

# THE Freethinker

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## COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL.

ROBERT GREEN INGERSOLL was born on August 11, 1833, at Dresden, in the State of New York. He was of Puritan stock. His father was a Congregational minister. Robert himself, however, did not take kindly to the opinions that were taught him. His boyhood was spent in Wisconsin and Illinois, where the family removed in 1843. He was set to study law, and when his term expired he opened a law office in Shawneetown, Illinois, in conjunction with his brother, Eben C. Ingersoll, who subsequently became a member of Congress. In 1857 they removed to Peoria, where Robert married. In 1860 he put up for Congress. It was the first and only time. His reputation for heresy ensured his defeat. During the civil war he raised the 11th Regiment of Illinois Cavalry, of which he was appointed colonel. He was in the hot battle of Shiloh and other engagements. In 1866 he was appointed Attorney-General for Illinois, and but for religious bigotry he would have been made Governor of the State. Being asked once how much his fine copy of Voltaire cost him, he replied: "I believe it cost me the Governorship of the State of Illinois." His political oratory was even then in great demand. In 1876, at the Republican Convention, when he proposed Blaine as candidate for the Presidency, his oratory was so overpowering that the opposition got the voting postponed till the following day. In 1877 he was offered the post of Minister to Germany, but a great storm of religious prejudice arose, and Ingersoll declined the post in order to spare the President. Employment in important law suits compelled his removal to Washington, whence he afterwards removed to New York. For many years he lectured chiefly on

Freethought to immense audiences in all parts of the country. He was an institution in himself. The clergy said he had a million followers. His family life was ideal, he was perfectly mated, and his home was an earthly paradise.



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN SHORTLY BEFORE HIS SUDDEN DEATH.

He had a host of friends, and he was the subject of innumerable stories. Piety slandered him because he was a Freethinker, but his reputation never suffered. People had only to look at him to see the folly of his libellers. He died of heart disease on Friday, July 21, 1899. His death was sudden and swift—as he would have wished it.

Colonel Ingersoll's body was cremated, and his ashes are preserved in a beautiful urn. Resolutions of sympathy poured in on Mrs. Ingersoll and the rest of the family from all parts of the world. The American papers were for some time full of the great Freethinker's death and funeral. Memorial meetings were held in many cities in the United States. The principal of these meetings was held at Peoria, where Ingersoll settled down after the war, where he married, and where his children were born. Men of all religious denominations united in doing honor to his memory as that of a great and noble citizen. Another noticeable meeting was that of the veterans of the regiment which Ingersoll commanded in the war. They spoke of him as one whom they all loved, and whom they were proud to follow.

A strong Committee has also been formed for the purpose of raising a Memorial at Peoria in the shape

of a statue of Ingersoll, and we hear that the appeal for subscriptions is eliciting a satisfactory response. But the greatest and best monument will be the complete edition of Ingersoll's writings, speeches, and lectures.

## Kruger's Psalms.

PROTESTANTS have always been specially fond of the Old Testament. This is particularly true of the Puritans. Their old sermons abound in allusions to Jewish history. Their preachers had the prophets by heart, and larded their discourses with texts from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and even from Habbakuk and Malachi. But their especial delight was in the Psalms. The fighting Puritans, who overturned the monarchy of Charles the First, and kept poor Charles the Second so many years from the quiet enjoyment of his wine and his mistresses at Whitehall and Hampton Court, were perpetually quoting what they considered the Psalms of David, but what is now known to have been the much later Hymn-Book of the Second Temple. Cromwell's soldiers sang psalms in their camp. He selected one for them preparatory to charging the Scotch army at Dunbar, and another by way of thanksgiving when the charge ended in one of the most complete and disastrous routs in the history of modern warfare. Since then the Psalms have lost something of their ancient glamor; partly because Puritanism has been shorn of a great deal of its strength, and all its predominance; and partly because their growing civilisation has made Englishmen look askance at some of the pious outpourings which are associated with the name of the murderous and adulterous Shepherd-King of Israel. What are sometimes called plainly, and quite justly, the Cursing Psalms are a disgrace to the Bible and a scandal to Christianity. This is really perceived even by apologists like the late Mr. Gladstone. It was amusing—though in a sense disgusting—to read his labored defence of those malignant and bloodthirsty outpourings.

When the Dutch went out to South Africa they took their Puritanism and their Bible with them. When we say their Bible we mean that the New Testament was bound up with the Old Testament, but it was the latter that they read, marked, and digested. It is not surprising, therefore, to find President Kruger relying on the words of the Blessed Book, and bidding his Boers to do the same. According to the newspaper reports, he has issued a circular urging his Generals to show more energy in the Transvaal cause. He quotes Psalm 33, from verse 7 to the end; also Psalm 89, verses 13 and 14. He says the British have fixed their faith in Psalm 83. He adds that he has searched the Bible, and cannot find any other mode which can be followed but to fight in the name of the Lord.

Let us look at these Psalms. Here are the two verses from Psalm 89:—

"13. Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand; and high is Thy right hand.

"14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before Thy face."

This is a sort of preliminary trumpet-blast, but the following four verses, selected from Psalm 33, are evidently intended to apply to the Boers:—

"12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He has chosen for His inheritance.

"16. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

"17. An horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

"20. Our soul waiteth for the Lord; He is our help and our shield."

Some months ago we said that the Boers, or rather the old-fashioned Boers upon whom Kruger has always relied, looked upon themselves as a sort of chosen people. The astute old Dopper President doesn't say as much, but it is delicately suggested by this reference. We are bound to say, though, that verse 17 should be read ironically. It is enough to make the most solemn Boer laugh on both sides of his face. No safety in a horse, forsooth! Why the pony is the Boer's best friend while fighting in a country like Natal. It is the pony that gives the Boer forces their mobility, and it is the pony that carries them off rapidly whenever they have had enough of an engagement. When the British cavalry get to work in larger numbers this advantage of the Boers will be largely counteracted. Meanwhile it is rather rough on the dear, docile, sure-footed Boer pony to sneer at him in the language of

David. If the ponies could only read this Psalm, they would stampede *en masse*, and where would the Boers be then?

Psalm 83 is hardly the one in which the British have fixed their faith. This is only Kruger's little joke. What he means is that Psalm 83 applies to the accursed British. Here are some verses from it:—

"3. They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones.

"4. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

"5. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against Thee.

"11. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb; yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

"12. Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

"13. O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

"15. So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

"16. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Thy name; O Lord.

"17. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame and perish."

Some of these verses are wonderfully apposite. The "nobles" are the officers, who have been picked off by the Boer sharpshooters; while the "princes" who want to take possession of God's property, and who ought to be disposed of like Zebah and Zalmunna, are presumably Rhodes and Jameson. "Persecute them with thy tempests" is an allusion to the transport ships that got into trouble. "Fill their faces with shame" is a reference to the British prisoners at Pretoria; while "Let them perish" alludes to the awful slaughter of British troops, and the miraculously small loss on the side of the Boers—according to the official reports in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. After this, who shall say the Bible is not inspired?

G. W. FOOTE.

## Christian Claims.

(Concluded from page 19.)

WE now conclude our brief refutation of the principal claims put forth on behalf of Christianity.

4. *That the Christian religion is the cause of human progress.* The fallacy of this claim is shown by the fact that the elements of modern progress are not to be found in the New Testament, and that when Christianity was at the zenith of its power all secular progress was comparatively unknown. It is quite unnecessary, in our opinion, to furnish evidence of the accuracy of the former of these two statements, inasmuch as we have frequently supplied it in these columns. The teachings ascribed to Christ are so contradictory, impracticable, and effeminate that they are useless for all progressive purposes. To put the matter in a few words, we thoroughly endorse the opinion of J. S. Mill that Christian morality "is, in many important points, incomplete and one-sided, and that, unless ideas and feelings, not sanctioned by it, had contributed to the formation of European life and character, human affairs would have been in a worse condition than they now are." Of course, it is not denied that Christianity has been useful to some. There are many who have been born amidst such unfortunate conditions, and who have received such imperfect training, that no incentive but the fear of punishment and the lapse of personal reward will induce them to avoid evil and do good. To individuals in this abnormal state Christianity possibly, for the time being, acts as medicine does upon those who are physically sick; still, the less they take of it the better. Restore the sick to a physically healthy condition, and medicine can be dispensed with. In like manner, raise the morally decrepit from their infirm conditions, and no artificial means will be necessary to stimulate them to live moral lives.

Our allegation, that the progress of the human race does not depend upon Christianity, is further proved by the historical facts that before its inception great civilizations obtained, and since its introduction individual and

national advancement have been commensurate with the practical decay of the Christian faith. Hence, during the present century—the most sceptical period of the Christian era—greater progress and more reforms have been achieved than were obtained through all the previous centuries since the alleged birth of Christ. If, for instance, Christianity were necessary to moral growth, it is only reasonable to suppose that the most Christian nations and times would be the most moral. But the history of Spain, Italy, and the Dark Ages proves the very opposite. As James Cotter Morison asks: "Do we find, as a matter of fact, that the Ages of Faith were distinguished by a high morality? Were they superior in this respect to the present age, which is nearly on all hands acknowledged not to be an age of faith? The answer must be in the negative. Taking them broadly, the Ages of Faith were emphatically ages of crime, of gross and scandalous wickedness, of cruelty, and, in a word, of immorality. And it is noteworthy that in proportion as we recede backward from the present age, and return into the Ages of Faith, we find that the crime and the sin become denser and blacker..... When all men believed and doubted not, we should have found, according to the Christian hypothesis, a godly world; devout people living always with the great Day of Judgment before their eyes, crushing down the lusts of the flesh, in view of the tremendous penalties prepared for those who indulged them. But we find nothing of the kind. On the contrary, we find a state of things to which our imaginations are scarcely able to do justice in these comparatively tame and moral days" (*The Service of Man*, pp. 118-19).

5. *That the mission of Christ was successful in its object.* The avowed purpose of the mission of Christ was to remove sin from the human race (John i. 29), to convert "all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15), and to secure unity among Christians (John xvii. 20-21). That this purpose has not been gained is quite evident from the present state of the world. So far from what the theologian terms sin having disappeared from our midst, there is more of it around us to-day than ever. We may well say, if "the Savior has come, whence comes salvation?" By-the-by, if Christ had succeeded in this part of his mission, it would have been rather unfortunate for the clergy, for in that case their occupation would have been gone. It might be really said that they live upon the sins of the world. Therefore, the failure of Christ has proved their success.

Equally ineffectual was Christ in propounding a scheme for converting the human race to a belief in the religion of the Cross. Christianity has now nearly a two thousand years' history. It has had everything in its favor—wealth, power, fashion, and the willing submission of the people—and yet it has failed to touch the hearts (to say nothing of the intellects) of more than an insignificant few of mankind. Foreign missions have *admittedly* proved unsuccessful, while at home the non-Christians are paramount. Mr. Joseph McCabe, in his recently-published work, *The Religion of the Twentieth Century*, makes the following statement, based upon the figures contained in a paper read by Prebendary Webb-Peploe at the Church Congress of 1899, held at the Albert Hall:

"We may safely take such statistics as a maximum estimate of the real actual influence of the Churches, and they tell a story of profound decline. There are not 2,000,000 communicants in the Church of England throughout the whole of England and Wales; there are still less communicants in the dissenting Churches of England and Wales. We may add—on the strength of information gleaned in our own sacerdotal days—that the Church of Rome can claim about a million communicants in the same territory. Thus we have less than 5,000,000 communicants for all the Churches of England and Wales.....All the ecclesiastical organisations taken together do not effectively influence more than a minority of the nation" (p. 101).

Taking the population of the globe to be 1,470,000,000, statistics now before us show that only 400,000,000 are even *nominal* Christians. Amongst these, be it remembered, are included Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, Freethinkers, and Nothingarians. If the "Son of Man" came to save those who were lost, the salvation is evidently looming in the future. Up to date the overwhelming majority of the world's inhabitants have, like the citizens mentioned in the New Testament, who said

of the "Son of Man": "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 14).

The breakdown of Christ's mission is also evidenced in his inability to produce unity amongst his followers. We are told in St. John (xvii. 21-2) Christ prayed that "they all may be one"; but that prayer has never been answered, for, instead of unity, the dissensions amongst professed Christians are increasing year by year. As the Archbishop of Canterbury said in his recent sermon upon this very supplication: "They had had the teaching contained in the recorded word, and yet, when they looked around, they saw that this prayer had not been fulfilled.....But, as time went on, the division became deeper, more permanent, more real, until now it was impossible to speak of Christ's kingdom as if it were one as the Lord would have it.....The principles on which they had formed themselves were made the principles of division, and not the principles of unity." The Bishop of Ripon avows that "our internal divisions are perhaps our greatest foe" (Bradford Conference, September, 1898). We take the following from a report of a discussion "On the Unity, Duality, and Trinity of the Godhead," published by Trübner and Co. in 1864. Upwards of 250 clergymen, dissenting ministers, and laymen of all denominations took part in the debate. Here are a few samples of the expressions used by those who were taught to "love one another" towards their fellow Christians: "The Calvinists represent Arminianism as 'delusive, dangerous, and ruinous to immortal souls' (*Close's Sermons*), and the Unitarians declare them both 'to be a mischievous compound of impiety and idolatry' (*Discussion on Priestley*). Archbishop Magee denounces the Unitarian system as 'embracing the most daring impieties that ever disgraced the name of Christianity,' and declares that, 'if Unitarianism be well-founded, Christianity must be an imposition.' All sects join in denouncing the Methodists 'as misled fanatics, alienated from all knowledge of the true God' (*Divine Truth*). The Church of England denounces the whole body of Dissenters 'as accursed, devoted to the Devil, and separated from Christ' (*Canon*, v. vii.), and the Bishop of London (*Letters on Dissent*) denounced the Dissenters 'to be actuated by the Devil, with the curse of God resting heavily on them all.' The Dissenters are not slow in retaliating on the Church of England, declaring it to be 'an obstacle to the progress of truth and holiness in the land, that it destroys more souls than it saves, and that its end is most devoutly to be wished for by every lover of God and Man' (*Christian Observer*). The Roman Catholics declare their Church to be 'the only true one,' and all the other sects join in denouncing her to be 'the scarlet whore of Babylon,' and a combination of idolatry, blasphemy, and devilism (*Cumming's Apostasy*); whilst the Roman Catholics retort on the whole body of Protestants of every sect and description, consign them to eternal damnation as heretics and schismatics, and their clergy are designated 'as thieves and ministers of the Devil'" (*Rheims' Test*). Even Dr. Clifford, the representative of the English Baptists, in an interview which was reported in the *Church Gazette* of January 6, 1900, confessed that he saw no way to bring about a union with the Church of England.

If it be true, as the Bible states, that a "house divided against itself cannot stand," then the fate of Christianity is sealed. CHARLES WATTS.

### Christian Pessimism.

My article of December 24 on "Atheism and Conduct" has been fruitful of correspondence, if of nothing else. I have had no less than five bulky letters—three from Christians, and two from people whose position it is somewhat difficult to decipher—discussing my position. All my correspondents hope that I shall find time to reply to their letters, and the request would have better ensured its gratification had they have given me something tangible to answer. As it is, my answer must chiefly consist in supplementing what I then said, with the additional remark that the proper person who should have received these communications is the editor of this journal. Editing a paper like the *Freethinker* is such a

simple matter that I am sure Mr. Foote will be only too delighted at being bombarded with a few reams of correspondence weekly.

My two doubtful correspondents join in assuring me that the whole ethical problem consists in determining whether man is in any special sense independent of his surroundings or not. In other words, the question of approval or disapproval of any action resolves itself into a discussion of the old problem of the freedom of the will. Well, I can only say, as I have said before, that moral approbation or disapprobation has nothing whatever to do with the discussion of this ethical mare's-nest. All we are concerned with ethically is the effects of actions on life and the influence of feelings on actions, and on this matter the question of whether the will is "free" or not has no bearing, and is only raised in support of some preconceived idea. As a gifted lady essayist points out: "Our ideas of right and wrong depend, not upon the consideration of cause, but upon the consideration of effect. A thing is wrong which leads to a balance of suffering; a thing is right which leads to a balance of happiness; and the question why a creature is noxious, or whether it is so from fatality or otherwise, does not interfere with the fact that all noxious things must be stamped out. Now, right and wrong, morality, is the question of what should be abetted and what should be stamped out: it is the question of the result of a certain action, not its cause."\*

The bulk of the other letters consists in a series of jeremiads as to the fearful consequences of leaving human nature unchecked or uncontrolled by supernatural beliefs. It is these letters which have induced me to head my article "Christian Pessimism," and I do so because all such expressions of belief display Pessimism of the most pronounced and demoralising character.

It was, indeed, a true insight into the real nature of Christianity that led Schopenhauer to rank it amongst pessimistic systems. In truth, Christianity is one of the profoundest pessimisms that the world has ever seen. Whatever optimism it possesses is concerned with God, not with man; with heaven, not with earth. Distrust of human reason in intellectual matters, distrust of human nature in moral matters, has always been characteristic of the most representative Christians. The official Christian creeds are saturated with the conviction that human nature, as such, is morally and intellectually hopeless; and yet, by a curious paradox, it is the Christian world that charges non-religious systems with degrading the character of man and robbing him of his dignity.

True, in this respect, Christianity is not sinning alone. It is only exhibiting in a more complete form a quality inherent in all religions. All religions appeal to the supernatural, and this appeal is never made save in man's despairing moods. Trust in God is the reverse side of despair of man, just as revelation or faith is the negation of human reason. What has been the true reason for the historic struggle of religion against unbelief but that the methods of human reason were not to be trusted, nor dependence placed on its conclusions? Nor is it without significance that religious leaders, from Paul to Pusey, have argued strongly against earthly comforts as drawing man away from the true service of God. These men have felt, consciously or unconsciously, that man is never so near real religion as in his moments of despair, never so near abandoning religion as when he is convinced that unassisted human reason is capable of solving its own problems, and unassisted human nature capable of carrying out its own duties.

This wholesale distrust of human reason is best seen, so far as Christianity is concerned, in the Roman Catholic Church. Here there has always been an explicit declaration that human reason must in all cases submit to the authority of the Church; and, although among Protestants the enunciation of this principle has not been quite so clear, yet its presence has been quite as plain. All the arguments used by the Catholic against criticising the dogmas of the Church have been used by the Protestant against criticising the claims set up on behalf of the Bible. Each has asserted that human reason is not to be trusted when deciding against the teachings

of religion, even while invoking reason to prove the uselessness of reasoning. But with the leaders of both parties there has been exhibited the same feature—a paralysing distrust of human reason as such.

And just as Christianity discloses a fundamental pessimism concerning man intellectually, so it exhibits an enervating distrust as regards man and his capacity for goodness unsupported by supernatural considerations. The number of quotations that might be given on this head is legion. I will satisfy myself with but one citation from such a comparatively liberal man as Dr. Martineau. He declares that, if there be no supernatural authority for morality, "nothing remains but to declare the sense of responsibility a mere delusion; the fiduciary aspect of life must disappear; there is no trust committed to us, no eye to watch, no account to render; we have but to settle terms with our neighbors, and all will be well. Purity within, faithfulness when alone, harmony and depth in the secret affections, are guarded by no cautionary presence, and aided by no sacred sympathy; it may be happy for us if we keep them, but if we mar them it is our own affair, and there is none to reproach us and put us to shame."

I do not wish, at present, to argue whether this view of human nature is justifiable or otherwise; my object is to emphasize the profound distrust of man underlying it. For what such a view amounts to in the lump is that, humanly considered, virtue is an impossibility. Man, as Leslie Stephen somewhere says in summarising this position, is a pig only to be kept from wallowing in the mire from fear of the whip. No consideration of domestic or social ties would be sufficient to keep him decently moral; nothing will do this but the belief that a supernatural power is watching his every action, the conviction that he is under the perpetual supervision of an omnipotent and omnipresent policeman. I doubt if Atheism could possibly hold out a more hopeless and despairing view of human nature than this.

But Christianity has not only been a source of obstruction to the development of a healthy morality in this direction; it has inflicted injury in, at least, three other directions that may be indicated.

First, it has separated man from the rest of nature, and persisted in treating him as something distinct from the universe as a whole. Man was in nature, but not of it; he was simply halting here for a season, like some traveller resting at a half-way house. So long as this view obtained, anything like an adequate conception of human nature or human possibilities was out of the question. The lessons that were to be learned by a study of animal life at large, or by a study of the various cosmic forces to which animal life is subject, were lost. And the time and energy that have been spent in driving home the lesson that human life is at one fundamentally with the rest of the animal world, that man is as much an integral portion of the universe as any part of the animal, vegetal, or physical kingdoms, gives but a faint indication of the extent to which Christianity has stood in the path of the development of a rational morality.

Secondly, Christianity has made the radical mistake of treating ethics from an individual, rather than from a general or social, standpoint. We frequently hear it said that, if all individuals were moral, society would be moral as a result. This is a truism; but, like many truisms, its value is but small as a working rule. And when we find that the main conception that Christianity has had of reforming society has been that of reforming the individual first, then I submit that the theory has been altogether a false one. If scientific sociology has made one thing clear, it is that the individual, as a whole—structure, passions, desires, actions—is the concrete expression of past generations of social life co-operating with existing social conditions. And if this view of human conduct be sound, then to attempt to reform the individual *directly* must always be an extremely doubtful operation. What has to be done is to attack the individual indirectly, and by the removal of all such conditions as hinder development, and by establishing all such conditions as further development, produce a higher type of individual character as the almost insensible result of general changes. But to do this one has to step outside Christianity; for Christianity has made an appeal to the individual right through the

\* "Vernon Lee," in *Baldwin*, p. 368.

whole of its history. The salvation of the individual soul has been the beginning and end of its gospel; and, by ignoring the scientific conditions of individual welfare, it has successfully paved the way for its own failure.

And, lastly, Christianity has narrowed, instead of extending, the scope of morals. In spite of all that has been said concerning the superiority of Christian over Pagan ethics, the Pagans gave, on the whole, a wider and saner meaning to morality than was given to it by Christians. To the Pagan teachers morality meant an all-round observance of duties to self, family, and the State. To the Christian teachers, for many centuries, when morality did not mean merely religious observances, it meant little more than sexual right conduct. Indeed, it has meant little more than that to the average individual up to our own day. Ninety-nine out of every hundred would understand by an immoral man one who was *sexually* immoral. A man may, if he is a statesman, plunge his country into serious trouble to gratify personal ambition; if a landlord, grossly abuse his power over his tenants; if an employer, sweat his workmen to death; if in business, he may sand his sugar, sell paper boots for leather, margarine for butter, or otherwise swindle his customers; he may float bogus companies, or, by an infinitude of sharp practices, beggar thousands who have placed reliance upon him; yet, provided he be sexually continent, few will dream of applying the epithet "immoral" to him.

Now, in all this there is something radically unsound; and it is an evil that owes its perpetuation, if not its existence, so far as Western Europe is concerned, to the Christian view of life that has dominated European civilisation. I do not at all wish to take a light view of the value of either male or female chastity; but I do wish to point out that sexual chastity is not by any means the whole of morality; that it has been made so largely due to the prurient imagination of ascetic Christianity. To my mind, there is often more to be said on behalf of the sexually immoral man or woman, whose special misconduct may be the result of overmastering passion, than on behalf of the man who, throughout the whole of his life, has been deliberately swindling thousands, and bringing mental and moral ruin to many.

What we have to do is to sweep away this narrow conception of morality and return to the Pagan conception of the "whole man," to make it plain that morality covers the whole sphere of human conduct, and that the only truly moral man is he who sees that every act of his life is discharged with a due regard to the community of which he is a unit. It is this conception of morality that was prominent in the best writings of Greece and Rome; and it is one that, in spite of senseless and hysterical pulpitering, is reasserting its sway over the minds of all sane thinking men and women.

C. COHEN.

### Ritualism and Reason.

THE internal squabble which is going on over ritual in the Established Church in England is really too puerile in itself to be worth any serious attention. Personally I am free to confess that, beyond some desperately exciting questions of candles and millinery, I have the vaguest notion what it is all about; though, of course, so far as that part of the controversy goes, I am on the side of the candles. There is also, I am told, some question as to the "laying on of hands" (there is a suspicion, indeed, that in the course of the dispute there has been a good deal of rather violent laying on of hands, to say nothing of "knuckle-dusters"), and there is some fuss about "continuity." Mr. Balfour, in dealing with the matter, says there are two important doctrines which, "properly interpreted," he regards as "not only religious truths, but I had almost said religious truisms." "One of these," says Mr. Balfour, "is that the members of the English Church belong not only to the English Church, but to the Church Universal; and the other is that the English Church, though it be an established Church, nevertheless has, and ought to have, a spiritual independence of its own." If we lived in the Middle Ages, there is no doubt but that, with a slight effort, a good deal of blood might be let flow over

the "proper interpretation" of these things. But if it gives any good Churchman peace of mind to know that he belongs to the "Church Universal" (whatever that may be), it would be cruel to withhold the information from him, provided he can properly interpret it when conveyed.

Mr. Balfour has recently been writing on these interesting matters in the *North American Review*, presumably in order to keep American readers posted in the latest flights of English culture. Of course, nobody really imagines that Mr. Balfour himself cares two straws about the candles or the Church Universal; but, as leader of the House and a prominent English politician, he is obliged to feign some sort of interest in them, and string together some pages of platitudes in which both parties to the dispute are mildly kept in countenance. You can never tell, of course, but that a vote is lurking even behind a candle-stick. In the course of this platitudinising, however, Mr. Balfour lets slip the following paragraph, which is a sufficient indication of his own real opinions and fears. Says Mr. Balfour:—

"There is one class of the community who make no show in the public papers, who do not appear on platforms, who neither publish letters nor make speeches, for whom I would venture to plead. After all, whilst we are disputing about ecclesiastical matters of relatively small importance, there are vast questions lying at the root of all religion, which are being called in doubt by men very far removed from the plane of this controversy. No greater injury can be done to the cause of true religion than to compel these men to witness from day to day so many ministers of religion apparently absorbed in disputes which, compared with the subjects to which I have referred, are as nothing in the balance."

Thus does Mr. Balfour, in the neatest Balfourian manner, make plain the pettiness of the whole squabble and the inevitable results to which it leads. As a matter of fact, the Ritualist controversy is at once an index and a result of the intellectual barrenness of the Church. Only men who had ceased to be able to think with any real sanity, who lacked the capacity to understand the larger issues of life and mind, could be bothered for an instant with the mighty question whether a priest should wear one petticoat or two, or whether churches should be fumigated with incense or not. In truth—with so many serious problems facing us for solution—it is difficult to conceive the crabbedness of the mind that can occupy itself with such empty trifles. For it is not even as if the questions in themselves possessed any intellectual value or interest. A Greek scholar may write volumes on some problem of Greek literature, or an astronomer may devote his life to the working out of some astronomical speculation; but, though these things may seem impractical and remote to the ordinary man in the street, they may not be so in reality at all, for many of the most practical results in science have involved much seemingly impractical research. And, in any case, intellectual exercise possesses an intrinsic value of its own. Geometry is a beautiful science, chess is a beautiful game, even if they never led to anything else. But this controversy over "incense and lights" does not seem intelligible on any ground; it is neither interesting as a speculation, nor of importance as a matter of practical life. The Big-endians and the Little-endians in Gulliver were serious thinkers in comparison. The whole thing is simply an exhibition of pettiness which reveals more, surely, than the far-seeing friends of the Church would wish.

So Mr. Balfour, in his way, appeals to the combatants to reflect. Whilst they are heatedly debating whether God Almighty prefers a plain or a colored worship, men of sense must be driven more and more to ask themselves whether an organisation in which such debates are possible represents anything but a superstitious survival. Could any more efficient demonstration, indeed, be offered of the superstition which Christianity engenders? Surely, one feels, even those with the least manhood and dignity must rise from this nightmare and ask themselves, Is manliness compatible with such littleness and nonsense? Surely they must realise that these squabblers have lost touch with every live idea, every sane impulse, and are merely rummaging in the dust-heaps of the dead.

But will the squabblers take Mr. Balfour's warning? Will they desist and close up their ranks against the

criticism of the "men very far removed from the plane of this controversy"? We doubt it. Give religion its head, and it inevitably and almost necessarily runs to littleness; the whole business of religion, when you examine it, is petty. For surely even from the Theistic point of view, if there is a God pleased with our worship (a petty conception in itself), one would think that any being of the least dignity would not ponder for an instant on the accidental details of that worship, provided it were sincere. If a little child were really desirous, say, of thanking you for some service rendered it, is there any man who would be mean enough to examine minutely the phraseology which the little brain employed? Even if the syllables were pronounced ever so awkwardly, and the words ever so clumsily chosen, is there anyone whose pedantry would prevent him from taking the little child and kissing it for its gentleness and kindness? Can we, in fact, conceive the mind that, overlooking the manifest intention, would concern itself solely with the language in which that intention was clothed?

Yet, as has been remarked, this pettiness, which nobody would stoop to in the ordinary affairs of life, is the very essence of religion. Take away all the candles and the abracadabras, the incense and the images; take away all the ceremonials and the discussions about ceremonials and the interpretations of ceremonials—take away all these, and you sweep away the very vitals—nay, the whole organism—of religion. For there is no reality left. Reality is the outcome of active thought. And religion is not concerned with active thought; it merely revolves around the formulas in which bygone thought expressed itself.

FREDERICK RYAN.

### Acid Drops.

DR. PARKER, the Oracle of the City Temple, gets a column now and then in the *Daily News* to ventilate the odds and ends of his opinions. This column occurs on the "Saturday Page" for "Home Reading." Perhaps it is thought that playing the fool is suited to the domestic circle. At any rate, Dr. Parker does play the fool pretty often; and the cream of the joke, we presume, is that he gets well paid for doing it.

In the *Daily News* for Saturday, July 13, Dr. Parker has a fling at "mathematical certainty." Euclid says that "A point is position without magnitude," but Dr. Parker says that "there is not one word of truth" in this definition, for there cannot be position without magnitude. Euclid says that "A line is length without breadth," but Dr. Parker denies this too, because length and breadth are inseparable. Indeed, the reverend gentleman denies that twice two are four. "Two peacocks and two bicycles," he asks, "are four what?"

Now this is what the man in the street would call "Tommy rot." A mathematical line is not an entity, but a conception. We cannot see length without breadth, but we can separate them in thought. Then, again, "two" is a word of number. We cannot see two things exactly alike, and few of us want to; but we can think of them numerically, without regard to any other quality or relation.

We are not affecting to be original. What we have said is familiar enough to a well-informed schoolboy. What we want to point out is the imbecility of letting Dr. Parker stand on his head outside the *Daily News* office, so to speak, for the edification of the religious world. But perhaps, after all, we ought to rejoice instead of complaining; since the folly of religionists is, in its way, a means of promoting the growth of Freethought.

Dr. Parker has his lucid intervals, in one of which he made the following confession of the discord which prevails in the Christian fold:—"Unhappily 'ministers of all denominations' have unintentionally created for themselves the reputation of being disputatious and unmanageable—a body of angry controversialists who do not hesitate to throw hot pokers at one another, by way of illustrating a Christian spirit. We cannot, of course, admit that such is the case in any literal degree, but perhaps it is true that they occasionally suffer from a special temperature of zeal, and sometimes come into sharp collision in the decorous festivity of a May meeting. They do not, of course, publicly claim to be perfect men. For example, they are not like the doctors, who, as men of science, necessarily agree with one another in everything pertaining to scientific investigation and professional method. 'Doctors of all denominations' is never a toast at any Mayoral feast, even 'after men have well drunk,'

as quoth the bibulous man of Cana. All doctors believe, and publish, and practise the same medical creed. How different from the Methodists and Presbyterians with their doctrinal and metaphysical contentions! Doctors are not men who can be specialised as if each had a theory of his own, or as if fifty here and a hundred there opposed one another in resentful polysyllables. How different from the Anglican and the Independent, who are in continual hot water, speaking of one another now and then in terms which are not distinguished for their civility!"

An excuse for all this discord is presented by Dr. Parker, and it is about the funniest we ever encountered. "The simple fact is," he says, "that the greater the subject the greater the possible difference of opinion; and as religion is the greatest of all subjects, it should be no wonder, and no discredit, that its teachers see it from many points of view, and speak of it in many tones and in many accents." Dr. Parker must have written that with his tongue in his cheek. What on earth has the size of a subject to do with the room for difference of opinion? Change the word "largest" in Dr. Parker's sentence into "most uncertain," and you have the whole truth in a nutshell. And what is the cause of uncertainty? Lack of knowledge. And what is the cause of lack of knowledge? Paucity of facts. Religion is not founded on facts; it is founded on fancies. Hence the diversity of its utterances. Knowledge gradually brings all men to one settled opinion; but the more play they give to their imaginations the wider they are apart. For this reason, the only possible unity in religion is the unity of slavery under a despotic Church.

The Roberts agitation seems to be growing in the United States. Mr. Roberts is a Mormon, and has been elected to represent Utah in Congress. It is proposed to prevent his entrance; it is also proposed to let him enter and then expel him, without a discussion and without assigning a reason. If the former be done, the Constitution will be violated. If the latter be done, and Utah returns Mr. Roberts again and again, America will have her Bradlaugh case, and it will give her no end of trouble. For our part, we are quite unable to see why Christians should object to Mr. Roberts. There is nothing in the Bible against polygamy. The only person who is told to have "one wife" is a bishop, and the Mormons say that means one wife at least.

Mr. Moncure D. Conway contributes "A Plea for Personal Liberty" in the *New York Truthseeker*. He takes the ground that "Congress has no more right to expel a polygamist than to expel an Atheist." "A man's liberty," he says, "can be justly forfeited only by crime, not by immorality." Of course "polygamy is odious to Freethinkers," but "Freethought is equally odious to the orthodox millions," and arbitrary punishment by majorities is simply lynching.

The *Referee* takes Mr. Stead to task for signing as from "The Temple, London," a pro-Boer article contributed by him to the *Paris Matin*. Of course, the *Review of Reviews* is not published in the sacred precincts of the Temple. The *Referee*, however, suggests that Mr. Stead, in using this rather misleading address, is hardly living up to the traditions of a telegraphic address that Dagonet once gave him—namely, "God-London."

Mr. Robert P. C. Corfe, writing from the Constitutional Club, Northumberland-avenue, and commenting on the recent letters in the *Times* objecting to a day of humiliation, says that "the *Times* had not the courage to exhibit that dread phantom of whose existence people are now pretty generally aware, but avoid mentioning (especially in war time)—namely, that this nation and Church have been encouraged to believe that the God of the Bible to whom we cried in the Crimean and Indian Mutiny distress—that God to whom, with all their faults, the Boers are praying—is really some God whose personality is so unknown to us, indeed, that it is pronounced at a Church Congress 'a problem which will probably tax the next age'; or by others that he is Unknowable or Law—some Power that makes for righteousness, or energy or force, etc., in which teaching officials of the Church have had a most regrettable share."

The *Church Times* considers that no Protestant lecturer, in his wildest dreams, has ever essayed a bolder flight than that recently taken by Dr. St. George Mivart. It quotes some of the statements made by Dr. Mivart, such as that he knows devout persons "who would prefer to worship God under one of his attributes, symbolised by representations more resembling Athene or Apollo." Also the statement that "there are persons who go to the Brompton Oratory to there worship the Madonna as the only available representative of Venus." And the further statement, that Dr. Mivart has heard devout and religious persons affirm that "the extraordinary dignity to which Rome has now raised St. Joseph may have been providentially brought about in preparation for a great change in popular sentiment and credence."

Apparently apropos of the death of Mr. Moody, the *Nonconformist Musical Journal* inquires whether it is not "about time that Sankey's music was replaced by something better at mission services attended by educated people. For 'slum services' possibly Sankey may be useful; but for missions held by the Free Church Councils, which are largely attended by regular church and chapel-goers, surely something more elevating, devotional, and less 'syrupy' should be adopted.....The musical people ought to make a stand against Sankey. If organists would decline to play them and singers would refuse to sing them, these wretched tunes would soon be replaced by something of a much better standard, and far more appropriate for worship."

At the International Student Missionary Conference, Mr. Earl Taylor, leader of the movement in America, related the following story: Some blasting operations were going on up the Hudson, and the very powerful explosive was kept in boxes. In spite of printed warnings, "people would fool about those boxes." Then the foreman had a happy inspiration. He labelled them "Tracts," and nobody went near them any more.

We have all heard about Church slum-property in London. Apparently the same thing exists in New York. According to the *Journal* of that city, the hundreds of tenements owned by Trinity Corporation are kept in "notoriously poor condition." This Corporation, being a religious body, pays no taxes on its estate, which is valued at from twenty to thirty million dollars. The head of the Trinity Corporation is the Rev. Morgan Dix. His salary is 25,000 dollars a year. He has eight vicars and sixteen curates to help him, receiving from 5,000 to 10,000 dollars a year each. What a comfortable way of following Jesus! Bearing the cross in this fashion is a pleasant sort of martyrdom.

Colonel de Villebois-Mareuil, one of the Frenchmen fighting with the Boers, who has been made Chief of the Staff of General Joubert, writes a lengthy letter to his brother, a former French deputy, from Pretoria. He says that the French are very popular among the Boers. A different story, however, is told by other French officers. Speaking to a Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*, one of them says: "You see we dare not tell the Boers we are Freethinkers; so, when asked about our religion, we say we are Catholics, and the Boers, who are very strong on 'No Popery,' look at us askance."

Captain Slocum, who circumnavigated the globe in the yacht *Spray*, was introduced to President Kruger of the South African Republic. Being told that Captain Slocum was sailing round the world, Kruger pronounced the feat impossible, since the earth was flat, as the Bible describes it. Captain Slocum forfeited Opm Paul's esteem by his complicity in the heretical demonstration that the globe is round. —*Truthseeker* (New York).

What fun it is to listen to various sorts of Christians explaining what Christ meant. What he said—if he *said* it—we can all read in the Gospels. But what did he *mean*? Ay, there's the rub. Perhaps he didn't always know himself. Anyway, his interpreters don't, for one says one thing, and another says another thing, while a third says they are both wrong and he has got the right explanation. Here is Count Tolstoi, for instance, contending that the greatest duty of a Christian, if he means to follow Christ, is to avoid all participation in the use of force, and to refuse to serve as a soldier even in countries where the army is filled by conscription. But here, on the other hand, is the Rev. J. H. Stowell, writing to the *Daily News* and declaring of the same Christ: "If Caesar had requisitioned him for military service, I suppose he would have obeyed."

According to Mr. W. Anderson Smith's new book on *Temperate Chile*, it appears that the priests are the curse of that country, as they are of most others. Liberalism has to fight them constantly, but, fortunately, it is winning. Even agriculture is hindered by the Church, which is the chief landed proprietor. Schoolmasters and newspapers are particularly hated by the priests, who actually went to the length of threatening all the advertisers in a certain Progressist journal with everlasting brimstone. The threat was not efficacious. Perhaps the brimstone had gone flat.

The Bishop of Coventry wants to see local educational authorities "who are independent of popular election." No doubt he would like to see these educational authorities appointed by the Church. His wish is not likely to be gratified, but we are not surprised at his entertaining it. This man of God, if we recollect aright, was one of the principal defamers of Freethought literature, and a ringleader in the conspiracy for depriving the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society of the use of a Board school for Sunday meetings.

Lord Rosebery knighted Henry Irving. We don't complain of it; quite the contrary. But if an actor is "honored" in

this way, why not a schoolmaster? Clerical headmasters may become Bishops, but no such distinction awaits lay headmasters, who are certainly as capable, and in no wise less deserving. The question has been mooted by Mr. Gow, as President of the Association of Headmasters; and by-and-by, perhaps, when the value of schoolmasters is properly estimated, we may see at least one of them in the list of New Year's honors. Of course, it may be urged that such distinctions are worthless, and even meretricious; but that is very much open to question. At any rate, while "honors" are bestowed, schoolmasters should have a share of them as well as priests, or even in preference to the reverend gentlemen, who, as they profess to be doing the Lord's work, might well wait for *their* reward until they reach heaven.

A little time ago the *Christian Budget* commenced a series of articles, entitled "Roads to Ruin," and made a great fuss about the discoveries of its "Special Commissioner." It pretended to find in Denaby Main, Yorkshire, the worst village in England. The description affected a local colliery company, who have now brought the *Christian Budget* down on its knees. In a formal "Apology" the *C. B.* says: "We have felt it our duty to inquire into the matter." That is, they publish the imputations first, and then inquire about them afterwards. And now "We take this *early* opportunity of admitting that we cannot justify the language used in that article." Obviously they couldn't justify it, as any intelligent reader could have seen at the time. Then they go on to "admit that the article is couched in unjustifiable terms." And they "beg to express regret for having published the article," and "tender our apology to the Denaby and Cadeby Main Collieries, Limited, for having done so."

The best portion of the "apology," however, is at the end, where they say that they have undertaken "to pay all costs incurred by the company in connection with the proceedings they have instituted against us, complaining of the language used." This, it may be hoped, will be a salutary lesson to the *Christian Budget*. Needless to say, the "Road to Ruin" series has been incontinently dropped. The Special Commissioner was taking the paper into a "road to ruin" not contemplated by the proprietors and publishers. The next thing for the latter to do will be to exercise some discretion as to the foolish lies about "infidels" that this paper seems to be so fond of publishing. Anyway, the *Christian Budget* has had its "day of humiliation," though not exactly the kind of thing it was calling for very loudly a few weeks ago.

Yet the *Christian Budget* still retains its admirers. One of them, to whom it has forwarded a 10s. prize in a competition, writes in acknowledgment: "The *Christian Budget* is a factor for good in the fight against pernicious rot issued by stinking presses." This is in a page close to that containing the abject apology for publishing lies. Christian journalism, judging by this specimen, is rather low just now.

The Rev. A. F. Maskew, vicar of St. Paul's, Peterborough, is evidently a cleric who does not mince his terms. He recently responded at a public dinner for "the clergy." He said, perhaps warmed by the genial atmosphere, that it was "not playing fair with the Almighty to pretend that Englishmen, in the collective sense, were a religious or Christian people." Rather a funny expression about not "playing fair" with the Almighty, but a pretty correct estimate of the amount of religion to which Englishmen can ordinarily lay claim. "When it was said," he continued, "that England was a particularly religious nation, speaking of the majority of the people, he answered: No."

Then, warming up to the theme, Parson Maskew said that Englishmen "liked to have a little religion, just enough to die on"—or, as he probably hesitated to say, "just enough to swear by." His next observation was still better. He said: "They did not want too much of it." True, Parson Maskew, quite true! Afterwards he observed that God could not be turned on like the gas. No, that he cannot; but one wonders whether Maskew's way of turning on the gas at a public dinner quite meets with the approval of his bishop.

Browning's poem, *Instans Tyrannus*, is familiar enough, but one does not quite see how it can be made to bolster up Christ's doctrine of non-resistance of evil as set forth in Matthew v. 39. A correspondent of the *British Weekly* seems, however, to find some coincidence in the teaching. He winds up by saying: "It is to be feared that the Churches are yet far from the spirit of Jesus in this matter. They do not see that all wars are wrong for them, and to encourage or engage in any war is contrary to what Jesus could and would do under the same circumstances."

Greek clericalism, acting in the interest and probably under the inspiration of Russia, tried to stop the pro-English manifestations that were being organised for last Sunday in different parts of the Hellenic peninsula. The priests, however, were powerless against the popular feeling; the manifestations duly took place, and the Greek people expressed

their affection and gratitude towards England and the British cause.

Judge North's retirement from the Bench gave the *Daily News* an opportunity of writing a rather satirical article upon his lordship. Special reference was made to his conduct at Mr. Foote's trial for "blasphemy" in 1883. Our contemporary said that it recalled Lord Ellenborough's conduct at the trial of William Hone; and added that, on the jury disagreeing, Lord Coleridge went down himself and took the second trial. This, however, was a mistake, and Mr. Foote thought it advisable to write to the *Daily News* on the matter. His letter appeared in the next day's issue, Thursday, January 11—curiously, his birthday. It ran as follows:—

MR. JUSTICE NORTH AND THE LAST BLASPHEMY TRIAL.

SIR,—Kindly allow me to correct an inaccuracy in your article on Mr. Justice North's resignation. His lordship's conduct at my trial for "blasphemy" was all that you say it was—and more; but it is not a fact that when the jury disagreed the second trial was taken by Lord Coleridge. Mr. Justice North took it himself, prolonging the sessions in order to do so, and refusing me bail, although my alleged offence was legally but a misdemeanor, and nobody thought I was likely to run away. I was indeed tried for "blasphemy" before Lord Coleridge, but that was two months later, and under another indictment, which had been removed by *certiorari* from the Old Bailey to the Court of Queen's Bench. There again the jury disagreed, and the prosecution was dropped by a *nolle prosequi* from the Attorney-General. Lord Coleridge was scandalised at my treatment, both in the dock and in prison; he had intimated that he meant to take the case himself as often as they brought me up for trial; and as it was certain that he would act as a Judge, instead of a prosecuting counsel, there was practically no prospect of a unanimous verdict of Guilty.—Yours obediently,

G. W. FOOTE.

28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Judge North, according to the *Daily News*, had "a sincere horror of Mr. Foote's opinions." Perhaps so, but the feeling he most displayed was a cold and venomous hatred of Mr. Foote's person. Deliberate malignity sat on Judge North's countenance, and at the finish of the trial it was obvious that he regretted his inability to give the "blasphemer" a severer sentence. He would have been delighted to give Mr. Foote penal servitude for life, or even to hand him over to the hangman. As it was, the law was strained to the uttermost. Instead of being sentenced as a first-class misdemeanant, like Richard Carlile, George Jacob Holyoake, and other "blasphemers," Mr. Foote was sentenced like a common thief, and subjected to all the worst privations and indignities of imprisonment. It was this which so scandalised Lord Coleridge, who was a Christian, but also a gentleman.

The French journals that have England on the brain—if there is any brain in the case—have found a new provocation in the hanging of Louise Masset. Many of them take the position that we hung her to spite the French! She happened to be of French extraction, and to have a special taste for French paramours. So we had her executed by way of providing our Gallic neighbors with a second Fashoda! Of course it is ridiculous to argue with such midsummer madness. We say *madness* advisedly, for the woman's racial origin had nothing to do with her crime or her punishment. Judged by any decent standard, too, her crime was to the last degree sordid. She murdered her own child in order to spend the money, which its father had sent for its keep, upon erotic sprees with a young fellow, little more than a boy, only half her own age. Having killed her child, she went straight off on the first of these projected sprees. There was no insanity in her conduct, in the ordinary sense of the word. She knew what she was doing all the time. She acted with the utmost deliberation, and a certain superficial cleverness. She belonged to the very worst type; the type of reckless lust and callous cruelty. It is a waste of sympathy to bestow it upon such a creature. She was one of nature's disgusting freaks, and most people are glad that the world is rid of her. True, she did not make herself, and in that sense it may be said that she was entitled to our sympathy. But neither did a shark, or a viper, make itself; and it is certainly wrong to torture one or the other; although it is just as certainly right to protect ourselves against their venom and rapacity. One doesn't pity them until they are dead, and then it doesn't matter.

We are not prejudging the question of capital punishment. Our argument leaves it quite open. What we say is that, while capital punishment still obtains, it is absurd not to hang a wretch like Louise Masset. The objection founded upon her being a woman is a mere sentimentalism. While the gallows is in use, women should be hung as well as men. There is no distinction of sex in the crime of murder, and there should be none in the penalty.

Some of the French pressmen, who have found a new Fashoda in this woman's execution, are perhaps under the impression that she has been sacrificed on the altar of British morality. Nothing of the sort, however. She was not hung

because her child was illegitimate, but because she murdered it without a single extenuating circumstance. Had she been driven to desperation by want, by desertion, or by social ostracism, she would have found plenty of sympathy. But she suffered from none of these things. Her crime was perfectly gratuitous.

What a lot of silliness, by the way, is talked about "circumstantial evidence." Why, nine-tenths of the affairs of life are conducted upon it. In regard to crime, too, it is often the only evidence that is available. Most murderers do not advertise their intention and procure an audience; and thieves have a very natural fondness for secrecy. If nobody is to be punished for a crime unless somebody saw him do it, we shall want very few prisons, and very small ones, to hold our convicted malefactors.

Rev. F. W. Aveling, writing to the *Daily News* from Christ's College, Blackheath, protests against Dr. Grece's objection to a theological chair in the new London University. Dr. Grece points out that the London University has hitherto been purely secular, and that the introduction of theology would inevitably lead to sectarianism. Not so, says Mr. Aveling, as the policy would be one of "absolutely fair play to all sects." What this gentleman means is all *Christian* sects. Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, Ethicists, and all sorts of Freethinkers—to say nothing of Jews, and even Mohammedans and Buddhists, of whom there are so many millions in the British Empire—are to whistle outside while the Christians divide the spoil. This is called *undenominationalism*. But has not theft been called *conveying*?

Mr. Alexander Sutherland, having returned to Australia after a long visit to England, sends a letter to the *Ethical World*, which is chiefly remarkable—to us at least—for its attack on Mr. Joseph Symes. Mr. Sutherland remarks that in England, as elsewhere, the "old Voltairean methods of scornful attack and merciless derision" have fallen into disrepute. "But in Australia," he says, "the revulsion is perhaps stronger than at home, for the effect of a writer and speaker so strong and so well-informed, yet with so little refinement of taste, as Joseph Symes, has been to sicken many of the name of Freethought whose minds were steadily ripening for the thing itself. Freethought on Voltaire's method did its work in its own day, but it could have done it better had it been less exasperating; and the effect of Joseph Symes's loud rhetoric of sneers and ridicule has been to make something of a gulf between thinking people and Freethought people."

Now there is a good deal in Mr. Sutherland's letter with which we agree. We recognise quite as clearly as he does, and we have often stated it, that science is the great emancipator. Voltaire himself recognised it, and urged it over and over again. But we decline to narrow science down to mere physical science, although physical science is the basis of all other science. Gibbon was, in his way, as scientific as Watt or Stephenson; Voltaire was as scientific as Buffon or Cuvier. Science, indeed, does not lie in the subject matter, but in the spirit, the attitude, the method of investigation. Strauss's first masterpiece, for instance, although it dealt with Jesus Christ and the Gospels, was an eminently scientific performance; and was rightly referred to as such by Flaubert, in preference to the more brilliant but less critical work of Renan.

What is science, after all? Is it not the application of reason to facts? In that sense, perhaps, Mr. Symes is as scientific as Mr. Sutherland. When the latter talks about "taste" he is probably alluding to a difference of temperament. This is pretty obvious from the application of the word "exasperating" to the methods of Voltaire. Now the truth is that Voltaire meant to sting. Fancy being tender to the susceptible prejudices of the men who broke Calas upon the wheel! Fancy writing gently and sweetly for the good people, of whom Voltaire said that they had no courage; hearing of an injustice or an infamy, they shrugged their shoulders, and then went to supper, and did nothing. Of course Mr. Sutherland is not a Voltaire; but that is a fact which does not need emphasising.

Mr. Sutherland is not a fighter, and Mr. Symes is. *Voilà tout!* Mr. Symes, however, would never think of attacking Mr. Sutherland for serving the progressive movement in his own way; but Mr. Sutherland does attack Mr. Symes, and the attack is as absurd as it is gratuitous.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. 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. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, January 21, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool: 11, "Was Jesus Christ a Reformer?" 3, "Britishers and Boers: A Freethinker's View of the South African Question"; 7, "The Dream of God."  
 January 28, Glasgow.  
 February 4, Manchester.

**To Correspondents.**

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 21, Athenæum, London; 28, Athenæum, London. February 4, Sheffield; 11, Bolton; 18, New Brompton; 25, Glasgow; 26, 27, and 28, Glasgow districts. March 4, Dundee; 11, Huddersfield.—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.

G. J. WARREN, 20 Rhodeswell-road, Limehouse, E., thanks A. Embleton for another parcel of clothing for distribution among poor friends.

A. JOHNSON.—You must not expect the editor to answer such questions by post. The Lord's share of the spoil is referred to in Numbers xxxi. 32-40.

FRANK HALL.—Your comment is pointed and wholesome, but the matter has already been dealt with in our columns.

W. F. HERBERT suggests that the N. S. S. should arrange for its Annual Excursion this summer to go to Thetford, the birthplace of Thomas Paine. He also suggests that the Yarmouth Freethinkers should make local inquiries and send information to the Executive.

J. PARTRIDGE.—See paragraph.

S. HOLMAN.—Shall appear.

T. FELIX.—We daresay Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., could supply you with the "Apocryphal" Books of both Testaments. Write to him direct.

W. SIMONS.—The slip got mislaid during the editor's illness. We will insert a final list of acknowledgments when you send it. Meanwhile we note your wish that those who hold Fagan Testimonial tickets would clear for them without delay.

W. MARTIN.—We have sent a brief note to *Reynolds'* concerning the letter you refer to.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE.—It seems to us that Charles Bradlaugh's name is ill associated with a place of mere recreation and entertainment. When you have notices of lectures or public meetings to send us we will insert them. It was never intended that our "Lecture Notices" should cover regular Sunday amusements. Of course it is different when a Branch has an occasional social party.

F. LACEY, in reference to what he calls our "admirable article" on "Praying against the Boers," suggests that the Salvation Army should be sent to the front. They are already dressed as soldiers, he says, and used to the blood-and-fire business.

R. CHAPMAN.—Mr. Foote will give you an answer as soon as possible about visiting South Shields again.

T. HAMLYN and F. TEAL.—Mr. Forder's indisposition has probably dislocated his business at the shop. We regret that you have had such difficulty in getting your orders executed, and have handed the matter over to the Secretary of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, who will give it immediate attention.

LOVER OF JUSTICE.—Your love of justice is not strong enough, apparently, to prompt you to give your name and address. We cannot take any notice of the contents of your letter unless you disclose your identity.

H. PERCY WARD.—Mr. Foote is much better, but the throat irritation has not quite left him. Thanks for your kind inquiries.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Boston Investigator—Public Opinion—Progressive Thinker—De Vrije Gedachte—Daily Chronicle—Open Court—Western Evening Herald—Der Arme Teufel—Brann's Iconoclast—Secular Thought—Blue Grass Blade—Two Worlds—Postal Record (Boston)—Crescent—Ethical World—Coming Day—Independent Pulpit—Truthseeker (New York)—Sydney Bulletin—Torch of Reason—Liberator—Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper.

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.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

**Sugar Plums.**

Mr. FOOTE delivers three lectures to-day (Jan. 21) in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool. His subjects are likely to attract large audiences. Mr. Foote goes on from Liverpool to Glasgow, where he delivers three lectures on the following Sunday (Jan. 28). On the intervening week-nights he will be lecturing at various towns in the surrounding district, of course under the auspices of the Glasgow branch.

This evening (Sunday, January 21) Mr. Watts lectures in the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, taking for his subject "Can a Scientist be a Christian?" This will be a new lecture, and should be interesting. It will, no doubt, evoke some discussion.

Mr. Cohen's article on "The Dying of Religion" is reproduced, with acknowledgment, in the *Liberator* (Melbourne) from our columns.

The Statutory Meeting of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, was held on Wednesday evening, January 10, at Anderton's Hotel. A large number of shareholders were represented by proxies, principally in Mr. Foote's favor. Those who were present in person listened appreciatively to the Directors' report, and afterwards passed a resolution of approval and confidence. During question-time it was made evident that there was a general opinion in favor of better arrangements for the sale and distribution of the Company's publications, including the *Freethinker*. We may add that Mr. Foote occupied the chair at this meeting, and that the Board was further represented by Messrs. C. Watts and S. Hartmann. Miss Vance, of course, was present as Secretary.

We have been asked whether Shares can still be obtained in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. Yes, they can be obtained, and the Secretary (Miss Vance, 377 Strand, W.C.) will be happy to send Application Forms to the address of any correspondent. The Company is not being advertised at present, because a fresh Prospectus is now necessary, and the issue of it will probably be concurrent with the bold step which is being contemplated. The Company is going to take premises in conjunction with the Secular Society, Limited, and the National Secular Society; and a definite announcement on this point may be expected very shortly. By this arrangement all the central work of the Secular movement will be concentrated under one roof, securing economy and effectiveness of effort.

We venture to call our readers' attention once more to the Freethought Publishing Company's new edition of Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses*. The shilling edition is well printed and attractively got-up. The half-crown edition is fit to be laid on any drawing-room table. Every Freethinker who has not got a copy of this book should get one as soon as possible. It is a capital bit of reading, replete with Ingersoll's best qualities, and written in his prime. It is also an excellent book to lend to a less heterodox friend. We may add that this is not the *lecture* on the "Mistakes of Moses." It is a book of nearly 150 pages. And most people will consider the popular edition a remarkably good shilling's worth.

Mr. H. Percy Ward held his first important debate on Sunday evening. His opponent was the Rev. A. J. Dade, a Unitarian minister, and the subject of discussion was "Is there a God?" We don't hear whether it was settled, but we do hear that the hall was so crowded that quite a hundred people were unable to gain entrance, that both speakers were well received and heartily applauded, and that both sides were thoroughly satisfied with the character of the proceedings. The veteran J. H. Ridgway occupied the chair.

Mr. Daniel T. Ames, a handwriting expert, was called as a witness in the great poison-murder case which is now being tried in New York. Mr. Ames is a well-known Freethinker, and has written against the Bible and Christianity. The counsel for the prisoner, therefore, took objection to the witness's evidence on the ground of his "blasphemous" opinions. Recorder Goff, however, interposed decisively. "In this country," he said, "a man's belief or want of religious belief cannot be raised in any court of justice. It is of absolutely no effect: whether he believes or not must not have any weight whatever with the jury. No witness is barred from giving testimony in our courts because of his belief or disbelief in religion. Our Constitution says that this must be no bar or disability."

Without, there was a frosty atmosphere and a starlit sky which made the Leicester Secular Hall seem all the brighter and cosier last Sunday evening, and a crowded audience greeted Mr. Charles Watts on his entrance to lecture on "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him." Amongst the listeners

were elder folk who had for many years past come to hear Mr. Watts on his visits to Leicester. Ingersoll's portrait adorns the Society's club-room, and his name is always applauded. But on this occasion a special vividness was lent to the memory of the great Transatlantic pioneer by the fact that the lecturer had so often come into personal relation with the Colonel. Laughter alternated with pathetic silence and eager clapping as Mr. Watts shifted his eloquent descriptions from one phase to another of the Colonel's personality as a man, an orator, the centre of a household, and a generous neighbor.—*F. J. Gould.*

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie's "The Christian Alphabet" is reproduced from our columns in *Secular Thought* (Toronto).

Mr. E. Gwinnell, a veteran North London Freethinker, writes to us as follows: "Occasionally you state certain ways of helping the sale of the *Freethinker*. I have adopted another. I buy yearly a Kelly's Local Directory for one shilling. I find the *Freethinker* weighs under two ounces, and can go by book-post in a halfpenny newspaper wrapper. To prevent bigoted postmasters from prying I fold the title inside. I write out the addresses from the Directory, taking my own street first, and post the papers a dozen or so a week. They don't know but that it comes from a friend, and are more likely to read it in consequence. In a week or two I will see if my newsagent is selling any more. I think this is a better way than distributing broadcast in parks and elsewhere, and seeing three parts torn up before your face by Christian bigots." No doubt this is a very good plan, and perhaps other friends will give it a trial.

Rev. Father Edward J. Gleason, a Jesuit lecturer in America, is the author of the following protest against the "infidelity" which prevails over there: "The schools of the present are imbued with infidel teachings. In fact, religion is tabooed in the modern school. All the class books are full of pagan lore. I know as a matter of fact that the majority of publishers are ever ready to print books containing infidel teachings. They act in that way merely from a financial motive. They are well aware of the temper of the times. One will find that almost nine out of every ten books contained in the public libraries of the country teem with Agnostic ideas."

### The Source of England's Greatness.

'Twas stated that our Queen and "Faith Defender,"  
Whose Arms are noted for their up-to-date-ness,  
Once called "God's word" the source of England's splendor  
Or "greatness."

The statement was denied, and that was vexing  
To folks with Jingo leanings and opinions;  
Their Bible sanctions thieving or "annexing"  
Dominions.

With Volume II. they're only slightly smitten;  
They like Jehovah's methods—bloody, drastic,  
And treat His words "Thou shalt not kill" as written  
Sarcastic.

"An eye for eye, a tooth for tooth's" their motto;  
To Jah the jingo's grasping followers' noses  
The smell of blood is sweeter far than Otto  
Of Roses.

Tom Atkins seeks the foe to overthrow him;  
Supplied with gun and Bible, goes and whacks him;  
The source of England's greatness is "Elohim"—  
And Maxim.

The Bible says: "Our readers they are few, so  
Don't tarry in the land that you inhabit;  
Go ye to all the world." The British do so,  
And grab it.

Salvation without price the Bible offers,  
Salvation from its Author's fiery curses;  
The British sell His Book to fill their coffers  
And purses.

Encouraged by its bibulous narrations,  
They drink too much intoxicating liquor;  
Which helps to swell the "pile" inside the Nation's  
Exchequer.

"The Bible is the source of England's greatness."  
The statement in cold print looks most alarming;  
And after "Bible," "Beer, and up-to-date-ness"  
In arming!"

ESS JAY BEE.

A clever theft was praiseworthy among the Spartans, and it is equally so among Christians, provided that it be on a sufficiently large scale.—*Herbert Spencer.*

### Soldiers of Freethought.

FAR be it from us to underrate the valor of the "Soldiers of the Queen," who, at the present time, are commanding so much attention from their adversaries in South Africa, and from their sympathetic countrymen at home. The intrepidity of the rank and file, and of the officers by whom they are immediately led, is deservedly the subject of almost universal eulogy. Even the Generals, whose want of sagacity has led to lamentable disasters, have previous records which place their personal bravery beyond dispute.

The world is still compelled to acknowledge with admiration the power of British pluck. But as there are various kinds of pluck—physical and moral—so there are different meeds of praise to be accorded. And, looking back through the long series of persecutions to which heretics have been subjected by tyrant theologies in the past, one cannot but think that the "Soldiers of Freethought" have won even nobler laurels than may be accorded to the "Soldiers of the Queen," however victorious they may eventually be.

The fight, continued through centuries, for freedom of opinion and its expression has evolved heroes greater than any who have been decorated with the Victoria Cross. A finer and more unflinching spirit has been demanded in that warfare than ever was displayed in mere military conflict. The man who joins the Army does so, as a rule, in times of peace and without any immediate prospect of active service. He may draw his pay, eat his rations, serve out his time, and retire on some small pension without having once been "under fire." If, as in recent times, he should be unexpectedly called upon, it is simply to fight as a hired combatant. He has no voice, no privilege of volition in regard to the issues involved in the fray. That is all settled for him by the Government which happens to be in power at the time. It is merely a coincidence if he chances to be in agreement on general grounds. In the ever-changing aspects of international politics he may, if he has independence and individuality of thought, find himself called upon to shoot and slash people who, as far as he knows, are probably in the right. That, apart from the shedding of blood, is one of the most horrid and hateful features of an active military career.

There is, of course, the comfort constantly administered to him that he is fighting for his God, his Queen, and his country. But he may, in the first place, be one of those doubting Thomas's whose belief, or lack of it, would best be defined by the exclamation, "God knows if I have a God!" Or, again, if of reflective mind, he might inquire if the enemy has a God, and, if so, whether, perchance, that Deity is not identical with the Deity he himself is worshipping. In that case, of course, it is useless to consider that he is serving his God by slaying a co-devotee.

And then, his Queen? Well, he may have Republican instincts, acquired, perhaps, after he had taken the oath of allegiance and service, or, more probably, hardly thought of it in the hurried formality. He may find no special incentive to shed his own blood, or other people's blood, for someone who, however estimable in herself and her numerous progeny, is still merely a figure-head gilded with national gold that in the future—perhaps the far-off future, but still in the future—will be better applied. And his country? Well, his country demands something from him—more, by the way, than it is ever likely to give him in return. One is always inclined to be patriotic—even to the extent of poetic frenzy—when one's country is in the right. But suppose it is in the wrong? The civilian then begins to think of Thomas Paine's cosmopolitanism—"The world is my country." But the Soldier of the Queen has no choice. He has to go forward and attack—it may be, without the slightest animus in his heart; possibly, indeed, with some latent sympathy—fellow-creatures whom he has never seen before, and against whom he has not the slightest personal animosity, at any rate at the commencement of hostilities. This is the real position of the "Soldier of the Queen." No amount of religious, loyal, patriotic, or military humbug can gloss it over. There may be loud shouts of "glory" at the immediate time, and medals afterwards; but "Country," for whom the

British soldier has fought in his blind obedience to orders, is just as likely, when all is over, to reward him, should he be of the rank and file, with a miserable pittance that eventually lands him in the workhouse.

There is no "glory" about all this. But there is real glory falling in halos of luminous rays around the heroes and martyrs of Freethought, who have not died in the attempt to kill others, but in the effort to save them. The champions of Freethought in the past were no hired combatants, any more than they are now. In their time, they had no hope of glory except from the small circle of heretics amongst whom they lived and worked. Their sacrifice—at the stake, in torture, in imprisonment, by fine and social ostracism—was made and willingly made, not for the sake of their own intolerant times, but for the sake of posterity. And their names are treasured now in the grateful memory of those who benefit, at this moment, from their voluntary martyrdom. They were not led to war as part of some mechanical and misdirected Army Corps. They went as voluntary agents under no direction except their own spirit of determination, and with no desire to achieve anything but rights which now—thanks to their sacrifices and exertions—are admitted in principle, if not entirely in fact. They were always at liberty to retire—were, indeed, implored even at the last moment to renounce their heresies with a full promise of pardon and tempting prospective inducements. A soldier of the line is offered no such chance of withdrawal. They continued firm, and therein exhibited the moral courage by which heroes are made out of men.

Without mentioning all the pioneers of heresy in early times—amongst them Vanini, who was burnt at the stake at Toulouse as an Atheist, and whose tongue was plucked out with pincers after he said: "Christ sweated with fear and weakness; but I, I die undaunted"—there is a whole calendar of Freethought heroes. Richard Carlile, who suffered nine and a-half years' imprisonment, and upon whom fines, amounting to several thousands of pounds, were imposed, is a hero never to be forgotten. Since Richard Carlile's death no fewer than forty-nine years have been passed in prison by twenty-seven persons—including Mr. Foote, who was caged-up for one year "on his own." This is a calculation made from available records. It is very much below the mark, I know, because I have not at hand the records of the lengths of imprisonment meted out to Carlile's shopmen and a number of others in the past century.

But say it is only forty years! Imprisoned for an aggregate of forty years—to say nothing of fines—for a filthy old Jew book, with a later addition called the New Testament, which is nearly, if not quite, as bad. Does it not make one's blood boil?

The men who have done these forty years are indeed "Soldiers of Freethought." Let us ever retain a grateful memory of them in our minds. They have done more for progress than the "Soldiers of the Queen" would do if they smashed the Boers to-morrow.

FRANCIS NEALE.

### Shelley's Masterpiece.

"Prometheus is my favorite poem. I charge you, therefore, specially to pet him and feed him with fine ink and good paper.—For Prometheus I desire no great sale; Prometheus was never intended for more than five or six persons; it is, in my judgment, of a higher character than anything I have yet attempted, and is, perhaps, less an imitation of anything that has gone before it; it is original, and cost me severe mental labor."—SHELLEY, *Letter to Ollier*.

No apology is necessary for an examination of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, that profoundest and most perfect of his more elaborate compositions. In this splendid lyrical drama the poet depicts the sufferings and endurance of the unconquerable spirit of liberty through its night of tribulation and suppression, the ultimate overthrow and annihilation of the omnipotent tyrant, and the joy of all at their liberation from the "sceptred curse."

In the English language there is nothing of the kind sublimer than the cry with which the drama opens. As dawn slowly breaks over the Caucasus, the chained Titan lifts up his heart and voice against the tyrant.

Coleridge's Hymn to Mont Blanc, Satan's Address to the Sun, are both inferior to this magnificent poem. The sustained elevation of thought, the organ-like roll of mighty verse, the gorgeous imagery, combine to make the glorious music with which we are conducted into the fairy palace of the *Prometheus Unbound*. After the opening speech the wings of the poem flag and falter. Shelley invents a second world, corresponding to the world which we inhabit, out of which earth summons the phantasm of Jupiter, who, in this poem, is the spirit of evil, slavery, ignorance, and vice.

The phantasm repeats the curse which Prometheus long ago pronounced upon the tyrant. Then follow some of those ideal pictures which Shelley was so felicitous in drawing.

Later, a swarm of furies come to prey upon the Titan. With their departure the music, which, after the magnificent opening, has dropped, grows more rapid and clear. Adding strength to strength and beauty to beauty, Shelley, towards the conclusion, reaches the heights of passionate song, of inspired lyric frenzy.

As the furies sweep away, there come floating up from beneath, like fleecy clouds in spring, the bright choirs of those subtle spirits whose homes are the dim caves of human thought. In one of these choruses occurs the exquisite couplet:—

And the wandering herdsmen know  
That the white thorn soon will blow.

The second act opens with the most perfect heroic verse Shelley ever wrote. As the speech of Prometheus is the height of the sublime, so is the speech of Asia of the beautiful. It is the morning on which fate is to release Prometheus and overthrow Jupiter.

Asia, the love of Prometheus, is awakened from sleep by a presentiment of approaching good. Soon she sees the point of one white star quivering in the orange light of widening morn. It wanes and gleams again. This beautiful description is as perfect as a landscape by Turner. It is a dream of loveliness, such as only the greatest artists can command.

It is the morning when eternity, here named Demogorgon, declares at last for the enchained spirit of freedom. Then follow some lovely lyrics. It is only the greatest poets who can ring these delicate chimes. Like Shakespeare, Shelley saw sylphs and fairies, and heard the ding-dong bell of the water nymphs. In these scenes we obtain some insight into the extraordinary complexity and depth of Shelley's mind, which could, on occasion, turn from elf-land to the powerful and exciting realism of *The Cenci*.

Asia and Panthea arrive at the home of eternity. Here they have that vision of the "immortal hours":—

The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night  
I see cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds,  
Which trample the dim winds; in each there stands  
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.  
Some look behind, as friends pursued them there,  
And yet I see no shape but the keen stars;  
Others with burning eyes lean forth and drink  
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,  
As if the thing they loved fled on before,  
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks  
Stream like a comet's flashing hair. They all  
Sweep onward.

Further on we meet that splendid ode which we see so often in Anthologies under the title of "Hymn to the Spirit of Nature."

Throughout this drama Asia is Shelley's substitute for the Greek Aphrodite. She is, therefore, incarnate Love. He even introduces the conception of her marine birth in lines of exquisite imagery. Then follows that glorious hymn, "Life of life, thy lips enkindle"—one of the most perfect of Shelley's lyrics.

Out of the central caverns of Existence Eternity rises to overthrow the Omnipotent Tyrant. Jupiter is overwhelmed and swept out of heaven. He falls dizzily down, for ever down—

Ruin tracks his lagging fall through boundless space and time

Thence to the close of the poem is depicted the joy of all living things at the return of Love and Liberty. The splendor of the strains of Earth and Moon, the piercing cry of the liberated Earth, the delicate responses of the Moon, render the poem at this place amongst the wonders of literature. As the passion of triumph abates in the heart of Earth, he grows aware

of the faint, sweet voice of the crystal paramour who pursues and accompanies him through space :—

MOON—As a grey and watery mist  
Glow like solid amethyst  
Athwart the western mountains it enfolds  
When the sunset sleeps  
Upon its snow.  
EARTH—And the weak day weeps  
That it should be so,  
O gentle moon, the voice of thy delight, etc.

What exquisite word-music! The delicate alliteration, the response when the dying fall and close of the moon's song is met and prolonged by Earth, like the nightingale in that weird forest through which Asia pursued the singing voices :—

Waiting to catch the languid close  
Of the last strain, then lifts on high  
The wings of the weak melody.

The poem closes with the low, solemn words of Eternity, like the muttering of far-heard thunder, and the meek, small voices of created things respond :—

I hear : I am as a leaf shaken by thee.

So divinely ends this masterpiece. It is noble and inspiring in its scope and significance, and grandly conceived. It is thronged with shapes of the utmost majesty and loveliness, and is full of swift and thrilling melody. It is the final triumph of Shelley's lyrical poetry.

What Shelley might have been we cannot conceive. At the age of thirty he was drowned in the sea he so loved. His ashes lie beneath the walls of Rome, and "*Cor Cordium*" ("Heart of Hearts"), chiselled on his tomb, well says what all who love Liberty feel when they think of this "poet of poets and purest of men."

MIMNERMUS.

### Murder of a Professed Sorcerer.

STRANGE APPEAL TO THE POPE.

AN extraordinary story of credulity and superstition has just been disclosed before the Juge d'Instruction of Marseilles in connection with the murder of Frozza Fovilla, a rag merchant, who was found dead in front of a little house in the Rue Granoux a few days ago. The victim, a young man of twenty-six, had lodged six months with a couple, named Salvator, in the Rue Roussel-Doria. Fovilla had not been long with the Salvators before he found that they had a great belief in sorcery of every kind, and he at once set about turning their credulity to his advantage. He himself professed to be a sorcerer, and, assuring them that he had been sent by God, began to terrorise them in every possible way. The husband submitted to him becoming the lover of his wife. Fovilla next made his host, who is a cobbler by trade, pay over all his earnings to his wife, from whom he thus succeeded in borrowing 165 francs. He even controlled Salvator's work, deciding what he must undertake and when it must be finished. The cobbler and his wife now feared Fovilla's power so much that they attributed to it any evil or mischance that happened to befall them. In particular, a complication of ailments that seized the husband was laid to his charge. They would have turned their lodger out, but were restrained by his prophecy that Salvator would die within twenty-four hours after Fovilla crossed the threshold.

The Salvators, at length, became exasperated to such an extent that they seriously thought of making the unpaid loan a pretext for getting rid of Fovilla. Here the strangest part of the story begins. They did not eject him on account of the loan. Their position had now become so unbearable that they meditated his death instead. They were, however, seized with scruples in case the rag merchant should really prove to be a Divine messenger. They, therefore, agreed to write to the Pope, giving full particulars of the case, and asking his Holiness to inform them whether or not Fovilla's actions had the authority of heaven. The letter was written for them by a public letter writer, near the Marseilles General Post Office. It was registered and sent off to Rome. No reply was received, the Secretary of the Vatican doubtless thinking that the letter had been written by some madman. Apparently, the situation grew still more desperate, for on January 3 and 4 two telegrams, reply paid, were dispatched to the Pope, asking for an immediate reply to the letter. Then, as there was still no answer, the Salvators took the matter into their own hands. One night, after supper, they taxed Fovilla with being the cause of their ruin; a scuffle ensued, and then the husband cut the rag merchant's throat. The Salvators, whose story is confirmed by the public letter writer and by the duplicates of the telegrams, confess their crime with the utmost satisfaction, and declare that since Fovilla's death all their ailments and other misfortunes have disappeared.

### The Secular Alphabet.

A are the Arts that have lifted our race ;  
B are the Books that have moved us apace.  
C is Credulity, nearing its end ;  
D stands for Doubt, the true Truthseeker's friend.  
E is Endeavor, the Secular pray'r ;  
F is the Freedom to think and declare.  
G is the Gloom that is passing from life ;  
H is Hypocrisy, less and less rife.  
I is Instruction in matters of fact ;  
J stands for Justice in thought and in act.  
K is the Knell of the biblical blight ;  
L stands for Liberty, Logic, and Light.  
M are the Mystery-mongers exposed ;  
N are the National ills diagnosed.  
O are the Orthodox, foes of the Truth ;  
P are the Priests, the corrupters of youth.  
Q are the Querists that smile at Taboo ;  
R is the *Right* to be honest and true,  
S is Salvation of man by himself ;  
T is the Truth, spite of parsons and pelf.  
U is the Union of *Christ-sundered* hearts ;  
V are the Virtues that Science imparts.  
W stands for the Work of to-day ;  
X, the "Unknown," to which thoughtless folk pray.  
Y are the Years that are wasted on God ;  
Z is our Zeal ; and for Truth we will plod.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

### "Bonfire of Books."

REV. LUCIEN CLARK, the able and popular pastor of Foundry Church, Washington, D.C., preached last Sunday from the verse in Acts xix : "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all men"; and the *Post* reports him as saying that this bonfire was "a public testimony and a powerful means of grace," and declaring that "there are many books in every public library which might well be burned.....All books which antagonise the Bible and the Christian religion should be consigned to the flames.....Do with them as the Ephesians, who had practised curious arts, did with their literature—burn them."

Librarians will doubtless take note of this advice, or rather command, to the people of Washington. The word "arts," appearing in the Bible, usually refers to chemistry ; so it was scientific books that were burned by the ignorant Ephesians. That books were good to make fire with was early learned by the Church.

Under the Christian Emperor Theodosius, about 380, Bishop Theophilus put a torch to the greatest library in the world, the Serapion, in Egypt, he holding that all useful knowledge was contained in the Bible and the Church, and all other writings, therefore, ought to be destroyed. A nephew of Theophilus, "St. Cyril," it was who established Christianity in Alexandria. Hypatia, the brilliant and popular lecturer on Plato and Aristotle, addressed great audiences. "Each day before her academy stood a long train of chariots ; her auditorium was crowded with the wealth and fashion of Alexandria." A mob of Cyril's priests intercepted her in the suburbs, stripped her naked, tied her to a chariot's wheels, and dragged her through the streets to the altar, where the officiating clergyman slew her with a club.

In this way freedom of thought and speech perished. Justinian prohibited the teaching of philosophy in Athens, and its splendid schools were closed for ever. For twelve hundred years all knowledge of astronomy, geology, biology, geography, and chronology was made to conform to the preposterous first chapter of Genesis.

When the Alexandrian Library had grown to half a million books once more, Khalif Omar burned it again, justifying the act, as Theophilus had done, on the score of its irreligious tendency. The Christians burnt, for the same reason, the vast library of Tripoli, said to contain two million volumes of writings. They committed eighty thousand Arabic manuscripts to the flames in the square of Granada, a priceless treasure-house of knowledge. They burned the Fatimite Library at Cairo, they burnt the Hebrew libraries at Cologne, Dresden, and Munich. They destroyed almost all of the seventy public libraries of Andalusia. They burnt the astronomical observatory at Seville. Saracens had taught mathematics to Europe, had developed algebra, and named the stars. Christianity produced only one astronomer in 1,600 years, and him it burned at the stake—the great Bruno, who insisted that the earth was round.

Christians burnt the fine library at Lisbon, an irretrievable loss ; but ignorance took its revenge, for in 1601, the year after Bruno's martyrdom, a trick horse was brought before the ecclesiastical court in that same city charged with being possessed with a devil, was solemnly and exhaustively tried, was found guilty by unanimous vote of the ecclesiastics, was sentenced, and burned to death in the public square. De Dominis, a distinguished chemist, printed a book to prove

the rainbow a natural phenomenon; he was decoyed to Rome, persecuted there, and perished in the old castle of Hadrian. His books were then placed in the coffin with his body, and the whole, being convicted of heresy by the Church, were piously anathematised and cast into the flames.

In Mexico and Peru the conquerors burnt vast libraries of picture-writings and quipu records, for the very reason which Dr. Clark gives. What would not the world give for them to-day? What would not the world give for the magnificent stores of "the Daught Library," the great Serapion? Nay, what would not the world—even the Christian sects for which Brother Clark speaks—give for those curious books teaching "curious arts," destroyed by the fanatics of Ephesus? Many books in public libraries are defaced and mutilated by readers who consider them "sacrilegious," and that quite regardless of the fact that they belong to the public. Is it going to be necessary on this edge of the third century after Bruno for the custodians of books to increase their vigilance?

—Washington Post.

### Book Chat.

DR. JAMES MARTINEAU, who has just died at the great age of ninety-five, was a somewhat voluminous author, almost entirely on religious subjects, or on ethics as related to or affected by religion. The one book of his outside this sphere, if, indeed, quite outside, is the monograph on Spinoza; which, excellent as it is, is not as good as Sir Frederick Pollock's. Dr. Martineau was perhaps the most striking figure of the century in the religious life of England after Cardinal Newman—but it was a long way after that wonderful man with the subtle mind, the profound knowledge of human nature, and the well-nigh impeccable style. The style of Dr. Martineau had a certain noble sonority, but its movement was a little monotonous. He had a certain power of imagination, but it was the imagination (so to speak) of the metaphysician, not the imagination of the poet. His praises are being sounded right and left, chiefly because, having lived nearly a century, he saw the very Churches, or at least their advanced leaders, getting abreast of the Theism which he had taught all along. He was not exactly an original thinker, but as a Christian—for such he professed himself, in spite of his rejection of miracles and supernatural inspiration—he was a herald of the newer religion, into which orthodox Christianity is merging. He was able to transfuse his advanced Unitarianism—although, we believe, he repudiated the libel—into the more old-fashioned denominations. It must be allowed, too, that he more and more firmly denied, as he grew older, the authority of the Christian documents; and his criticism of them was really drastic—far too drastic for the common hacks of Christian apologetics. This much must be added, that he attracted the reverence of many good men, and that he lived on the higher levels of personal character. On the other side, it seems that he was unduly shocked by his sister Harriet's friendship with Mr. H. G. Atkinson, and too intolerant of her brave, outspoken Atheism.

Here is a favorable specimen of Dr. Martineau's style, taken from a lecture on "Religion as Affected by Modern Materialism," delivered at Manchester New College, London, in 1874. After referring to the long evolution of man and society, he proceeds: "The beings that touch me with their look and draw me out of myself, the duties that press upon my heart and hand, are on the spot, speaking to me while the clock ticks; and to love them aright, to serve them faithfully, and construct with them a true harmony of life, is the same task, whether I bear within me the inheritance of a million years, or, with all my surroundings, issued this morning from the dark."

A new edition of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Letters* has been demanded by the public. Stevenson was a brilliant writer, and was perhaps most naturally brilliant in his correspondence. He was a Freethinker, and had to suffer in the usual way when his family became aware of the fact. The following extract from a letter addressed to Mr. Charles Baxter, of Edinburgh, and dated February 2, 1873, will show what we mean:—"The thunderbolt has fallen with a vengeance now. On Friday night, after leaving you, in the course of conversation, my father put me one or two questions as to beliefs, which I candidly answered. I really hate all lying so much now—a new-found honesty that has somehow come out of my late illness—that I could not so much as hesitate at the time; but, if I had foreseen the real hell of everything since, I think I should have lied, as I have done so often before. I so far thought of my father, but I had forgotten my mother. And now! they are both ill, both silent, both as down in the mouth as if—I can find no simile. You may fancy how happy it is for me. If it were not too late, I think I could almost find it in my heart to retract, but it is too late; and, again, am I to live my whole life as one falsehood? Of course, it is rougher than hell upon my father; but can I help it? They don't see either that my game is not the light-hearted scoffer; that I am not (as they call me) a careless

infidel. I believe as much as they do, only generally in the inverse ratio; I am, I think, as honest as they can be in what I hold. I have not come hastily to my views. I reserve (as I told them) many points until I acquire fuller information, and do not think I am thus justly to be called 'horrible Atheist.'"

Mr. H. S. Salt, the honorary secretary of the Humanitarian League, has just published, through Reeves, 185 Fleet-street, a new and popular edition of his admirable book on *Animals' Rights* at the astonishingly low price of threepence. It is handsomely printed, and contains nearly a hundred pages of excellent and elevating reading.

A sumptuous edition of Ingersoll's *Vision of War* reaches us from Mr. C. P. Farrell, of New York. The illustrations, which are admirable in conception and execution, are by Mr. H. A. Ogden, and the reproduction of them is by the American Lithographic Company. By way of frontispiece, there are two fine portraits of Ingersoll; one from a photograph taken in 1862, as Colonel of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry, the other from a photograph taken in 1877. With regard to the text, every reader of Ingersoll knows it to be a masterpiece of imaginative eloquence. All who can afford the dollar will be glad to have this noble *Vision* in such a beautiful and fitting form.

The *Open Court* (Chicago) for January contains an article by the editor, Dr. Paul Carus, on "The Ox and the Ass in Illustrations of the Nativity." It is very interesting, and is accompanied by some well-executed drawings. The most notable article in this number is Dr. Moncure D. Conway's on "The Idol and the Ideal of the French Republic." Mr. Conway is "unable to share the optimistic view." He sees "perils ahead." Whether the Republic is to be ruled by the civil or the military power is really not yet decided. There are two nations in France opposed to each other, and no compromise is possible. "On one side," Mr. Conway says, "four-fifths of the army (including the police), all the priesthood, and all the Catholic peasantry who obey their priests, all the Royalists, Bonapartists, anti-Semites, snobs, and rowdies. Against all these all the scholars, professors, Protestants, artists, authors, Socialists, Freethinkers, real Republicans, merchants, skilled workmen, manufacturers." Mr. Conway fixes upon General Mercier as the worst criminal of the whole conspiracy against the Republic.

We have been favored with the December number of the *Coming Day*, edited by the Rev. John Page Hopps. Perhaps the January number will come along some day. Mr. Hopps is a good sort of man, but rather hysterical. Those who side with him in politics and so forth belong to the celestial hosts; those who don't belong to the hosts of Hades. We note a brief review of George Meredith's poems, in which his subjects are described as "morbid and miserable." Mr. Hopps would be a much more effective person if he had a little of George Meredith's mental and moral sanity, and a small dash of his humor.

### Not a Miracle.

The lawyer asked the witness if the incident previously alluded to wasn't a miracle, and the witness said he didn't know what a miracle was.

"Oh, come!" said the attorney. "Suppose you were looking out of a window in the twentieth story of a building and should fall out and should not be injured. What would you call that?"

"An accident," was the stolid reply.

"Yes, yes; but what else would you call it? Well, suppose that you were doing the same thing the next day; suppose you looked out of the twentieth-story window and fell out, and again should find yourself not injured. Now, what would you call that?"

"A coincidence," said the witness.

"Oh, come now," the lawyer began again. "I want you to understand what a miracle is, and I'm sure you do. Just suppose that on the third day you were looking out of the twentieth-story window and fell out, and struck your head on the pavement twenty stories below, and were not in the least injured. Come, now, what would you call it?"

"Three times?" said the witness, rousing a little from his apathy. "Well, I'd call that a habit."

And the lawyer gave it up.

—Green Bag.

Calumny is the homage which dogmatism has ever paid to conscience. Even in the periods when the guilt of heresy was universally believed the spirit of intolerance was only sustained by the diffusion of countless libels against the misbeliever and by the systematic concealment of his virtues.—*Lecky*.

## 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, "Can a Scientist be a Christian?"

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Religion and War."

NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Leighton Hall, Leighton-crescent, Kentish Town): 7, Joe Clayton, "Socialism the Hope of Mankind."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion on "Rational Dress," opened by Mrs. Pooley; 7, Mr. John Robertson, "The Morality of Empire."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Discussion on "Should Ethical Societies Aim to Establish a Democratic Church?"

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Arms, Page-street): 7.30, Chilperic Edwards, "The Book of Daniel."

## COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): 3.45, T. Millar, "Intellectual Atheism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): W. F. Barnard—11, "The Suicide of Religion"; 7, "Theology Tested by Morality."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Harry Snell, "Mazzini: Patriot and Prophet."

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, Mr. Baylief, A lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, Harry Simpson, "Cremation." Lantern views.

PORTH BRANCH (29 Middle-street, Pontypridd): 6, A Meeting.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' annual and quarterly meeting; 5, Tea; 7, Lecture or Reading.

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

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): G. W. Foote—11, "Was Jesus Christ a Reformer?" 3, "Britishers and Boers: A Freethinker's View of the South African Question"; 7, "The Dream of God."

## Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—January 21, Camberwell; 28, Dundee. February 4, Glasgow.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—February 4, Birmingham; 25, Birmingham. March 11, Sheffield; 18, Birmingham. April 1, Glasgow; 8, Birmingham; 29, Birmingham.

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