for Mr. A. and B. to direct them how far to go in obeying Christ.—John Stuart Mill.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, October 8, Secular Hall, Leicester: 11, "After the Dreyfus Affair: the Church and the Republic"; 6.30, "The Dream of God."  
 October 15, Manchester.

**To Correspondents.**

**MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.**—October 8 and 15, Athenæum Hall, London; 22, Hull. November 5, Aberdeen; 12, Liverpool; 19, Camberwell. December 10 and 17, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

**W. P. BALL.**—Thanks for your ever-welcome cuttings.

**H. MCGUINNESS.**—See "Sugar Plums."

**H. POYSER.**—We take your letter in the same friendly spirit that prompts you to write, but we fancy you have put rather a strained interpretation on the P.S.(2) of the Freethought Publishing Company's prospectus. There was no sort of intention of putting any kind of pressure on small shareholders. The invitation to pay up shares in full was only addressed to those who could do so conveniently. No one is bound to pay beyond the legal rate, and we cheerfully and thankfully admit that working-men who take a share or two, which they perhaps cannot too well afford, ought not to be harassed. We shall not harass them, anyhow. At the same time, we believe that scores, probably hundreds, can take a share or two if they would, who have not yet shown any disposition to move in the matter. Maybe we shall hear from them presently. Let us hope so.

**A. WALBANK.**—See "Acid Drops."

**W. H. SELLORS.**—In applying for one share, before the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, was formed, you omitted to give your address. Kindly forward it at once. There is 10s. to your credit.

**HARRY WRIGHT.**—See paragraph. Freethinkers should lose no opportunity of introducing their principles in the general press.

**S. J. ROSE.**—We shall be pleased to give you advice, at any time, on the matter you refer to. With regard to shares in the new Company, you will be in time later on, if the present moment is unfavorable. No doubt, as you say, it would be easy to earn a much larger income outside the Freethought cause; but we counted the cost of our apostleship long ago, and are never likely to turn back.

**X. L.**—You are quite right. The Catholic Church sings small in England, and talks about toleration, simply because it is weak, and cannot do otherwise. If it were powerful here, it would act as it does in France, in Austria, and even in Spain. It purrs like a domestic cat when it must, and roars like a tiger when it can.

**P. SHAGHNESSY.**—We cannot see our way to advertising Glasgow meetings, gratuitously unless we are notified of them by the local Society.

**JAMES NEATE.**—Pleased to hear that Mr. F. A. Davies addressed a good meeting in Victoria Park on Sunday, in spite of the inclement weather.

**C. T. BROOKS.**—You did not read it in the *Freethinker*. There is no such text in the Bible.

**G. L. MACKENZIE.**—Accept our best thanks for the Ingersoll drawing, and convey our sincere compliments to your daughter on her admirable work.

**S. A. BENDIT.**—We don't mean to waste our time in the manner suggested. It is simply silliness to object that the Board of Directors of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, are Mr. Foote's friends. What else could any sane person expect? Why should he invite the co-operation of his enemies? His "friends" are sufficiently well known to the Freethought party. We say the Freethought party, as there is really no other.

**THOMAS SHORE.**—Thanks for the reference.

**JAMES H. WATERS.**—Received. Hope to use it shortly.

We hear that some copies of last week's *Freethinker* did not contain a Prospectus, etc., of the new Company, probably through their being dropped out by newsagents. We therefore beg to remind our readers that copies of the Prospectus, with Application Forms for Shares, can be obtained post free from the Company's secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 377 Strand, London, W.C.

**YARMOUTH AND BIRMINGHAM.**—Too late, just as we go to press.

**PAPERS RECEIVED.**—El Libre Pensamiento—Freidenker—Blue Grass Blade—Progressive Thinker—Huddersfield Examiner—Public Opinion—Yorkshire Post—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Humanity—Torch of Reason—Ethical World—Young Oxford—Two Worlds—Boston Investigator—Bradford Observer—Truthseeker (New York)—Liberator—Morpeth Herald—Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper—Sydney Bulletin—Sentinel.

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

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

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

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.

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

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.

**Special.**

**The New Company.**

FORMAL applications for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, are coming in very well. Of course one did not expect a Lipton rush, but, at the present rate, most of those who gave promises will have redeemed them by the date of next week's *Freethinker*. We quite recognise that it is not always convenient to pay money at a few days' notice, and are prepared to wait even for weeks in some cases. But we hope there will be no laggards. All who intend to take Shares, and can do so at once, should try to avoid unnecessary delay, as the Company wants to get to work as soon as possible. I make a personal appeal to all my readers. Many who have not promised support are able to give it. Some, indeed, have given it already; but a much larger number are holding back, and I ask them to come forward. This is not one man's battle; it is the battle of the whole party.

A considerable proportion of the applicants for Shares have paid up one half straight away. Others have paid up the whole amount. Where this can be done without inconvenience, it is the best thing to do. But I wish it to be distinctly understood that payment in full is neither obligatory nor expected. The amount legally payable is only 2s. 6d. per Share on application, and 5s. on allotment, with a subsequent 2s. 6d. on the last day of December. This gives plenty of time to all who can afford to take Shares at all.

Next week I shall probably be in a position to indicate what the Company means to do in the immediate future. The Board of Directors do not intend to crawl along in an old-fashioned style. They will act judiciously, but also with enterprise and vigor.

In the meantime it is to be hoped that every Freethinker will ask himself the plain question, "What can I do?" and go and do it. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of investment. Let this project be not only a success, but a great success, and, if possible, an immediate success.

G. W. FOOTE.

**Sugar Plums.**

THE Athenæum Hall was crowded on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Boers and Britishers: Another Christian Quarrel." The audience seemed intensely interested from beginning to end, and a great burst of applause greeted the peroration, in which the lecturer bade the friends of peace and progress to keep up a heart of hope for the future, in spite of the fact that civilisation was still but a thin veneer over the solid substance of inherited barbarism.

Mr. Foote lectures twice to-day (Oct. 8) in the Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester; in the morning on "After the Dreyfus Affair: or the Future of France," and in the evening on "The Dream of God." Both subjects should attract large audiences.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured twice last Sunday in Sheffield. Despite the excessive rain—it poured the whole of the day in torrents—he had capital audiences and an enthusiastic reception, it being his first appearance in Sheffield since his late severe illness. Five miners walked fourteen miles through the wet to hear the lectures. The local paper, the *Independent*, gave brief reports of both lectures. Of the lecture on Dreyfus, it says it was given to "a large and very highly appreciative audience." It "was not only instructive—it was entertaining." Referring to the lecture on Colonel Ingersoll, the report states that it "was attentively followed throughout and duly appreciated."

This evening (Oct. 8) Mr. Watts occupies the platform of the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, taking for his subject, "The God of War and the Goddess of Peace." This should prove an interesting topic in these "warlike times."

Mr. C. Cohen has been debating and lecturing in South Wales. The two-nights' debate was well attended, and thoroughly successful from the Secularists' point of view. The local "saints" are in high spirits over the affair. The lecture at New Tredegar on "Secularism" drew a large meeting, which was quite orderly throughout, in spite of the opposition of a knot of local preachers gifted with more lungs than brains.

The Libraries Committee, West Ham, do not agree with the N.S.S. Branch that a second copy of the *Freethinker* is wanted. We did not suppose they would, but we thank the Branch for moving in the matter.

As it was not possible to arrange for any more Sunday Freethought Demonstrations this season, the West Ham friends were unavoidably disappointed. Mr. Foote has promised, however, to deliver a free indoor lecture at West Ham on some convenient week-night, and this will probably serve the turn as well.

Mr. Joseph Symes's *Liberator* (Melbourne) for August 26 is just to hand. It contains several items reproduced from the *Freethinker*. Mr. Symes is back again and lecturing in the Hall of Science, and his bigoted opponents seem to have renewed their activity. The windows of the Hall have been repeatedly smashed, and this time it is supposed to be the work of Papists. Fortunately Mr. Symes is not as easily smashed as his windows are.

Mr. Harry Wright contributes an article on "The Atheism of Shakespeare" to *Club Life*, a journal which circulates pretty widely in London and other clubs. The article is well-written, and should do good in non-Freethought circles.

The Camberwell Branch held its first conversazione for the present season on Sunday evening. It was a very successful gathering, about two hundred persons being present. This afternoon (Oct. 8) the Branch co-operates in a protest meeting on Peckham Rye against the London County Council's prohibition of the sale of literature.

The *Buxton Herald*, in a notice of "Bob" Ingersoll, says that "His position towards religion was very much strengthened by the loftiness of his character and the stainlessness of his private life. He was beloved to an extraordinary degree by all who knew him intimately."

The Derby Christians who mobbed Mr. Percy Ward went about saying that Secularism was dead in the town. To prove the contrary, the N.S.S. Branch organised a fresh series of meetings. Mr. Willie Dyson began on September 17 with two open-air lectures, which were very well attended. Mr. C. Cohen followed on September 21 and 22, lecturing in the Co-operative Hall, and being in first-rate form. Mr. Ward paid his return visit on the following Sunday, addressing two meetings in the Market Place, numbering several hundreds. Instead of Secularism being dead in Derby, its activity is causing a flutter in Christian circles, and the Christian Evidence people are cleaning their weapons—which want it.

Mr. J. Keast, Bristol, reports that he has addressed three good meetings at the Horsefair. An encouraging feature of these meetings was the presence of many young men, who seemed genuinely interested in the proceedings.

During the Dreyfus court-martial the Generals, who stuck at nothing, broadly hinted that Colonel Picquart was no better than he should be, and that his conduct while at the head of the Intelligence Department was worse than unsatisfactory. Colonel Picquart, in his firm and quiet way, immediately sent a polite letter to the Minister of War asking that an inquiry should be made into these charges. Well, the inquiry has been made, and General Galliffet announces that after investigation he finds that there is no ground for the least suspicion of Colonel Picquart's integrity.

### How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.

### "The Intelligent Zulu."

It was an unfortunate day for the Church of England and the Church of Christ generally, when J. W. Colenso was sent out to South Africa as Bishop of Natal. For if Colenso had not been "called" there, he would never have thought of translating the Bible into Zulu, and, consequently, may have remained to his dying day insufficiently acquainted with the Blessed Book to have fully appreciated its many beautiful barbarities and sublime impossibilities. But, apart from this, it is evident that the Church had chosen a wrong man. We learn that his favorite writers, up to then, had been Maurice and Martineau. Such reading could not breed a humble and docile servant of the Church. Worse than that, he had an antipathy to the cheerful sentiments of Watts' hymns, and actually had given up all belief in a material hell. Can we wonder at a man who exhibited such deplorable traits as these turning out any other than that "heathen man and a publican" of later days.

Whilst making the translation referred to, Colenso was assisted by a Zulu servant. This "intelligent native," as Colenso called him, really appears to have had a good share of sagacity and common sense. When reading aloud the story of the Flood, our dusky friend chimes in: "Is all that true?" Such pertinency would shock even a bishop. It disturbed Colenso, but the climax came one day when the Zulu servant actually takes exception to some of the language set forth in the Bible as coming from the lips of Deity, and emphatically refuses to believe the Book in which the same is chronicled. Ye gods! a pretty picture.

Now, with the normal cleric on such an occasion, such sentiments would have brought forth terrific reproof. "Do you not know," would have been argued in effect, "that the most enlightened persons in our and other countries have never found anything but intense sublimity in such passages? Then what more befits a benighted Zulu than to knuckle down to his superiors, and to apologise for ever having entertained such blasphemy?" Then he would be reproofed as being "righteous over-much," and a few tactful remarks made as to a God that loves a soul who believes in spite of difficulties, and to whom unbelief is the one unpardonable sin. The closure would be applied effectually by reference to the dreadful fate reserved for the unbelieving, and the premium on credulity in the shape of eternal bliss. The odds would then be on that Zulu's Christianity being an appreciable quantity.

We have learned quite sufficient of Colenso, however, to know that this would not be his attitude. When a man has given up a hot hell, it is proof that all his natural virtues have not been altogether stifled. Small wonder is it, then, that, instead of considering his servant's attitude as deserving of rebuke, he considered rather that there must be something radically wrong with a book which credited Deity with attributes that even a Zulu considered revolting.

Whether this incident was directly the cause of Colenso's critical examination of the Bible, it is, of course, impossible to say; but that it was one of its factors, and a very large factor, cannot be denied. At any rate, the Bishop of Natal determined to take in hand an impartial and scientific examination of the Pentateuch. He had only one special faculty to keep him in this task. He was a mathematician. Some of us probably know the name Colenso as that of the author of a disagreeable "Arithmetic" and "Algebra." Well, Colenso fully appreciated the fact of two and two making four, and further than that; but he had sufficient temerity to believe that not even reason, assisted by faith, could disturb these relations. That, no doubt, is where he got astray. Guided by his mathematical aptitude into a system of criticism as precise and accurate as could be wished, he sat down to his work, and when he rose again he had discovered "that the books of the Pentateuch contain such plain contradictions, and involve such remarkable impossibilities, that they cannot be regarded as true narratives of actual, historical matters of fact." Such things, of course, had been said before. But then, by infidels. The Christian who allowed himself to be influenced by unbelievers must have been a very poor specimen indeed. But these doctrines from a real

live bishop! What else was it but base treachery? The consequence was that when the first part of *The Pentateuch Critically Examined* saw the light, with these conclusions embodied therein, a howl went up to heaven—a howl of a people mightily offended.

Nowadays, similar proclamations, no matter from whom, would hardly elicit more than a squeak. But it was a very different England in 1864 from what it is to-day. Then bibliolatry was rampant. The Bible was practically universally believed to be the "unerring word of the living God." Clergymen saw the uselessness of a revelation if such a position were abandoned—that is one of the points in which they rose superior to the compromising gentlemen of the present day—and, as for the laity, they recognised the virtue of believing as much as possible, even more strongly than they do now. It was amongst such a people that Colenso's work fell, with the inevitable result which has overtaken all those who have ventured to ruffle orthodox susceptibilities, that it was the signal for reckless and unscrupulous invective being heaped on his head. The halo had departed from Colenso; henceforward he was regarded as proper game for any pietist to exercise his denunciatory powers against. Bishop Colenso's action also alienated some of his best friends, even including Maurice.

He was had up for trial at Cape Town by the Bishop of that place. It was here he was declared to be "a heathen man and a publican," and was deprived of his living; but the ceremony was an illegal one, and Colenso treated their pronouncements with contempt. After this trial he paid a visit to England. Whilst here, we learn he was invited to express his views at the Hall of Science, which invitation was actually accepted; but that such action would be responsible for a still greater outburst of orthodox fury against him, which it would be ungenerous to allow him to undergo.

All this time, of course, his book was receiving great attention. Replies were being circulated broadcast. The story of the intelligent native was ridiculed to the high heavens. The following lines went the rounds of the press:—

To Natal, where savage men so  
Err in faith and badly live,  
Forth from England went Colenso,  
To the heathen light to give.  
But behold the issue awful!  
Christian, vanquished by Zulu,  
Says Polygamy is lawful,  
And the Bible isn't true.

The statement as to polygamy was, of course, incorrect, but, as Holyoake observes, "as near to the truth as orthodoxy generally gets first effort."

The necessity of some counter-action was impressed on the clergy by the success of Colenso's work. One result of this was the *Speaker's Commentary*, a huge work compiled by various divines, specially given out to confute Colenso. No possibility of his being right was ever entertained, it being consequently as pure a piece of special pleading as ever saw the light. And many recognised this. "Your scholars are making themselves the laughter of all Europe," said one, and apologies for verse were again indulged in:—

The Bishops all have sworn to shed their blood  
To prove 'tis true the hare doth chew the cud;  
O Bishops, Doctors, and Divines, beware!  
Weak is the faith that hangs upon a hair!

Of all the other replies that went out against Colenso, none of them were marked by that careful and impartial weighing of the evidences which is necessary to arrive at a true decision. Orthodoxy, as was to be expected, pursued those time-honored tactics of searching for errors in Hebrew, indulging in personalities, and other delightfully illogical methods. And Colenso perceived the unfairness of the treatment he was being subjected to. Hear his plaint: "It is painful to me how little love of truth there is among those from whom one hoped most."

Another outcome of the fluttering in the clerical doves was the forwarding of a round robin to Colenso, signed by all the English bishops (save one), asking him to resign; but, in view of certain recent ecclesiastical decisions in English law courts, he considered himself justified in remaining at his post; besides, as he honestly expressed in one of his letters, the prospect of commencing life again at his age was not an alluring one. A

declaration was also prepared, and signed by about 10,000 clergymen, to the effect that the Bible, from cover to cover, was the Word of God, and that the punishment in the next world was everlasting. If anything deserves to go down to history, that does. Let posterity know the fact that ten thousand presumably intelligent men showed their eagerness at this date to testify to their sincere belief in that deadly sarcasm on deity exhibited in the Old Testament and the almighty devil of the New, whose peculiar idea of justice is that a finite offence should be visited with infinite punishment.

Amidst all this hubbub, Colenso quietly wrote on till he had completed the seven volumes on the Pentateuch. In manner "patiently adamant," as Ruskin termed it, he stuck to his guns; his conviction, that what he was writing and had written was the truth, affording him that stimulus which enabled him to treat composedly the murmurs of multitudes. For what Colenso went through was no trifling persecution. "He was assailed," said Dean Stanley in 1880, "by scurrilous and unscrupulous invective, unexampled in the controversy of this country, and almost in the history, miserable as it is, of religious controversy itself."

If Colenso is remembered to-day, it is chiefly through his Biblical criticism. It was to the Pentateuch that Colenso had directed his critical faculties, and the results of his criticism were a complete upheaval of orthodox notions. Amongst other things, the idea of its Mosaic authorship was shown to be utterly untenable. Moses himself was an unhistorical character; Joshua entirely mythical. The popular idea of Biblical chronology was completely dispelled. The Book of Chronicles was not an historical narrative, but a complete fiction, put together for a special purpose. These were some of the conclusions arrived at by a purely internal criticism, by comparisons and deductions drawn from the plain texts of the books themselves. And when we have to boot the complete opposition of Biblical narrations to the plain facts of science, almost every branch of science coming into contact with them, then we can realise what criticism has done with the old book. Shown to be unreliable in every particular, not only contradicting scientific facts, but contradicting itself, the person who stands to-day for the inspiration of the Scriptures has to throw to the winds any shred of reason or common sense that he may possess. He must of necessity dogmatise on the untrustworthiness of the logical method, and on modern science and reason being but forms of alluring temptation to the believer. All this sacrifice has to be made, and for what end? To stand up for an oracle which pictures nothing less than a hideous caricature of deity, with attributes revolting to the moral sense of any average individual.

But everything is militating against any return to the pristine glory of that pernicious superstition, bibliolatry; that bibliolatry which found a virtue in burning the witch and heretic—in keeping the slave in fetters. And, in helping substantially to shatter this fetish, the name of Bishop Colenso should not be forgotten. As a man who faced brutal offensiveness and the fiercest of acrimony for the sake of his convictions, he is worthy of the respect of all those who are searchers for truth, and who hold it a duty to proclaim their conclusions, cost what it may.

And we should not forget "the intelligent native."  
RUSTICUS.

## Most Unnatural History.

THOMAS CARLYLE, probably prompted by an unusually severe attack of dyspepsia, once called Man (with a capital M) a "two-forked radish." The term, it must be confessed, was more insulting than accurate. It would not, for instance, have won the approval of that eminent scientist, Charles Darwin, or even of doubting Thomas Huxley. And yet Carlyle erred in good company. If Jehovah-Jireh—who, it is alleged, inspired, or wrote, the Bible—could not accurately recollect such an elementary fact as that the whale was not a fish, although he had made a few millions of them, there is every excuse for the Sage of Chelsea.

Curiously enough, our Heavenly Pa was always a most inaccurate writer. He was as careless of "facts"

as the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. He could, on occasion, frankly contradict himself, and, when bankrupt of ideas, simply copied a passage he had written elsewhere in the same book, and filled the vacancy. And he very frequently said the thing which was not. But his crowning glory was his knowledge of natural history, which was both peculiar and extensive. His mathematics would disgrace a fourth-form schoolboy, his geology was very stupid, his history was almost entirely imaginary; but his zoology is almost too funny for words.

A certain Mr. William Wordsworth has told us that—

Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her.

And this, dear reader, reminds us that there is such an astonishing discrepancy between the zoological conclusions of earnest students of nature and the so-called science of the First Person of the Christian Trinity. The consideration of this difference affords us material for a genial discussion, entirely free from the acrimony so often imported into the writings of theologians. In natural history proper not the veriest tyro, the most myopic bungler, could confound the hare with the ruminants. Yet the Creator of Linnæus twaddles about clean beasts and dirty beasts; the Maker of Cuvier blundered about the hare chewing the cud. It was reserved for worms of the dust like Buffon, Lamarck, and Darwin to clear out the Augean stable of the Divine ignorance, and to create the science anew.

Æsop and Bidpai, Phœdrus and La Fontaine, have shown us that everything talks, from a potato-bug to a hairdresser. Even the taciturn tapeworm unfolds itself when in liquor. There appears to be an international Volapuk. Surely the Ancient of Days could have effected the capture of the various animals as simply as we catch sparrows by salting their tails. A few minutes' conversation would then have verified the accuracy or otherwise of His extremely entertaining Unnatural History.

In spite of George Meredith's remark about the "Homeric Laughter of the Gods," Jehovah has no sense of humor. Our Gawd is rather the cause of laughter in his creatures. He is as silly and as simple as a spring curate. Really, the descriptions could not be improved upon for unconscious fun. "A cat is an animal," once wrote a very juvenile writer, "but our cat is a beast." Similarly, in the Sacred Zoological Gardens all the animals are monsters. Where else can you find a talking snake, a lodging-house whale, or a pigeon co-respondent? Where else are the fiery serpents, the dragons, the cockatrices, and our old acquaintance, "the worm that never dies"? Where, oh where, other than in the Holy Bible, are the be-devilled porkers, the four-legged fowls, the unicorns, the cherubim, and the eloquent ass of Balaam, to say nothing of the menagerie of the Apocalypse? Among such a collection it is remarkable that cats are nowhere mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. Maybe the Third Person of the Trinity, that Holy Dove, had a mortal objection to the animal. For the cat is, above all things, spiteful. And the Holy Ghost was such a Gay Dog!

M.

### Ambrose Bierce (Dod Grile) Defends Ingersoll against Professor Harry Thurston Peck.

[Professor Peck's attack on Ingersoll appeared in the *Bookman*; Ambrose Bierce's reply appeared in the *New York Journal* of September 10.]

MR. HARRY THURSTON PECK is a scholar, a Professor of Latin in a leading college, an incisive, if not very profound, thinker, and a charming writer. He is a capable editor too, and conducts our foremost literary magazine, the *Bookman*, in which, as compelled by the nature of the business, he concerns himself mightily with the little men capering nimbly between yesterday's begetter and to-morrow the destroyer.

Sometimes a larger figure strides into the field of his attention, but not for long, nor with any very notable accretion of magnitude. The lenses are not adjusted for large objects, which, accordingly, seem out of focus, and give no true image. So the observer turns gladly to his ephemera, and we who read him are the gainers by his loyalty to his habit, and to his public that fixed it upon him. But in the current number of his magazine he so far transcends his limitations as to review the work of a pretty large man—the late Colonel Ingersoll. The result is, to many of Professor Peck's admirers,

of whom I am one, profoundly disappointing. In both spirit and method it suggests the question, Of what real use are the natural gifts, the acquirements and opportunities that do little for the understanding? Surely one must sometimes dissent from the generally accepted appraisal of "the things we learn in college," when one observes a man like Professor Peck—a collegian to his finger-tips—feeling and thinking after the fashion of a circuit-riding preacher in South-western Missouri.

Let us examine some of his utterances about the great Agnostic. Speaking of the purity of his personal character, his critic says:—

"No one has questioned this; and, even had it been questioned, the fact could not be pertinent to our discussion. Indeed, it is not easy to perceive just why his private virtues have been so breathlessly brought forward and detailed with so much strenuous insistence; for surely husbands who are faithful, fathers who are loving, and friends who are generous and sympathetic, are not so rare in this our world as to make of them phenomena to be noted in the annals of the age."

It seems to me entirely obvious why Ingersoll's friends and supporters have persisted in putting testimony on these matters into the forefront of the discussion; and entirely relevant such testimony is. Churchmen and religionists of all ages and countries have affirmed the necessary and conspicuous immorality of the irreligious. No notable unbeliever has been safe from the slanders of the pulpit and the Church newspapers. And in this country to-day ninety-nine out of every one hundred "professing" Christians hold that pure and personal morality has no other permanent basis than the Bible.

In this they are both foolish and wise—foolish because it is so evidently untrue, and wise because to concede its untruth would be to abandon the defence of religion as a moral force. If men can do good without religion, and scorning religion, then it is not religion that makes men good; and if religion does not do that it is of no practical value, and one may as well be with it as without it, so far as concerns one's relations with one's fellow men. We are told that Christianity is something more than a body of doctrine; that it is a system of ethics, having a divine origin; that it has a close and warm relation to conduct, generating elevated sentiments and urging to a noble and unselfish life. If, in support of that view, it is relevant to point to the blameless lives of its Founder and His followers, it is equally relevant in contradiction to point to the blameless lives of its opponents. If Professor Peck finds "it not easy to perceive" this, he might profitably make some cautious experiments in discernment on a big, red Pennsylvania barn.

Professor Peck tries to be fair; he concedes the honesty of Ingersoll's unbelief, and acknowledges that "it is entitled to the same respect that we accord to the unshaken faith of other men."

"Indeed, for the purpose of the moment we may even go still further, and assume that he was right; that Christianity is in truth a superstition, and its history a fable; that it has no hold on reason, and that the book from which it draws part its teaching and its inspiration is only an inconsistent chronicle of old-world myths. Let us assume all this, and let us still inquire what final judgment should be passed upon the man who held these views, and strove so hard to make them universal."

Well, Professor Peck is not called upon to make any such concessions and assumptions. As counsel for the defence of Ingersoll, he is amply willing to make admissions as he, and, "for the sake of argument," as the meaningless saying goes, to confess that the religion attacked by my client is indubitably true. His justification depends in no degree upon the accuracy of his judgment, but upon his honest confidence in it; and that is unquestioned: that is no assumption; it is affirmed and conceded. If he believed that in these matters he was right, and a certain infinitesimal minority of mankind, wrong, he would be merely his duty as a gentleman to speak his views, and to strive, as occasion offered or opportunity served, to make them universal."

In our small personal affairs there is such a thing as righteous suppression of the truth—even such a thing as commendable lying. Under certain circumstances, a great deal of convictions is as hateful and mischievous as under most circumstances dissimulation is. But in all the large matters of the mind—in philosophy, religion, science, art, and the like—a lesser service to the race than utterance of the truth as he thinks he sees it, leaving the result to whatever power may be, no man has a right to be content with having formed, for it is only so that truth is established. It was only so that Professor Peck's religion was enthroned upon the ruins of others—among them one so beautiful that, after centuries of effacement, its myths and memories still have a wonderful power, the hearts of scholars and artists of the last and conquering faith. Of that religion it might once have been said, in deprecation of St. Paul, as, in deprecation of Ingersoll, Professor Peck says of religion in general: "Its roots strike down into the very depth of human consciousness. They touch the heart, the sympathies, and the emotions. They lay strong hold on life itself, and they are

chords to which all being can be made to vibrate with a passionate intensity, which nothing else could call to life." I have said that Professor Peck tried to be fair. If he had altogether succeeded, he would have pointed out, not only that Ingersoll sincerely believed the Christian religion false, but that he believed it mischievous too, and that he was conscientiously persuaded that its devotees would be better off with no religion than with any. Had Professor Peck done that, he could have spared himself the trouble of writing, and many of his admirers the pain of reading, his variants of the ancient and discreditable indictment of the wicked incapable, who can "tear down," but not "build up." Agnosticism may be more than a mere negation. It may be, and in Ingersoll it was, a passionate devotion to Truth, a consecration of self to her service.

Of such a one as he it is incredibly false to say that he can only "destroy," and "has naught to give." As well and as truthfully could that be said of one who knocks away the chains of a slave and goes his way, imposing no others. One may err in doing so. There are as many breeds of men as there are of dogs and horses; and, as a cur cannot be taught to retrieve or herd sheep, or a roadster to hunt, so there are human tribes unfit for liberty. One's zeal in liberation may be greater than one's wisdom, but faith in all mankind is at least an honorable error, even when manifested by hammering at the shackles of the mind. What Ingersoll thought he had to "give" was Freedom; and that, I take it, is quite as positive and real as its opposite. The reproach of "tearing down" without "building up" is valid against nobody but an idolatrous iconoclast. Ingersoll was different.

(To be concluded.)

**Sanctified Shufflers; or, Signless Christians.**

"And these signs shall follow them that believe."—*Jesus.*  
 The modern signless Christians say,  
 When forced by facts to stand at bay,  
 That Jesus "kept his word" divine  
 By sending "signs" in *Auld Lang Syne*;  
 So, none is *now* expected.  
 But still, they say, their Lord divine  
 Sends "grace," although he's stopped its "sign";  
 Of course!—a "sign" a *fact* would be,  
 And facts with Christians don't agree;  
 By facts are frauds detected.  
 They say that "signs" are seen *no more*,  
 Because they'd "signs" in *days of yore*;  
 But people *still* are "saved," they hold,  
 Though folk were "saved" in *days of old*—  
 A funny contradiction!  
 No outward "sign" they show, but yet  
 They say the inward "grace" they get;  
 It seems—although it seems absurd—  
 That Jesus "keeps" but *half* his word,  
 But *half* of his prediction!  
 Ideas may be changed and mixed,  
 But properties of things are fixed;  
 A thing that acts not as before  
 Is *something else*, nor less, nor more;  
 A thing's *eye* self-consistent;  
 "A thing is what it *does*"; and "Faith"  
 Does "miracles," the "Savior" saith;  
 But "miracles" are *never* done  
 By any person 'neath the sun;  
 So "Faith" is *non-existent!*  
 G. L. MACKENZIE.

**Book Chat.**

*Paradise Lost* a double? is the inquiry of the *Daily Chronicle*, which mentions that in 1549 Dr. John Ponet translated and published for the first time a tragedy by a Frenchman, Bernardino Orchino. "In substance it is an attack upon the Roman Catholic Church, but its chief interest is its curious parallelism to *Paradise Lost*. The original is apparently quite unknown, and Ponet's translation must have been made from a manuscript copy. Miss C. E. Plumtre has edited this translation, and Mr. Richards is about to publish it."

Mr. H. S. Salt, James Thomson's biographer, and honorary secretary of the Humanitarian League, is the author of the *Logic of Vegetarianism* (Ideal Publishing Union). This neat volume is cheap at the price of one shilling. It contains, in substance, pretty nearly all that can be said against meat-eating, and in favor of a vegetal diet. Mr. Salt is a persuasive and vivacious. His style is always scholarly, and in this instance is particularly so. Those who do not find him convincing will at least find him entertaining. Here and there, perhaps, he presses his argument too far, as when he speaks with infinite disgust of half-putrid flesh being sold for food, forgetting that rotten strawberries find their way into "respectable" jam-factories.

Of course it is a mistake to argue from the accidents of case. On the whole, however, it must be allowed that Mr. Salt sticks in the main to the essentials of his subject; and we heartily commend it to the attention of all who care to learn what Vegetarianism has to say for itself.

\* \* \*

The October number of the *Literary Guide* opens with an article by Mr. Joseph McCabe, who points out that the Church in France is seeking to regain its lost power by political means, and that this is the real explanation of its policy throughout the course of the Dreyfus affair. This article is well-written, interesting, and suggestive. Another excellent article is the one by G. Dawson Baker on "The Claim of the Sabbatarian." Readable paragraphs and book-reviews add to the value of this publication. The usual quarterly supplement, on "The Religion of Charles Darwin," is from the capable pen of Mr. F. J. Gould. By the way, Mr. Gould is wrong in saying that Darwin "cared nothing for books of poetry." The great man read Shakespeare at one time with pleasure, but many years afterwards, when intense absorption in science had deadened his aesthetic faculties through want of exercise, he picked up Shakespeare again and found him "intolerably dull." Darwin himself gave the quite correct explanation of this atrophy of his poetical taste. It was simply the effect of disuse. Those who do not read poetry habitually, even if they begin with a taste for it, will end by finding that they have *no* taste for it. But this is equally true of every branch of aesthetics.

\* \* \*

Dr. Charles Féré, physician at the Bicêtre, is the author of an important work which has been translated into English by Dr. Robert Park, of Glasgow, and published by the University Press, Watford. The *Pathology of the Emotions* is not a work which we can pretend to judge. This, however, is certain and obvious, that it bears marks on every page of profound personal research and wide special study. Moreover, it is intensely interesting, both as to its facts and to their treatment. Dr. Park's "Preface" is outspoken. He hopes that such work as Féré's will "ultimately fructify in improved legislative and educational methods," both of which must be very imperfect "so long as the minds of men are over-ridden, or even over-shadowed, by the ideas emerging from a metaphysical or supernaturalistic philosophy." We may add that Féré, in his last chapter, throws a medical glance on criminology and on the excitable tendencies of modern democracy. He declares that all crowds are dangerous, as it is not reason which is appealed to or emerges in them, but mere passion, and generally the lowest passion. He therefore concludes that the right of public meeting is really pernicious to individual and public liberty. But he seems to overlook the fact, which has been abundantly clear in France of late, that the press can appeal to the unchastened instincts and passions of the mob, quite as effectively as any demagogic orator. Rochefort and Drumont are not public speakers, but they are nevertheless a match for any Cleon. The price of this valuable treatise is fifteen shillings.

\* \* \*

*The Claim of the New Testament*, by Donovan (G. Dawson Baker), is a sixpenny pamphlet published by Stewart & Co. The author addresses himself to plain people who have to work for their livings, and who may want to know the plain facts of the case. And he does state the plain facts of the case in a way that is easy to follow; and when the reader has got to the end he must see that the New Testament is no more God's work than it is his own. We regard this as a most excellent and useful propagandist pamphlet. The author's style and tone are manly. He wastes no time on mere verbiage or fanciful rhetoric, but goes straight to the questions at issue, and deals with them firmly and vigorously. We hope this publication will be extensively circulated.

**Correspondence.**

**A MEETING OF SPANISH FREETHINKERS.**

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I gather from the *Imparcial* (the organ of Spanish Liberals) the following particulars of a meeting held on the 12th ult. at Gijon:—A meeting, composed of Freethinkers and Republicans, took place at the Jovellanos Theatre, and was so densely crowded that a number of persons could not obtain admission. The speeches were characterised by the eloquence and the openness with which the speakers denounced the present monarchy and its great ally, the clergy. Among the orators were Emilio Pedrero, a popular Freethought lecturer, and Madame Belen Sarraza, the able editress of *La Consciencia* (Free Mind), who received a rare ovation. In her speech this lady compared Spain to a castle of cards, built upon a foundation of intrigue, ignorance, and superstition. A vote was passed vituperating the Catholic Congress recently held at Burgos, and the meeting also drew the attention of all Freethinkers to the necessity of rallying together and fighting fearlessly for "the good old cause." A musical *soirée* brought the interesting proceedings to a close.

F. MALIBRAN.

## 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 God of War and the Goddess of Peace."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Lyric Musical Comedy Co. in a musical play entitled "A Military Manœuvre."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The Originality of Jesus."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road): 8, W. C. Lyons.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. R. Macdonald, "Prayer."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Discussion Meeting—"Why do not more of the Numerous Dissidents from the Churches Join the Ethical Societies?"

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15, E. Pack.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Bradlaugh and Ingersoll."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30 and 7, E. Pack.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, Protest Meeting against L.C.C. Action *re* sale of literature.

S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): 11.15, Mr. Storrar. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, A lecture.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, W. Heaford.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards.

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, H. Courtney.

## COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): J. M. Robertson—11, "Clerical Influence in France and England"; 7, "The Feeling for Religion and the Feeling for Truth."

BRISTOL (in the Horse Fair): October 7, at 8, J. Keast, October 8, at 7, J. Keast, "Secularism."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Stanley Jones, "The Reaction in Modern Society."

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 7, A. Paul, "Kingdom Come!"

GATESHEAD (Co-operative Hall, Whitehall-road): C. Cohen—11, "The Crimes of Christianity"; 3, "Morality without Religion"; 7, "Humanity's Gain from Unbelief."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner—12, "Sunday"; 6.30, "Revenge."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): G. W. Foote—11, "After the Dreyfus Affair: the Church and the Republic"; 6.30, "The Dream of God."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. P. Ward—11, "The Impracticability of Socialism"; 3, "How Christianity has Cursed Humanity"; 7, "Why I am an Atheist"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, Mr. Sykes (F.R.M.S. Manchester Microscopical Society), "Natural Selection." Illustrated by lantern views and specimens.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Quarterly Meeting; 7, Musical and other Recitals, etc.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Business Meeting.

## Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 8, Gateshead.

R. P. EDWARDS, 9 Caxton-road, Shepherd's Bush.—October 8, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—October 8, Liverpool. 15, Birmingham. 22, Leicester. 29, Huddersfield. November 5, Birmingham. 12 and 19, Manchester 26, Birmingham. December 17, Birmingham.

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