

# THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

## Old Dowie.

MR. ALEXANDER DOWIE is an old Scotchman, who has long been settled in America, where he bosses the "Christian Catholic Church in Zion," whose headquarters, we believe, are at Chicago. This body is said to possess a great deal of property, which, however, legally belongs to Mr. Dowie. He is, therefore, absolute master of the Church, and is accountable to no one but himself for the expenditure of its revenues. This explains how it is that he travels like a prince, and is able, during his present sojourn in London, to occupy an extensive and luxurious suite of rooms in the fashionable Hotel Russell, at a cost of something like £70 a week. What a satire on the man's pretensions as an apostle of poor Jesus of Nazareth! Nevertheless, there is no particular reason for Englishmen to be enraged at the spectacle. We have a "General" Booth, who really owns all the property of the Salvation Army. We have Archbishops and Bishops who receive from four to fifteen thousand pounds a year for preaching the blessings of poverty, and all the rest of the pathetic nonsense of the Sermon on the Mount. Even such a phenomenon as old Dowie ought not to cause an earthquake or a revolution in England. Why, then, have his meetings been disturbed and broken up? Why has he to be protected from violence by large bodies of police? It can hardly be because he is an American, for Americans are rather popular here than otherwise. It can hardly be because he is a selfish humbug, for we have plenty of home-grown varieties of that species. The solution of the riddle is apparently to be found in the fact that old Dowie's meetings have been disturbed and broken up by medical students. Amongst other things, he is a faith-healer; so that the opposition of the medical students is a kind of professional demonstration. No doubt they think they are prompted by a love of true science, and a hatred of quackery; but outsiders are likely to take a somewhat different view of their proceedings. We venture to suggest to these young gentlemen that the most vital interest of science, as well as of citizenship, is freedom of investigation and discussion. It is for the interest of society, in the long run, that fools and philosophers should have an equal opportunity of being heard if they can. And for two very simple reasons. First, because it is not always easy at the beginning to discriminate between fools and philosophers. Second, because nobody is fit to be entrusted with the power of silencing anybody. Still, a despotism of that kind would be far better than the despotism of a mob, which is generally as devoid of sense as it is of manners, and without any lucid intervals in its irresponsibility. Medical students have no more right than other people to attend Mr. Dowie's meetings except to hear what he has to say. If they do not want to hear him themselves, they have no sort of right to prevent other people from doing so. Common sense might suggest that they are, after all, only playing old Dowie's game for him, by giving him a fine gratuitous advertisement, and enlisting in his behalf the sympathy of a multitude of superstitionists. Moreover, it is not so certain that faith-healing is all humbug. Very likely it is so as professed and practised by old Dowie. But men of gumption know very well that, in nine cases out of ten, it is faith that saves a doctor's patients, rather than his medicines; faith in his skill, faith in his good intentions, faith in his promises of recovery, and practical faith

in his directions as to dietary and other observances. The great thing a doctor has to do is to see that common hygienic laws are attended to, and to keep up the patient's spirits—for hope is half the battle. He may do *some* good beyond that, but he knows very well (if he only tells the truth) that it is far from being as much as ignorant people imagine. Surgery has indeed become scientific, but is medicine much less empiric than it was two thousand years ago?

It would be far better if the medical students attended to their own business, and if old Dowie were allowed to attend to *his* business in peace and quiet. No power on earth—or elsewhere, as far as we know—can prevent sharps and flats from coming together. They nose each other a long way off. They draw together as if by gravitation. The sharps enjoy it, and the flats enjoy it.

Doubtless the pleasure is as great  
Of being cheated as to cheat.

So sang the author of *Hudibras*, and he had studied both species to perfection.

So much for our reflections on old Dowie's case and the conduct of his riotous opponents. And now for a certain moral to be derived from this affair. The Chicago faith-healer is a Christian, and he is visiting a Christian country. Yet he is mobbed and insulted, and would probably be in serious danger if it were not for the police. Now let the reader, with this fact in his mind, just think for a moment of the missionary trouble in China. The apostles of Christianity in the Celestial Empire are all "foreigners." They speak not one, but many outlandish tongues; they represent, too, alien manners and customs; and the religious doctrines they disseminate are hostile to the most sacred beliefs and practices of the native inhabitants. Is it any wonder, then, that the missionaries are detested, and that every now and then the irate Chinese attack the "foreign devils" with a view to clearing them out of the country? Is it astonishing, when Christians mob Christian preachers in England, that Christian missionaries are sometimes mobbed in China? The wonder is, in our opinion, that the Chinese have allowed these Christian "foreign devils" to proselytise so freely and to establish their mission stations in so many parts of the empire.

What would happen if Buddhist missionaries came to England, Scotland, and Wales, and went about ostentatiously trying to convert the inhabitants to a new religious faith? We have not included Ireland, as that country is out of the question. The Catholic priests over there, without lifting their own fingers, would soon see that Buddhist missionaries were as scarce as snakes in the Island of St. Patrick. Perhaps they would not be murdered here—at least not extensively. Civilisation is more firmly established here, for one thing; and, in the second place, there are a vast number of Buddhists, Brahmans, and Mohammedans in the British Empire, owing allegiance to the Queen, so that it would never do to treat their representatives as thieves and assassins. But it is beyond doubt that there would be serious "ructions." Why, it is only a few years since the Liverpool mob howled and threw stones at a few peaceful citizens who, without any active proselytising, tried to worship God quietly in their own way in a modest little mosque in that somewhat cosmopolitan city. From stone-throwing to more murderous violence is only a step, and that step might easily have been taken if it were not for the police and a strong, if not wide, public opinion in favor of toleration.

G. W. FOOTE.



## Tolstoi and Christ.

THE Greek Orthodox Church has done itself no good by its virtual excommunication of Count Leo Tolstoi. Nor did the Romish Church derive any benefit from the ban it placed on the late Dr. St. George Mivart. These ecclesiastical fulminations have ceased to carry with them any of their old-time weight. Nowadays they are laughed at as the weak assumptions of a terrorising power which, happily, no longer exists. They are but the mumblings of toothless, decayed giants, who have taken refuge in wayside caves, from which they impotently snarl at passers-by.

Who cares in the present day whether he is excommunicated or not? The wide heavens are still open to him if he is inclined to continue his worship. Personally and socially he is not one penny the worse. So far from being shunned by his fellows as if he were a leper, his society is courted and his views invited even by members of his aforesaid Church. He is regarded as an interesting and welcome novelty in an age of conventionality and commonplace and cant. So the Church gnashes its toothless gums, and the object of its malevolence goes on his way, if not rejoicing, certainly not depressed, and always with an access of popularity.

Ecclesiastical establishments, which at other times find it a comfort to declare that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," apparently fail to perceive that their own attempts at martyrdom are at the best but incubating agencies of heresy. Befogged with theological dogma, and exalted with ideas of their own spiritual importance, they fatuously eject members of their ecclesia, from whom, perhaps more than from others, they have derived honor and distinction. What is still more disastrous to them is that they direct attention to heterodox opinions which otherwise might have failed to command so large a share of public attention. Persecution nowadays means publicity; excommunication is exaltation, and a Church which attempts to be tyrannical must be mad.

The little candle-lights of the Greek Orthodox Church have persuaded themselves that they are suns. Outside their feeble and flickering illumination they imagine that all is darkness. But we live in an age of new illuminants radiating an effulgence of light in which the candles of the "established lanterns" are completely snuffed out. Tolstoi needs no illumination from the Church. He is a light unto himself. No support or sanction that any body of ecclesiastics could offer is of any value to him.

One of the ironies of religious life presents itself in the fact that this man, rejected of the Greek Church, is imbued with a deeper spirituality than probably any other distinguished thinker of his time. He is an ultra-Christian, who, having studied the doctrines of Christ with the profoundest attention, has given his interpretation of them to the world in all honesty and sincerity, and has, moreover, endeavored to reduce them to practice in his own life's work. He, perhaps more than any other modern interpreter of the teachings of the Nazarene, has perceived and elucidated their natural, direct, and obviously-intended meaning. With him there is no disingenuous desire to explain away their drift and bearing. He recognises their impracticability in the present state of society, and therein is in agreement with Freethinkers, who regard much of the Gospel of Christ as irreconcilable with the laws and conditions of modern life. But he believes that ultimately these teachings will be capable of general acceptance. In regard to that view we are compelled to consider him a visionary. The whole tenor of social life is drifting farther and farther away from the doctrines of Christ as Tolstoi understands them. Nothing short of a complete revolution in the existing state of things—a revolution such as the world has never known, and could hardly dream of, and is not altogether to be desired—would be equal to establishing in practical life the Gospel which Tolstoi holds to be that which was promulgated by Christ.

Tolstoi dismisses as the bold affirmation of an untruth the suggestion that the Christian doctrine is concerned only with the salvation of the individual, and has nothing to do with questions of State. In his work entitled *My Religion* he deals with that point at length:—

"It is well (so I said); I will resist not evil; I will turn the other cheek in private life; but hither comes the enemy, or here is an oppressed nation, and I am called upon to do my part in the struggle against evil, to go forth and kill. I must decide the question, to serve God or *toku*, to go to war or not to go. Perhaps I am a peasant; I am appointed mayor of a village, a judge, a juryman; I am obliged to take the oath of office, to judge, to condemn. What ought I to do? Again, I must choose between the divine law and the human law. Perhaps I am a monk living in a monastery; the neighboring peasants trespass upon our pasturage, and I am appointed to resist evil, to plead for justice against the wrong-doers. Again I must choose. It is a dilemma from which no man can escape."

Undoubtedly it is a dilemma to all who accept the teaching of Christ and desire to live an active life in the world. It is a difficulty out of which it is impossible for Christians to wriggle with even the smallest shred of consistency. Tolstoi relates, in detail, in the work mentioned above, how it was that all doubt with regard to the true meaning of such words as "Judge not, that ye be not judged" was effaced from his mind, and how he saw their purport to be that Jesus denounced the institution of all human tribunals, of whatever sort; that he meant to say so, and could not have expressed himself otherwise. "When I understood the command 'Resist not evil' in its proper sense, the first thing that occurred to me was that tribunals, instead of conforming to this law, were directly opposed to it, and, indeed, to the entire doctrine; and, therefore, that if Jesus had thought of tribunals at all, he would have condemned them."

He points out that Jesus, from his childhood to his death, was concerned with legal tribunals, and could not, therefore, have overlooked their existence; that Jesus did not admit of an appeal to the justice of men where it was necessary for protection against evil, because he said: "If any man will sue thee at law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also," and when he prayed he besought all men without exception to forgive others that their own trespasses might be forgiven. "So I saw," says Tolstoi, "that, according to the doctrine of Jesus, no Christian judge could pass sentence of condemnation."

Upon this point Tolstoi brings to bear other sayings attributed to Jesus, and supports them by reference to the teachings of the Apostles and the early Fathers of the Church. He says it is plain, therefore, that Jesus's words, "Judge not, condemn not," were "understood by his first disciples as they ought to be understood now in their direct and literal meaning; judge not in courts of justice; take no part in them." Furthermore, he argues that it is impossible to regard these words as meaning simply that one is not to indulge in gossip and evil-speaking.

Tolstoi holds that our entire social fabric is founded upon principles that Jesus reprobated, especially in regard to resisting evil. People do not wish to understand Jesus's doctrine in its simple acceptance, and yet they assure themselves that they follow the doctrine; they go through the most elaborate ceremonies for the consummation of the sacraments, the building of temples, the sending out of missionaries, the establishment of priesthoods, but they forget one little detail—the practice of the commandments of Jesus.

With equal honesty Tolstoi deals with the major portion of the Sermon on the Mount, and with other utterances attributed to Jesus.

In regard to Christ's injunction to "Swear not at all," Tolstoi observes that the principal obstacle to a comprehension of the truth that the Gospel forbids all manner of oaths exists in the fact that "our pseudo-Christian commentators themselves, with unexampled audacity, take oath upon the Gospel itself. They make men swear by the Gospel—that is to say, they do just the contrary of what the Gospel commands." Church commentators, not at all awed by the authority of one whom they recognise as God, boldly distort the meaning of Jesus's words; but if, says Tolstoi, we take these words as we would take those of anyone who speaks to us, and admit that he says exactly what he does say, all these profound circumlocutions and evasions would vanish.

Jesus, he holds, was distinctly opposed to war under any circumstances whatever; but our existence is now



so entirely in contradiction to the doctrine of the Son of Man that only with the greatest difficulty can we realise his meaning. We are so accustomed to speak of a body of men specially organised for murder as a Christian army, we are so accustomed to prayers addressed to Christ for the assurance of victory, that we forget how entirely war is opposed to all his most solemn injunctions.

Whatever else may be said of Tolstoi, we owe to him the clearest, most honest, as well as the most scholarly, interpretation of the doctrines of Jesus which has yet been presented by a follower of the Nazarene. He takes, as we have said, the teachings according to their simple, natural, unsophisticated meaning, and, with an abundance of convincing arguments, he establishes that meaning in face of all the flimsy pretexts by which professing Christians would evade what they find it almost impossible to practise. Tolstoi is not at all concerned to inquire, Is this practicable? before he decides, What does it mean? As a result, he has pinned his faith to doctrines which are certainly not reducible to general practice, as society now exists; which are hardly likely to revolutionise society even at the most distant of conceivable dates, and some of which would not be beneficial to the community at any time, even if they could be carried out. No wonder his honest and indisputable interpretation of the New Testament is noxious to the Greek Orthodox Church. They, in common with other Christians, do not care to have it proved that they are followers of Christ only in name, and that they have wilfully and perversely glossed over his teachings because they cannot accept and practise them under the established conditions of life. Tolstoi's offence is that he has exposed their hypocrisy.

FRANCIS NEALE.

### The Fallacies of Spiritualism.

To maintain that the claims urged in favor of Spiritualism are fallacious, it is not necessary to impeach the honesty of all its professors. Many of them, no doubt, are sincere; but sincerity is no guarantee of the truth of the belief which is professed. Thousands of the victims of the lowest forms of superstition have been honest in their profession; that fact, however, does not establish the veracity of their belief. I frankly aver my opinion that the majority of Spiritualists are more liberal and progressive in their general ideas than orthodox Christians; still, that does not, in my judgment, rescue Spiritualism from the just charge of its being made up of the most palpable fallacies that pervert the human mind at the present time. I do not refer to the various phenomena which are said to take place at professional *séances*, although much that I have seen at such gatherings appeared to me to be the result of fraud and trickery. Certain it is that I have never witnessed anything which was claimed to be done through spiritualistic agency that in any way convinced me of the existence of any power that was not material. What I take an exception to is the attempted explanation of what are termed "spiritualistic phenomena." I do not believe that spirits of persons—or, as I should term it, the *ego*—survive their death and manifest intelligence when functional activity has ceased, and the material organisation is destroyed. As Professor Huxley says: "The fact remains that, so far as observation and experiment go, they teach us that the psychical phenomena are dependent on the physical." If this be so, the theory of Spiritualism is false, and its fallacies should be evident to minds not captivated by this modern superstition.

I propose now to give my reasons for regarding the claims of Spiritualism as fallacies based upon emotional supremacy. My first allegation is that no one has yet given an intelligible definition of what a spirit is. Supposing it to exist, it is not a known property of matter; and, therefore, being a foreign element, it might prove dangerous by destroying all scientific certainty through interfering with what Professor Tyndall terms "the stability of natural law." Spiritualism must be governed either by natural law—in which case it would be material—or its acts in defiance of that law, which process would be contrary to knowledge and

experience. Moreover, spirit, or what is better termed the *ego*, is not an entity separate from the body, but only the co-ordination of nerve-cells, an outcome of cerebral forces. According to modern scientists, the *ego* is not an independent existence which plays on the organs of the brain similar to a musician playing on the keys of a piano. Such an idea has no grounds in science; it belongs purely to the realms of imagination. The fact is that, so far as we know, consciousness does not, and cannot, exist apart from nervous matter. Or as Spencer puts it: "We know nothing whatever of mind, save as exhibited by living beings." He also says: "Between the physical forces and the sensations there exists a correlation like that between the physical forces themselves.....and the one correlation, like the other, is not qualitative only, but quantitative." This view is ably maintained by Haeckel, Huxley, Leslie Stephen, and the French scientist, Ribot; and it has also been thus well expressed by George Henry Lewes:—

"Without a nervous system there could be nothing like what we know as feeling; without a brain or supreme nervous centre there could be little or nothing of that complex grouping of sensitive states which we know as emotion, thought, and will. But brain and nervous system are only parts of a living organism, and their functions are only specialisations of the general properties of that organism; separate the brain from the vital processes going on throughout the organism, and it is no instrument of consciousness. The Materialist asserts that the brain feels and thinks, as the stomach digests and the lungs breathe. I answer, Yes, but the stomach does not digest, the lungs do not breathe, except when these organs form parts of a living organism. An idea will arrest digestion, a little surplus of carbonic acid will arrest respiration, for the same reason that an arrested secretion will fill the mind with gloom, an excess of carbonic acid will stupefy it, a worm in the intestine will distract it, a plugged artery will obliterate it."\*

Such is the scientific view of the subject, and surely it is superior to that of the Spiritualists, whose alleged proof of the truth of their claims rests upon the subjective, which depends upon the abnormal condition of the nervous system. In such a state reason and judgment are deprived of a fair opportunity of exercising their legitimate functions.

Another fallacy of Spiritualism is its teaching that a person can manifest intelligence after life when the activity of the brain has ceased. Now, as scientific investigation has proved that the intellectual faculties, allied with a material organisation, are necessary for the manifestations of intelligence, there is no obvious reason for supposing that in the absence of such organisation, and when the faculties are no longer in operation, any intelligence can be displayed. No truth is more certain than that too much alcohol, or an injury to the brain, impairs, and sometimes destroys, all consciousness and intelligence in man. Is the "spirit" susceptible of the evil influence of the one, and of the disastrous results of the other? If so, of what value is its controlling power? Further, if the body is used as an instrument by the so-called spirit for its operations, which are retarded and often entirely suspended when the brain is diseased, is it reasonable to suppose that these operations will continue when the instrument no longer exists? To postulate intelligence in some other state without living organisms is to assume possession of a miraculous power which Spiritualism does not do. The following scientific testimony, adduced by Dr. T. Cromwell in his work upon *The Soul and a Future Life*, fully corroborates my position, that intelligence and thought depend upon brain power:—

"Immaterialists have dwelt much on cases of considerable, though always partial, injury to the brain, with which no perceptible mental disorder was associated. But to this there are adequate replies. 'Many instances are on record in which extensive disease has occurred in *one* hemisphere (of the cerebrum) so as almost entirely to destroy it, without any obvious injury to the mental powers, or any interruption of the influence of the mind upon the body. But there is no case on record of any severe lesion of *both* hemispheres, in which morbid phenomena were not evident during life' (Carpenter's *Human Physiology*, p. 775). 'In every instance where there exists any corresponding lesion or disease on *each* side of the brain, there we are sure to find some express injury or impairment of

\* *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1876.



the mental functions' (Sir H. Holland's *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, p. 184). 'There are no cases on record in which the mental faculties have remained undisturbed when the disorganisation has extended to both sides of the brain' (Solly on *The Human Brain*, p. 349). Dr. Maudsley, in his *Physiology of Mind*, p. 126, observes that he has come to the assured conviction that mind does not exist in nature apart from brain; all his experience of it is in connection with brain. Lawrence, in his *Lectures on Comparative Anatomy*, p. 112, says: 'I firmly believe that the various forms of insanity, that all the affections comprehended under the general term of mental derangement, are only evidences of cerebral affections, disordered manifestations of those organs whose healthy action produces the phenomena called mental—in short, symptoms of diseased brain.'

The fallacy of Spiritualism is further shown in the contradictory conjectures of its adherents as to what takes place in the much-talked-of spirit world. If spirits really communicate with the inhabitants of this planet, it is fair to suppose that some actual knowledge should obtain as to the customs observed in this spirit world. But such is not the case, for Spiritualists are not agreed among themselves as to the habits of the departed ones. Some of them assure us that in the spirit sphere the lower animals exist; that clothes are manufactured; that food is eaten, and that the sexual relations are continued; but other Spiritualists deny all these allegations, and assert that spirits of human beings only are to be found in the future state, and that none of the above mundane operations go on.

The absurdity of the spiritual theory appears evident when we consider the vain promises made by persons during their lives to the effect that, if Spiritualism be true, their friends should be assured beyond a doubt that it is so. According to my experience, no such promises have been kept; on the contrary, an unbroken silence has been preserved, although for many years I complied with all the required conditions which were said to be necessary to obtain the information. To say that spirits do appear to those who believe in them does not remove the difficulty, because such appearances cannot afford any evidence of the truth of Spiritualism to those who do not witness them. Neither does it remove the dilemma to urge that antagonistic minds prevent the manifestations. During years of honest inquiry I was in no way antagonistic. But supposing I was "a disturbing element," if "the spirits know all mortal consequences" they were aware that my desire was to learn the truth, and they would, therefore, have known that their appearance would have convinced me of my error, and established at least some of the claims of Spiritualism. It is no answer to say that some spirits lack the power to appear, for the very persons who pledged their word to make themselves known to me are said to have frequently visited certain believers in Spiritualism. Besides, where it is alleged that such men as Shakespeare, Thomas Paine, and Colonel Ingersoll have returned to "say a few words," they are made to utter nonsense that in life they would have been ashamed of. The truth is, a living dead man is a contradiction, and we have yet to learn that one instance can be verified of the perpetual continuation of one living individual. A body in action must be present somewhere, but when it has disappeared in the grave and gone to dust it is no longer an organised body. In other words, a body, if it acts, must act where it is or where it is not. It cannot act where it is, in the grave, for there its functions have ceased; it cannot act elsewhere, because it is not there to act. This appears as self-evident as that the whole is greater than the part.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

## English Missions in India.

(Continued from page 660.)

IN my last article I pointed out that a great many of the cases of conversion recorded were not genuine, in the sense of being gains from the non-Christian population, but were simply captures from other missions. From this it follows that a man, getting converted first at one mission, then at another, and so on, may swell the number of conversions indefinitely without at all increasing the number of the native Christian population.

That this is not an exaggeration the following quotations will show conclusively.

The Baptist report for 1896 says: "Among other discouragements under which our missionaries in Bengal have labored, our Barisal brethren have been greatly distressed by the action of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel." Again: "Like other stations of our Society in Bengal, the Church at Soory has suffered greatly by the drain upon her that has been made by the several adjoining missions. Mention might be made in particular of the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Society, and the American Episcopal Methodist Society." From time to time the Salvation Army has published accounts of the huge number of converts made in India. In 1887 a Mr. Gillespie, of the Irish Presbyterian Mission, published a pamphlet in which he declared that the Army's statistics are purely imaginary, while the agents employed are "men of evil reputation, and the native Christians who join the Army suffer both spiritually and materially from the change." In Bareja Mr. Booth Tucker reported twenty-five families at work on the farm colony. Mr. Gillespie says that, instead of twenty-five families, there is only one. In Jugerat the Army claimed 75,000 adherents and 10,000 enrolled adult "soldiers." Mr. Gillespie challenges them to produce 100 genuine converts. Finally, in the Taneh Mahala, where about 3,000 are said to be on the rolls, Mr. Gillespie failed to find a single one after the most diligent inquiry.

The Church Missionary Society also falls foul of the Army, and asserts that whatever following it has in India is drawn from the Christian, and not from the non-Christian, population. The report adds that the native agents employed by the Army "are such as it is impossible to respect," and states that there is no evidence to show that "one heathen or Mohammedan has ever been brought by Salvation Army effort to professing in his home his adhesion even to unbaptised Christianity" (Report, 1896; p. 216). The report for the current year asserts, further, that at Kangaya, Travancore, the Army enticed away nearly half the congregation (p. 324); and, of course, these reach the British public as genuine converts from "heathenism." The Roman Catholics also receive their share of blame. In one place they are accused of stealing over 400 families belonging to the Christian Missionary Society; in another, of undermining the work of Protestant associations (Church Missionary Society Report, 1896; pp. 323, 344). Needless to say, the Roman Catholics return the charge, and accuse Protestants of stealing their converts. The London Missionary Society, in its current report (pp. 99, 232-3), also complains of the rivalry of Mormons, Catholics, and Seventh-day Adventists. In brief, each one of the societies accuses all the others of stealing converts already made, and palming them off on the people at home as cases of genuine conversion.

I have no intention of entering into any estimate as to which of these charges are true—they are probably all well founded—but quote them merely to show the utter unreliability of missionary returns. After reading these charges and counter-charges, it becomes plain that, in a large number of instances, these so-called converts are not converts at all. They are professionals who visit mission after mission, getting all they can at each, and ranking as a new convert in a score of different reports. No announcement is made in a single one of the reports that a large percentage of their new members belonged to other Churches before joining theirs; the public is carefully encouraged to believe that they are conversions from the non-Christian population. It is evident that, poor as the returns are as they stand, if we allowed for the new births among Christians already converted, the number who are converted one week and lapse the next, and those who are simply captured from the missions, the number of genuine converts would sink to microscopic proportion. If raising nearly one million and a-half sterling annually on the strength of such figures as those quoted above is not obtaining money under false pretences, it comes so near that it takes a missionary society to detect the difference.

In addition to the direct attack made upon non-Christian religions in India by propaganda, there is an indirect attack made through the agencies of schools



medical missions, and the like. That these latter agencies are productive of some good there can be no doubt; but, as they are all maintained for their value as instruments in the work of evangelisation, their worth has to be finally estimated in terms of their success in this direction. The Church Missionary Society's report asserts that the educational work in India continues "to demonstrate its usefulness as an evangelistic agency" (p. 347), and in various parts of the report the same opinion is expressed concerning the medical missions. The position of affairs in India in matters of education, it is worth noting, seems pretty much as in England, the religious schools running in open rivalry to the Government institutions, which they seek to supplant. Thus, the Church Missionary Society's report expresses "The great need for missionary schools that are capable of holding their own with the well-equipped Government institutions" (p. 252). The London Missionary Society reports that at Tresandrum more than 150 girls have left "mission schools to secure a higher standard of education in Government institutions—a fact which we very deeply deplore." The last phrase shows pretty clearly how very real is their solicitude for the educational welfare of the people; it also shows the real object in keeping mission schools going.

What, then, is the value of these schools as instruments of conversion? None of the societies give the least information on the subject, except indirectly. We are left to find out as we may. We shall, however, get some indication of their value if we compare the number of scholars with the number of reported cases of conversion. In 1896 the number of scholars in Church Missionary Society schools in India reached the figure of 52,004. But, as the increase in the number of communicants from all quarters between 1896 and 1900 was only 3,631, and as the reports of the various missionaries attribute almost the whole of the conversions to the influence of their preaching, it is difficult to see in what way these schools "demonstrate their usefulness as evangelistic agencies." The fact is that but very few of the people who pass through mission schools in India ever become members of any Church. Two or three sentences from the Church Missionary Society report will show this much. At Bannu, Punjab, out of 340 scholars two were baptised (pp. 262-3). At Karachi the conversion of one boy out of 476 scholars is described as a "noteworthy event" (p. 272). At Amritsar among 691 scholars there were "no baptisms" (p. 252). The London Missionary Society had in India, four years ago, 33,184 scholars; since then the net increase from all quarters has been 1,189. The Baptists register 6,000 scholars. In 1898 they gained 52 converts; in 1899 they lost 16.

Where, then, are the glorious results that we are assured flow from this educational work? Certainly they are not evident in the published returns; and it is not unfair to assume that, as they are not mentioned, they are not in existence. The truth is that, while the Hindoo is quite willing to avail himself of the opportunities for a good secular education, he definitely turns his back on the religious instruction. The case reported on page 17 of the Church Missionary Society report, of a man who had no objection to his son becoming a Christian, because "I have noticed Christians are coming to the front, and I want my son to come to the front," is typical of a large class. One may place at the side of the empty assurances of interested parties the explicit declaration of Mr. W. S. Caine, M.P., on his return from India in 1889, that "educated India is looking for a religion, but turns its back on Christ and his teaching as presented by the missionary.....As far as turning the young men they educate into Christians is concerned, their [the missionaries'] failure is complete and unmistakable."\*

I have said enough in what has gone before concerning the quantity of converts gained. What of the quality? That this is poor is admitted on all hands; the failure of the missionaries to twist the higher-class Hindoos is notorious. I could quote plenty of evidence to prove this from outside sources. I prefer, however, to take their own testimony as being indisputable. The Church Missionary Society Report says that the Bengali

Christian Church displays "a low ideal of Christian possibility and attainment fatal to real aggression and usefulness" (p. 191). In South India, to the query, "What is the character of these converts?" the reply is that, "while year by year there is a distinct growth in spirituality, yet at present there is a rather low standard of Christian living" (p. 301). The evangelisation of the heathen, we are informed (p. 286), depends ultimately upon the native agents. Yet of these the Rev. J. Stone writes: "What has saddened me.....has been the ignorance of some of the agents, and the almost utter lack of earnestness in others in their work" (p. 307). The Rev. T. Walker writes that, while "to the superficial observer all seems fair and hopeful," yet the state of things in South India is much like a certain sensitive plant, which, presenting a fair picture to the eye, yet, "if you touch it, the flowers decay and the leaves curl up into a shapeless skeleton.....Much that is fair to all appearance shrivels at the touch of truth" (p. 319). Mr. Walker's career as a missionary bids fair to come to an abrupt conclusion if he continues in this strain. Concerning another district, the report dwells upon the enthusiasm with which the missionary was received. The whole village was waiting for him. "The people had heard of me beforehand," goes on this guileless preacher, "and would not rest until I had sent back to Manikaru for *medicine chest and magic lantern*" (p. 266). So that the enthusiasm was, after all, for free medicine and a magic lantern entertainment, not for the Gospel. There were no converts.

The London Missionary Society refers sorrowfully to the fact that its efforts meet with little success among the high-caste Hindoos (1896 Report, p. 113). And in the Report for 1900: "Our people are gathered together from the lower-castes," but subscribers are implored not to "despise the low ideas and motives with which they come to us" (p. 186). Again: "A very large proportion of those who profess themselves Christians, and are baptised, are so very ignorant that great care and patience are required to make them intelligently acquainted with the fundamental truths of Christianity" (p. 145). That is, they convert them first, and explain what the religion is afterwards. At Salam "certain of the Church members have had to be severely disciplined" (p. 157). At Myanadu the Church "might be one of the most influential Churches in Travancore. But its spiritual power is gone." The members "frequently spend their leisure time in quarrelling among themselves. Aggressive Christian work is impossible. The past year has witnessed a long series of unhappy quarrels in the Church" (p. 188). At Trevandrum only a third of the Christians can read (p. 190). Among the Malu Christians, "When one questions them by themselves, the one appalling factor that forces itself upon one is their unimaginable ignorance. In most, the anxiety for their daily bread is the largely bulking factor in their consciousness" (p. 137).

It is needless to multiply quotations of this character. One might go on indefinitely, and add to these admissions the opinions of outsiders. I have preferred to take their own statements, and I repeat that, however one may feel inclined to question the general accuracy of missionary reports, it may be taken for granted that things are not *better* than they are represented. Yet, taking their own statements, three societies alone spent in India in twelve months £140,000, in round figures, maintained 5,820 missionaries, and converted (?) 2,136 individuals, that number including at least fifty per cent. of children. And of this number the confession is made that they exhibit "unimaginable ignorance," and display "a low ideal of Christian possibility and attainment fatal to real aggression and usefulness." Verily, there are few combinations of stupidity and knavery that can hold a candle to Foreign Missionary enterprise.

C. COHEN.

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Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing him against 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. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

\* *Birmingham Daily Post*, February 14, 1889.



## Acid Drops.

ST. LUKE, according to Christian tradition, was a member of the medical profession. For this reason a Guild of St. Luke, composed of doctors, has been organised in connection with the Church of England. Once a year, on St. Luke's Eve, this body assembles at St. Paul's Cathedral, to take part in a religious service and hear a sermon. There are 800 members; but 1,000 doctors in all, together with a considerable number of their friends, congregated under the great dome on Wednesday evening, October 17. The Bishop of Rochester's sermon, if we may judge by the scanty report in the newspapers, was a so-so affair, calling for no particular comment. But the collection hymn was really funny. Here is one verse of it:—

O! how glorious and resplendent,  
Fragile body, shalt thou be  
When endued with so much beauty.  
Full of health and strong and free,  
Full of vigor, full of pleasure,  
Thou shalt last eternally.

This is dreadfully poor stuff as poetry, and the penultimate line is more Pagan than Christian; in fact, it might very well be sung by a Mohammedan with his mind's eye on the seventy-two delicious houris awaiting his embraces in Paradise. And the science is about on a level with the poetry. Many of those thousand doctors must have smiled (inwardly) at the idea of a body lasting for ever. They know very well that perpetual motion belongs to the universe as a whole, and not to any part of it considered separately. But we daresay they have excellent reasons for countenancing in St. Paul's Cathedral what they would treat with uproarious laughter in their private sanctums.

While poor John Chinaman is being freely blackguarded as well as knocked about by the allied Christian Powers of Europe and America, it is pleasant to find someone who has a good word to say for him. Mr. J. H. Gwyther, chairman of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China, addressing a general meeting of shareholders at Cannon-street Hotel quite recently, said that "the bank had had very extensive dealings with Chinese traders, and had always found them reliable and honest. By their integrity and solvency they had shown a bright example to other mercantile communities."

We were talking the other day with the captain of a big merchant ship. He had traded in all parts of the world, and he was loud in praise of the honesty of the Chinese merchants. He said he had never found a rogue amongst them, though he had found plenty elsewhere, and the worst of all in Christian countries. The word of a Chinese dealer, he said, was as good as his bond, and you might almost dispense with any other security.

We send Christian missionaries to China, but it looks as though the Chinese should send some Moral missionaries over to Europe, and England ought not to be forgotten.

Wonderful, indeed, are the accounts now given of the gentle and conciliatory spirit in which Christian missionaries have always approached the Heathen Chinese. Of course, we believe them. How could we entertain any doubt when we read such a letter as the following, which was addressed by a Protestant missionary to the Commander of H. M. *Porpoise*, and published by Admiral Richards (China, Blue Book, No. 1, 1892): "What is the use of sending our men-of-war to ports like Wuhu, with only a small-official? Why not bring a few gunboats to Nan-king, and order the Viceroy to stop the nonsense in his district, with the alternative of a bombardment?"

That's the way to spread the gospel of the "meek and lowly one" amongst the heathen. Of course, it may lead to trouble, but that's where the fun comes in. Mr. C. T. Studd, an active missionary of the stand-no-nonsense sort, addressing a meeting of the Church Missionary Society, and pleading for the conversion of the heathen, is reported in the *Times* of December 4, 1895, to have said "he thought he could speak in the name of sport, and he could assure his hearers that the sport of preaching the Gospel to the heathen excelled the sports of cricket, football, shooting, or any other sport." Beats cock-fighting, in fact, according to this rollicking savor of souls.

The *Church Times* lifts up its head and wails at the "cynical and cruel crusade" against foreign missions. It is, however, obliged to admit that the methods of mission work in China are "not beyond criticism." And it tries to console itself with the reflection that "one good result of the present distress may be a reconsideration of the whole question of methods, a more thoughtful adaptation of means to the end."

Then it goes on to hope that the whole question of women's work in the interior of China may be reconsidered. It suggests that in this matter due prudence has not been exercised. "And it will be well if, in future, we pay greater attention to the intellectual capability of those who are sent upon the China missions." It says that for a long time it was thought that anyone would do for the Indian missions, but the idea has been dispelled. "In China that lesson has yet to be learned. Face to face with an ancient civilisation, with a people of marked intellectual power, with a social system dominated by *literati*, we have too often been content to send those who have no marked qualification for the special work."

Now doesn't all this go to show that the criticism the *Church Times* complains of has been deserved? Should we have heard anything about these deficiencies and need of reform if Lord Salisbury and the press had not spoken out? There would then have been but one side to the Chinese missionary trouble.

It is stated in the newspapers—we do not know whether it is true or not—that a book which was used all day for swearing purposes in a well-known London police-court turned out on examination to be a *Guide to the Law of Landlord and Tenant*. We daresay as much truth was told as usual—and the same number of lies.

The Rev. Dr. Clifford is "astonished" to find in the organ of the Salvation Army a direction from its General that its members should abstain from exercising their influence and votes as electors. How strange! Dr. Clifford is a friend of General Booth, and has publicly advocated the claims of his Social Wing. Yet he appears to have been ignorant all the time of the fact that abstention from politics is one of the Salvation Army regulations. General Booth plainly and honestly tells his soldiers, in good Bible language, that they are *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Here they are merely pilgrims; the place of their citizenship lies beyond death. And herein General Booth is a true New Testament Christian. It is not he, but Dr. Clifford, that has "fallen from grace."

Dr. Clifford advised all Salvationists who had votes to revolt against the General's advice. This was received with "cheers." But it was Baptists who did the cheering. The Salvationists will obey their own General, and not one of the leaders of another denomination.

A Chicago religious journal, the *Advance*, calls upon Birmingham to give up the trade of manufacturing idols for China and other "heathen" countries. The writer of the article says that he visited a factory in that city and saw a very fine and large assortment of gods. Some were gods of war, breathing fire and slaughter; others were gods of peace, beaming with good-fellowship. The "heathen" paid their money and took their choice. It made no difference to Birmingham.

We don't quite see why this easy and lucrative business should be abandoned. It is quite right and proper, of course, to send out missionaries to convert the "heathen" to Christianity. But the job cannot be done in a minute; while it is going on the poor benighted ones must have gods from somewhere; and why shouldn't the missionaries' friends supply the god-market during the interval? They can give a bit to maintain the missionaries, and thus the "heathen" are partially paying for their own conversion. What on earth could be better than that?

In an infantry regiment now in India (2nd Welsh Regiment) the married women are required to attend church. If they absent themselves, their husbands are punished. This is rather rough on Tommy Atkins. Suppose there is a little domestic tiff; all that Mrs. Atkins need do in order to get her husband into hot water is to stay away from church. In such an eventuality, the unfortunate Atkins may be expected to view both the church and the partner of his joys and sorrows with feelings which, temporarily at any rate, are not akin to love. The arrogant clerical martinet, by whom, of course, the regulation is instigated, probably thinks he is advancing the interests of his Church.

All officers attending divine service in Portsmouth Dockyard Church in uniform are to wear swords. Such is the order of Admiral Sir C. F. Hotham, the new Naval Commander-in-Chief. No doubt the order has been duly countersigned by God Almighty. Otherwise one might be tempted to quote the text about those who take the sword perishing with it. But even then we might be floored with the opposite text about those who had no sword selling their clothes to buy one. Such an *olla podrida* is the Bible!

The *Times* printed the other day the following advertisement: "A DVOWSON, within three miles of Charing Cross.

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Moderate High Church views. Well-to-do parishioners (3,000. Further particulars from," etc. What have the 3,000 "well-to-do" parishioners to say to this monetary transfer of the care of their precious "souls"? The chief attractions presented seem to be that the happy purchaser will be free from contact with low-class, beggarly folk, and that the offertories are likely to be handsome.

"A great many people sleep between these walls," said the guide, showing the visitor through the ancient English church where the noble families were interred. "Just the same way over in our country," replied the Continental visitor. "Why don't they get a better preacher?"

A letter appears in the *Church Times* on the subject of housing the poor. The writer says: "Of course, as Christian citizens we must help on all movements designed to put an end to darkness and cruel habitations; but that we should probably do almost as well if we were Agnostics. What the Agnostics cannot do, and we can do, is to bring pressure to bear on the consciences of Christian slum-lords (mostly not in the peerage), High Church slum-ladies, budding land-grabbers at Eton and Harrow, members of the Bible-class who own 'Rents,' communicants who have gained seats on the town council, churchwardens who are jerry-builders, and such-like. Now, this is surely spiritual work—spiritual enough to satisfy the extremest opponents of 'Christian Socialism.'"

Filthy-minded clerics who wish to introduce the Romish Confessional into the Church of England seem to be carrying on their little game in various parts of the country. The Rev. C. A. Pugh, rector of Ashton-under-Lyne, for instance, has been detected circulating a book entitled *An Aid to Repentance* to young girls attending his church. The book contains questions of a highly improper nature, and the reverent. has received a castigation in the *Ashton Reporter*.

Some anonymous lunatic has written to the *Church Gazette* declaring that if the "gigantic fraud of the Higher Criticism craze is in future to be advertised at our Church Congresses, the sooner they come to an end the better." He fully justifies our description of him as a lunatic, for he says: "Our Church and country are deluged with popery and infidelity, which sufficiently accounts for the hand of God having been so heavy upon us for the last twelve months in the recent terrible war—for war is one of the four sore judgments of God."

Even bishops are beginning to express their dissatisfaction with that annual outpouring of clerical twaddle cycled the Church Congress. At the recent Worcester Diocesan Conference the Bishop of Worcester was moved to say: "It had to be confessed that Church Congresses no longer excited the interest they once did; they were certainly waxing old, if they were not ready to vanish away."

A week or two ago we drew attention to the fact that Dr. Conan Doyle had been included in the *Tablet's* list of Catholic novelists. We said that we believed he was a bit of a Freethinker. Since then Dr. Conan Doyle has written to a Scottish newspaper on the subject. "I am not," he says, "and never have been since my school days, a Roman Catholic. For more than twenty years my strongest convictions have been in favor of complete liberty of conscience, and I regard hard and fast dogma of every kind as an unjustifiable and essentially irreligious thing, putting assertion in the place of reason, and giving rise to more contention, bitterness, and want of charity than any other influence in human affairs." Dr. Doyle states that the church which he attends in London is that of Mr. Voysey, who, as most of our readers will recollect, is a Theist, but a resolute opponent of orthodox Christianity. "It will be obvious," Dr. Doyle says, "that my religious views are broadly tolerant, founded upon a reverent Theism, rather than upon the special teachings of any particular sect."

Poison in the sacramental cup. The *Lancet* has again been calling attention to the danger of infection through the use of the common chalice in the Communion service. Ecclesiastical authorities are urged by that journal to consider the matter "without delay." Dear, dear; and to think that we should never have found out the danger till the present day! Who knows how many may not, in all the past centuries of the Christian era, have contracted by this means foul disease or malignant fever, and perhaps have died of it?

But what about the Heavenly Father? Surely he might protect us when we solemnly and symbolically drink his Son's blood. Or the Son himself might be reasonably expected to see that all is safe in this rite instituted by himself. Out upon a god who takes so little care of his creatures when they are engaged in the chief ceremony of his faith. Various expedients are suggested as a protection against the

possible dangers of the Holy Cup. The best one, of course, is to leave it alone altogether. Something should be done, for even in a pub. you are provided with a clean glass.

I see, says a writer in the *Sunday Sun*, that Archdeacon Sinclair dedicates his new book, *Unto You, Young Men*, to the undergraduates in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, in the hope of helping them to Christian faith and practice. The latter portion of this charitable hope will doubtless be appreciated by the medical students. "I have been desirous," says the Archdeacon in his preface, "of putting something together that may help to settle the young men of the present day in the faith of Christ and in the Christian life." This is very good of the Archdeacon, but the undergraduate, as I know him, rather resents being preached at, even in his own college chapel. Some of the chapters are on the Meaning of Life, Chivalry, Courtesy, Amusement, and the Future. Possibly on some of these the undergraduate could give any author points.

So the Bishop of Worcester wears his gaiters, and we presume his shovel hat, to foster in others a "reverence for the past." Well, we know that when dignitaries thus attired are seen trotting along the street they mostly occasion a feeling of merriment in irreverent minds. But may not the Bishop's plea for ancient habiliments lead him further than he is disposed to go? Why not apparel himself according to the fashion-plates of Judea, or go back to the simplicity of the Genesiac fig-leaf?

Whether jesting or not, the Bishop has rather given himself away to the watchful *Christian World*, which asks whether this clinging to the discarded habiliments of a bygone age is not a symbol of more than meets the eye—"of an ecclesiastical temper and frame of mind which is equally reluctant to let go ancient and outworn things in matters of thought and creed and worship and rite?"

The Bishop of Bath and Wells opened the other day an exhibition at Taunton designed to "stimulate interest in missionary work." It would seem just now that a good deal of "stimulant" is needed to pull that enterprise together. Hogsheads of the holy spirit wouldn't do it. As to the heathen, we have already "stimulated" them pretty well with bad whisky and rum.

"French novel readers"—writes the Paris correspondent of the *Church*—"will have to practise a little extra economy if they are to continue to indulge in their favorite pastime. The price of 'yellow-backs,' which has already advanced twenty-five centimes, still displays an upward tendency." We always wondered, says the *Topical Times*, who consumed the enormous annual import of naughty French novels. Evidently the secret sinner is the fair English curate, the guileless Robert Spalding of the village damsel's dream. But fancy the *Church* newspaper keeping a man in Paris to report the movements of the market in the literature of the petticoat! How Silvestre and the rest of the makers of Boulevard pot-boilers will smile when they learn the heart of the mystery thus given away by our clerical friend!

A Birmingham man named Keane evidently troubled himself more about Christ than Christ troubled about him. In a fit of religious mania he cut his throat.

Some young Sawbones, with more combativeness than sense, kicked up a rumpus at a lecture in London on "Faith healing" by Dr. Dowie, the founder of the "Christian Catholic Church in Zion." This is exactly what the downy Dowie wanted. The police-court proceedings have given him an excellent gratuitous advertisement.

A curious survival of pagan superstition is stated to exist in a forest of the district of Morbihan, in Brittany. There stands a gigantic black stone figure of a woman called the "Black Venus," to which the superstitious Bretons make offerings with prayers that it will bless their crops. Twice the stone was cast into the sea by people who hoped to put an end to the idolatry, but twice the peasants dragged it back and set up an altar before it. Count Pierre de Lannion about two centuries ago conveyed it by forty yoke of oxen to his own chateau and set it up in the courtyard. The Count and his chateau are both gone, but the "Black Venus" still remains standing in the forest, overgrown with moss, and is still prayed to by the peasants, who derive exactly the same assistance from it as if they addressed their appeals to Heaven.

The proposal of the Parks Committee of the London County Council to prohibit the playing of games on Sundays at Hackney Marsh is attributable solely to a petty Puritanical spirit, whatever the ostensible reason given. There is at least one concession that Sabbatarians make to the spirit of the age. They always endeavor to disguise their real motive



under some flimsy pretext or other. They know that the "sanctity" cant stinks in the nostrils of most of their hearers.

Dr. Chadwick, Bishop of Derry, is very irate over Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*. He thinks he is justified in protesting when he reads that the inquirer finds "at every step some amazing hypocrisy—some deed of darkness and bigotry and cruelty" (p. 270) among the English clergy; and that the words "full of hypocrisy and iniquity" apply fittingly to "more than half of the preachers of the Gospel at the present day" (p. 183), and that they are "fulfilling the words of the Lord—'full of extortion and excess'" (p. 243); and when we are told that a respectable clergyman promises heaven to the millionaire "on account of the money he has left to the Church in his will" (p. 281).

The clerical critic spots one misquotation of Scripture by Marie Corelli. Christ said "Sell that thou hast," but it is always printed in the novel "Sell half"! (pp. 85, 283, 311, etc.). The Bishop scores one in regard to the exact form of the injunction; but Marie Corelli could get more than her own back by pointing out that the Bishop himself carefully refrains from obeying the injunction, whichever way it is put.

The Revised Version of the Bible was published in America almost simultaneously with the Autobiography of General Grant, and it appeared from the respective sales of the two books that the great soldier was a more popular author than the Holy Ghost. We now read that the sale of the Bible is steadily declining in America. The American Bible Society confesses that it is sending out 400,000 less Bibles and Testaments than it sent out five years ago. In fact, the Society is contemplating the sale of its premises, and the transfer of its business to a cheaper position.

The late Marquis of Bute enjoined in his will that his heart should be taken to Jerusalem, and there buried in holy earth. The *Outlook* thinks that this illustrates the ideal side of his character. We should substitute "superstitious" for "ideal." No doubt the Catholic nobleman fancied there was something sacred in the very soil of Palestine. Perhaps he imagined that his heart would act as the centre of the reassembly of his bodily parts at the general resurrection, and that he would stand a good chance at Jerusalem of being in the first batch of spectators of the second advent of Jesus Christ.

James Menzies was charged at the South Shields Police-court with the awful crime of selling newspapers on a Sunday morning, and actually asking people to buy them. The police swore that he called out the name of a paper within twenty yards of a place of worship. But the magistrates did not appear to believe them, and the case was dismissed. The defendant affirmed instead of swearing. This fact may throw some light on why he was singled out for prosecution.

We have received a copy of the First Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Protestant Laymen's Association, which seems to be run by a little clique of "anti-infidels." The total income is £23 11s. 2½d., and the expenditure £23 11s. 1½d. This leaves a balance of a penny to go on with. The work of the Association consists principally in denouncing Roman Catholicism and calling on nobody in particular to "put down" the "immoral propaganda" of the National Secular Society. We don't suppose, however, that the Roman Catholic Church is frightened. Even the N. S. S. will hardly be terrorised by that penny.

The *Sunday Companion* publishes a very eulogistic notice of "Mr. Humphreys," who keeps a bookshop in the vicinity of Paternoster Row, and sticks pious notices outside, which have been the means of bringing many young men to God. This "Mr. Humphreys" is the fellow who behaved in such a ruffianly and disgusting manner to the N. S. S. secretary at the old office in the Strand. The portrait of him in the *Sunday Companion* is quite characteristic.

Men of God are sometimes full of enterprise. The Rev. F. H. Law, for instance, who had been rector of St. Margaret's, Lee, since 1873, recently resigned that living on account of failing health. Soon afterwards he married a maiden lady of Blackheath. We suppose it was a motion of the spirit, a call from the Lord.

Rev. Newton Ebenezer Howe, vicar of Swindon, has been committed for trial on a charge of obtaining money by false pretences. The only consoling text we can suggest is that the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth.

*Club Life* has a story called "Heaven: Up to Date." It narrates the experiences of a good man who died and went to that establishment. But he couldn't stand the company of the converted scoundrels he met there, and St. Peter had

to let him out again, although he was told there was no readmission.

"Chestnuts" are often spread out as new stories. The latest religious one is about a Methodist negro preacher who explained the "gross darkness" in Isaiah as meaning 144 times pitchy dark. A correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* declares that this explanation was given by a Primitive Methodist preacher at Adelaide some twenty-five years ago. Very likely. And no doubt it was heard of twenty-five years before that.

The sermon was just started on Thanksgiving Sunday in St. Peter's, Budleigh Salterton, when a young man jumped up from his seat, feeling that Old Nick had paid him a surprise visit, for his clothes were actually on fire. It soon appeared, however, that it was not really a branch establishment of Hades set up in the house of God. The young man had sat upon a box of matches in his pocket, and they had ignited and set his coat in a blaze. Unfortunately, he was rather severely burnt. While he was getting rid of the fiery garment there was great excitement among the male worshippers, and great alarm among the female part of the congregation.

Catherine Wilson, trading as a lady palmist under the all very fine and large name of Madame de Mudella, has been sentenced at Cheltenham to one month's imprisonment with hard labor for fortune-telling. Evidently the law does not mean to sanction any new branches of the old business of mystery. The existing Churches are held to be quite enough in that line. Besides, they are ancient and respectable. Moreover, they are too strong to be dealt with by the police.

Russia is like America in one thing. It is a land of strange sects. One of the latest is called the "Benefactors." Its members believe in the approaching end of the world, and they seem to prepare for this event by unlimited beer-drinking. Perhaps they think it will fortify them against the conflagration. A hogshead of "swipes" wouldn't burn easily. There is another new sect in Lithuania, which also believes that the Day of Judgment is at hand. Those who run this sect have persuaded the believers to place their wealth in the hands of their pastors for "good works." Of course, this is a very old game. It was played by the Catholic Church nearly a thousand years ago, and has flourished at intervals ever since. The end of the world doesn't arrive, but the gentlemen who take charge of the property are all right, anyhow. They practise what in betting circles is called "hedging."

The *Globe* states that it has received from a correspondent a copy of a bill, posted on a certain chapel, which reads as follows:—

— TABERNACLE,  
SUNDAY, — October, at —  
Preacher: Rev. A. B.  
Subject: DEATH AND THEN—  
*A warm welcome for all.*

The Rev. Forbes Philips states that he was called one night to baptise a little girl, the child of some poor people in a common lodging-house. The parents pleaded their great poverty and received the customary shilling; but as he passed out of the door the deputy jocularly observed: "You are the seventh parson that has baptised that kid to-day."

## The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

SHILLING WEEK.

(Fourth List.)

TO TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23.

W. Bowie, 1s.; J. Winlo, 1s.; H. Bennett, 1s.; J. Ralph, 1s.; W. Pattison, 1s.; Tom Taylor, 1s.; Mrs. Taylor, 1s.; Miss Rayner, 1s.; R. Taylor, 1s.; J. H. R., 2s.; W. T. Pitt, 2s.; Major G. O. Warren, 5s.; Hugh Thomson, 5s.; J. W. Taylor, 2s.; Satan, 2s.; T. R. Almond, 1s.; J. S. Finlay, 5s.; T. Miles, 2s.; R. D. Hoon, 1s.; J. Fish, 10s.; G. Smith, 10s.; C. Davis, 5s.; C. Bowman, 10s.; M. Haworth, 1s.; Ada Slack, 1s.; F. R. Phillips, 1s.; Edward Self, 5s.; J. Davies, 5s.; J. T. E., 5s.; J. G., 1s.; D. Brough, 2s. 6d.; per W. F. T., 4s.; C. P., 1s.; J. W., 1s.; H. Smith, 5s.; J. Walters, 1s.; R. Walters, 1s.; W. S. M., 5s.; W. Waymark, 1s.; Three "Dicky Sams," 7s. 6d.; W. P. Murray, 3s.; P. Dawson, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Dawson, 2s. 6d.; W. Robinson, 5s.; W. S. Wood, 1s.; T. T. (Hull), 5s.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

*Sunday*, October 28, Leicester Secular Hall; 11, "China and the Christian Powers"; 6.30, "Does Death End Us?"

## To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—October 28, Glasgow. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. A. JACKSON.—We have not referred to the matter for a very good reason. The National Secular Society did not receive an invitation to the Democratic Convention, neither did one find its way to Mr. Foote personally or to the editor of the *Freethinker*.

R. CHAPMAN.—Thanks. See paragraph and acknowledgments.

W. NASH.—Why lose your temper? How could we tell that you had read the pamphlet? We don't acquire knowledge by intuition. You forget, too, that assertion is not proof. You should have indicated the "two falsifications," the "anachronism" and the "error." Unlike yourself, apparently, we are always willing to learn.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad to hear the Birmingham Branch had a good sale of literature at the Town Hall on Sunday, including nearly two hundred copies of the *Freethinker*. Additions to your list for Shilling Week acknowledged elsewhere.

MAJOR G. O. WARREN, subscribing to Shilling Week, says: "I am sorry I cannot increase it a thousand fold. The *Freethinker* is always a treat of logical reasoning, which is more than can be said of many other periodicals I wot of."

J. W. TAYLOR.—Pleased to know you appreciate our work in "combating superstition and hypocrisy." Of course we wish, as you do, that you could send a larger contribution to Shilling Week. Still, you have sent what you could afford, and that is more than hundreds have done—at least as yet.

J. FISH.—Contents-sheet shall be posted to the newsagent. We are obliged to you for your trouble in the matter. It is pleasant to hear that you are recovering from the nasty blow dealt you by the bigots who got you dismissed from a post you had occupied with credit for eighteen years. We take the opportunity of saying that your brave, disinterested work for the cause is enough to shame a good many timid, indolent, and indifferent Freethinkers.

V. ROGER.—We shall be gratified to learn, when the time comes, that you have won a seat on the new Lambeth Borough Council. Men of your stamp are much wanted on public bodies.

A. WEBBER.—Glad to hear from you as one from Australia and a friend of Joseph Symes. We endorse all you say of him. He has had a terrible fight. We note your opinion that the class of people who read, or would read, the *Freethinker* are not likely to be much affected one way or another by its price. Miss Vance has sent you the *Bible Handbook*.

W. COX (Liverpool).—Please post lecture-notices in time to reach us by Tuesday morning.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—G. Alward, 10s.; C. Bowman, 10s.; A. Webber, 10s.; C. E. Hall, 10s.; J. M. McInnes, 10s.; Sydney A. Gimson, £2; W. S. Wood, 5s.

W. B. THOMPSON.—Your lecture-notice was not posted till Tuesday, as the Chatham postmark shows. We strain a point to insert it. Please note that such things should reach us by Tuesday's first post at the latest.

J. M. MCINNES.—Pleased to receive your promise of £2 towards the Twentieth Century Fund before the end of the year. The 10s. sent is acknowledged this week. Your suggestion as to a pamphlet is noted.

J. YOUNG.—Shall appear.

W. S. M.—Bristol will be taken in hand when the concentration scheme is extended westward. The local Freethinkers do not display much activity themselves.

W. P. MURRAY, subscribing to Shilling Week, says: "I take this opportunity to thank you for the pleasure which your paper, lectures, and books have given me for some years."

G. S. B. handed us at Birmingham £5 of the £10 he promised towards the Twentieth Century Fund.

C. HANDLEY sends 5s. as promised to the Twentieth Century Fund.

T. T. (Hull).—Have acknowledged under Shilling Week. Thanks for your interesting letter. Your closing reflection is very just. Evolution is a slow process, and we must not be disheartened when we cannot force the pace.

D. HARGREAVES.—We never heard of the Mr. Power you mention, or anybody else, turning Mrs. Besant's meeting against her many years ago at Peterborough, or elsewhere. He is no doubt romancing. Certainly he was not "caricatured" for his performance in the *Freethinker*. Some of these "infidel slayers" have fine imaginations.

EDWARD SELF.—Many thanks for your letter. Contents are noted, and shall be acted upon.

J. DAVIES, subscribing to Shilling Week, says: "I sincerely hope that, if there are many more laggards like myself, they will not hesitate to show their appreciation of this well-conceived scheme."

RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Awakener of India—Club Life—Ethical World—Boston Investigator—Paisley Express—Freethought Magazine—Manchester City News—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Two Worlds.

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

The National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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

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 two lectures to-day (Oct. 28) in the Secular Hall, Leicester. His subject in the morning is to be "China and the Christian Powers," and in the evening "Does Death End Us?" The latter lecture is the one that drew such a crowded audience at Manchester.

Sunday was a red-letter day with the Birmingham Secularists. They had their Freethought Demonstration, as was decided at the N. S. S. Conference; and they had besides a special lecture by the President. There was a first-rate audience in the afternoon. It was a particularly good audience, in every sense of the word—intelligent, attentive, and keenly appreciative; not the least so being the liberal sprinkling of ladies. Mr. Watts took the chair, and Mr. Cohen occupied a seat on the platform. Some very flattering things were said about the lecturer by way of introduction, which were as generously applauded. Mr. Foote, who was heartily cheered on rising, said that he was embarrassed by these eulogies, and only hoped he deserved a tenth part of them. Had he known he was going to be bombarded in that way, he would have felt inclined to execute a strategic movement to the rear until he was called upon to lecture. Having eased his mind on this point, he proceeded with his subject—"Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ." For over an hour the interest of the audience was unflagging; smiles, laughter, and applause came at frequent intervals, and the peroration was cheered vociferously. A few questions were asked and answered—no discussion being allowed; and then the chairman pronounced his benediction. Altogether it was a most successful gathering, and the collection added substantially to the fund for meeting the day's heavy expenses.

At six o'clock in the evening the Town Hall was open again, and the gathering audience was treated to music by the City Organist and solos by Mr. J. Matthews. The efforts of both were very warmly appreciated. At seven o'clock Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, and Ward, with several members of the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch, appeared upon the platform amidst enthusiastic cheers. There was a magnificent assembly in front of them, including a considerable proportion of ladies. The body of the hall, the large back gallery, and the narrower side galleries, were all full. The only vacant place was in the orchestra, high up behind the speakers. Mr. Foote presided as announced, and the first speaker was Mr. H. Percy Ward, who met with a highly gratifying reception, which showed that his labors in Birmingham have not been in vain. He dealt with the "What would you put in its place?" argument, much to the satisfaction of the meeting. Mr. Charles Watts was the next speaker, and his vigorous and telling address roused the audience to a high pitch of enthusiasm. At this point the chairman said that they would intercalate the most religious part of the proceedings—the collection. This being done, Mr. C. Cohen was called upon for the third speech. He was in a philosophic vein, which lent variety to the oratory. The meeting followed him closely, took all his intellectual points with admirable verve, and gave him a splendid round of applause at the finish. Then came the final speech by Mr. Foote; and when the cheering had subsided, and a vote of thanks had been accorded to the Mayor for the use of the Town Hall, the great meeting broke up and filed out of the building. Many of the local "saints" lingered for



a while in the big ante-room under the platform, congratulating each other, and the visitors from London, on the grand and perfect success of the Demonstration.

None of the daily papers condescended, or ventured, to pay the slightest attention to this glorious gathering. Had it been a religious assembly, it would have received abundant notice. But this ostrich policy is ridiculous when the Secularists can bring the public together in such a fashion.

It cannot be doubted that this Demonstration, preceded by the surprisingly good afternoon meeting, produced a far greater effect than a long course of ordinary meetings. It showed in so many ways the real strength of the Freethought movement. We do not mean, of course, that Demonstrations should supplant the regular propaganda; we only mean that they are a special and powerful auxiliary. And it seems advisable to continue the effort in Manchester and in other great centres of population. This will involve a good deal of expense. But what of that? Other parties have to pay for such "revival" work, and so must we.

On Saturday evening, October 20, a well-attended meeting was held at the Bristol-street Board School, Birmingham, in favor of the candidature of Mr. H. Percy Ward, who is standing for election on the "Secular education" ticket in the approaching School Board elections. Mr. Charles Watts presided, and, after Mr. Ward had ably and tersely explained his position, a vote of confidence was proposed by Mr. Willis and seconded by Mr. Andrews. It was carried unanimously, after speeches in support by Mr. Phillips, editor of the *Two Worlds*, Mr. C. Cohen, and Mr. G. W. Foote. This meeting was fairly reported in the *Daily Post*. On Monday evening another meeting was held in favor of Mr. Ward's candidature, at which Mr. Watts was the principal speaker. We believe there is every prospect of Mr. Ward's cutting a good figure at the poll.

To-day, Sunday, October 28, Mr. Charles Watts lectures three times in Glasgow. His subjects are varied and interesting, and should draw large audiences.

Mr. A. B. Moss had a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. He will be followed there this evening (Oct. 28) by Mr. C. Cohen, who is to lecture on "Christian Missions in Africa, India, and China." Mr. Cohen has been making a special study of this subject, and is writing a book upon it, which will be issued by the Freethought Publishing Company. We strongly urge London Freethinkers to bring their less heterodox friends along to hear this lecture. It is sure to be instructive, and, in some respects, entertaining.

Mr. A. B. Moss is a candidate for a seat on the new Municipal Council of Camberwell. He has been a member of the old Vestry for a considerable time. He is in the Coburg Ward, and he runs on the Progressive ticket. The Progressive candidates are called the three M's. They are Mayston, Moses, and Moss. We did not expect to see Moss running with Moses. In the circumstances, however, we wish success to both.

Mr. Victor Roger, another N. S. S. vice-president, and a member of the old Lambeth Vestry, is one of the Progressive candidates in the Bishop's Ward, Lambeth, for the new Borough Council. He has been very attentive to his duties, and has served faithfully on several important committees. No doubt the Freethinkers in that Ward will give him their best support. There is another Secularist on the Progressive list—Mr. Frederick Wood, who is known as "The Cabman's Friend." Years ago he was one of those cabmen who refused to take any fare from Charles Bradlaugh when driving him home from the House of Commons at night. We believe he is in a better worldly position now, but the old incident should be recollected by all who keep the memory of Charles Bradlaugh green in their hearts.

Mr. F. J. Gould is appealing to the burgesses of Leicester to elect him on the new School Board, and we hear that he has an extremely good chance of being successful. His address is an excellent one. The words "entirely secular" stand out in bold type. Mr. Gould is not put forward by the Secular Society, but of course the members will support him. In a letter to us he calculates that his expenses will be about £25, towards which he had received: Leicester Friends, £3; F. Smallman, £2; George Anderson, £1. We shall ask the Secular Society, Limited, to contribute something to his election fund. Any reader of this journal who wishes to help should send at once to Mr. Gould, at 41 Lower Hastings-street, Leicester.

Mr. Frederic Harrison, the well-known Positivist, has sent Mr. Gould a friendly letter after reading his address. "I wish you," he says, "all success as a candidate for the School Board."

Francis Parkham, one of the best of American historical writers, was once in a boat on Jamaica Pond with his sister Eliza. "If I should be asked about your religious beliefs," she said, "it seems to me I might say that you are a reverent agnostic." "Yes, that's about it," was his answer. This is recorded by his biographer, Mr. C. H. Farnham.

Secretary E. C. Reichwald, of the American Secular Union, writing to Mr. Foote under date of October 9, invites him to attend the Annual Congress at Cincinnati on November 23, 24, and 25; or, in default of attendance, to send a letter to be read. Mr. Foote will be happy to send a letter. He is sorry he cannot stroll round to the Congress. London is just as far from Cincinnati as Cincinnati is from London. Of course he wishes the Congress all success.

We understand that an invitation to attend the Cincinnati Congress has also been sent to Mr. Watts. According to a report in the American Freethought press, the "saints" over there are counting on his attendance. We do not know on what ground. Mr. Watts says he has neither written nor spoken anything to justify this expectation. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought.

The Manchester Branch has arranged for a special course of lectures on the Darwinian Philosophy to be delivered in the Secular Hall on the last Sunday in each month. There will be lantern and microscopic illustrations. Local "saints" should please note.

### The Wave of Reaction.

THOSE too-sanguine Freethinkers who think that all is over but the shouting in our battle with the Church may find food for thought in the declaration of George Brandes, the distinguished Danish Freethinker, as quoted recently in this paper, that the world is being swept by "a swelling wave of reaction." It is, indeed, well for us to seriously consider whether the modification of religious beliefs argues the early and permanent triumph of Rationalistic ideas and Secular policies. We should not forget that the world has seen many wide-extending changes in religion, and yet remains essentially religious. The masses have not been deeply affected by the acceptance by the select few of the scientific method of investigation. Superstition still dominates the vast majority of the world's inhabitants, even in the most enlightened lands. Those best qualified to give a valuable opinion are not astonished that this is so. Physical and mental and moral evolution proceeds very slowly. It was not to be expected that that which has been tens if not hundreds of thousands of years in building itself into the brain of man would be or could be driven out by a few decades, or even by several centuries of more or less wise educational work by a comparative handful of progressive men and women. We must find our comfort and reward in doing what we can to reduce the sum-total of inconvenience, pain, and danger that has always menaced those persons who did not agree with the majority, convinced that we shall not end the long struggle for light and right, that our children and our children's children for many, many centuries will be forced to continue the fight for rational thought and life in freedom. Those who imagine that religion, that invasive ecclesiasticism, is dead or swiftly dying are dwelling in the paradise of delusion.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

### Saucer-Crackers and Bible-Smackers.

"Usher (to Chinaman in the witness-box): 'The saucer is cracked, and if you do not tell the truth your soul will be cracked like the saucer.' (Laughter.) Usher: 'Silence!'"—*Daily Paper*.

THE followers of Jesus laughed, according to report, Because a man from China broke a saucer;  
Well might you murmur "Silence!" Mr. Usher of the Court;  
Such conduct was enough to make you raw, sir.

A Christian, when he steps inside the box to do a swear,  
Applies his lips to Holy Writ and smacks it;  
He's just as silly as the man who takes a piece of ware  
And throws it down upon the ground and cracks it.

You can't believe what Theists say unless they take an oath,  
And even then I'm hanged if you can trust 'em;  
The Christian scorns the Chinese form, the Sceptic scorns  
them both;  
To swear at all's an idiotic custom.

I'd rather be a Chinnee than a Christian on the whole,  
Though his creed's a silly one, and I despise it;  
A Chinaman believes his Maker cracks a perjured soul,  
But the other man believes his Maker fries it!

ESS JAY BEE.



## Edward Gibbon.

"When I contemplate the common lot of mortality, I must acknowledge that I have drawn a high prize in the lottery of life."—GIBBON.

"Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer."—BYRON.

THE fervid praise which Macaulay bestowed upon Boswell is applicable to Edward Gibbon: "He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere." Gibbon is, admittedly, the most famous writer of history in the English language. The *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is a masterpiece of genius and labor. It is a monumental work, bridging the gulf between the old world and the new. The wonder is that it should have proceeded, not from an academy of scholars, but from the brain and hand of a single man. With what mastery has he arranged his vast and incongruous material, gathered from the whole range of Classical, Byzantine, Mediæval, and Oriental literature, into one luminous and consistent tableau! What weight, majesty, and splendor in his style, in spite of its occasional grandiloquence!

It would be a pardonable exaggeration to declare that the reading of the *Decline and Fall* is an education in itself. That this encyclopædic history of thirteen centuries should ever be displaced is nearly impossible. Edward Gibbon died in London in January, 1794, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six, after a short illness, almost in the fulness of his intellectual power. The great work of his life was done when he was laid to rest in a remote village in Sussex. During the succeeding hundred years his reputation has been continually growing larger and firmer. The civilised world has now agreed to acknowledge the *Decline and Fall* as the grandest historical achievement ever accomplished.

Gibbon is not only our greatest historian; he is also, if we put poets aside, one of our foremost writers. He owes many readers to other than historical merits. It is even possible that no English writer equally old has so many readers to-day, if we except Bacon, Goldsmith, Defoe, or Boswell. If this is so, it is to the man of letters, and not to the historian, that it is due. It is not so much by what he tells us as by his incomparable way of telling it, that he attracts us. Like every great artist, he has given us himself as well as his subject.

If we return again and again to the *Decline and Fall*, it is less for the sake of Byzantine Emperors and Gothic invaders than for that of Gibbon himself. We feel the presence, behind every page, almost behind every sentence, of a great and original personality. Gibbon set a very high value upon style. We know that he would take several turns round his study-table before he could settle a period to his satisfaction. Having something of weight and importance to say, Gibbon was determined to give it all the advantages of a stately and splendid presentation. The stately structure of his immortal sentences remains for ever in just association with the grandeur of his theme. If the habit occasionally degenerated into an abuse, who, that loves dignity in a slipshod age, will care to condemn very severely a fault that came of loving it too well?

Gibbon's acidulated humor has been found distasteful by many otherwise estimable people. It is, however, one of the features in Gibbon's writings which the generality of his readers most clearly remember, and with which they would least willingly part. The most perfect examples will be found in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the *Decline and Fall*. In them Gibbon sketches the early spread of the Great Lying Christian Church. These two chapters show us the great historian as a Freethinker. Let us realise Gibbon's position. He pretends to give an account of the early Christians from the Christian standpoint, so as to hoodwink the solemn owls of orthodoxy. At the same time he contrives to throw doubt and discredit on the whole story. This is the sort of thing:—

"But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were

expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alteration in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history."

There is less evidence in a big folio volume written for or against Christianity than in the deadly irony of these lines.

Gibbon is ostensibly censuring the sages for overlooking the Christian miracles. In reality, he is denying their occurrence by slyly pointing out that there is no contemporary record of them from disinterested sources. Hundreds of books, pamphlets, and reviews have been provoked by these "stinging caresses" of the great historian. But the victory remains with Gibbon. Even Cardinal Newman, a most reluctant witness, is compelled to admit this.

Having no case, Christian apologists charitably accuse Gibbon of having no "heart." It is a characteristically malignant lie. His friends did not find Gibbon lacking in affection. When Godfrey Clarke lost his father, "the infidel" Gibbon was the only man he wished to see, outside his own family. To his father, his step-mother, his aunt, and his few friends, Edward Gibbon was all that a son, a nephew, or a friend could be. He sacrificed, not merely his leisure and tastes, but something of his prospects and fortune, to gratify a father who had not thought too much of his son's interests. For Mrs. Gibbon he showed his unselfish nature by a perfectly voluntary increase of her jointure, and in carrying out her wishes, reasonable or the reverse. For "Aunt Kitty," whose life and ways and character lay so far from his, he proved his genuine affection by many acts of kindness. Only a man who had real depth of heart would have thought, as he did, of asking his host that "Aunt Kitty," when she went to Sheffield Place, might have the room in which he usually slept. This little act of thoughtfulness is characteristic of the man. No one claims that he possessed an exceptionally affectionate nature; but his intimate letters to his friends amply prove that he was not heartless. His attachment to Lord Sheffield and his family forms one of the most constant and beautiful types of friendship embalmed in literature. Such letters as that on the death of young Holroyd, on the death of Lady Sheffield, on the loss of Dryverduin and De Sévry, give the lie to those pious traducers who seek to asperse the character of the great Sceptic. We like to think of Gibbon writing the pages of his immortal history amid the acacias of Lausanne. That beautiful and serene atmosphere is unsullied by the presence of Christian libellers. We will leave him in that haven of peace. He was a profound scholar, a great Freethinker, and one of the most splendid writers in the grand roll of English literature. He took what the years brought with open-hearted gratitude, he warmed both hands before the fire of life, and, as it burned low, he avowed himself ready to depart.

MIMNERMUS.

### Inspiration.

Whilst the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely, it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces, I must find true in me, or reject; and on his word, or as his second, be he who he may, I can accept nothing. On the contrary, the absence of this primary faith is the presence of degradation. As is the flood, so is the ebb. Let this faith depart, and the very words it spake, and the things it made, become false and hurtful.—Emerson.

The truth must be reiterated, for error is constantly repeated; and this not by individuals only, but by the multitude. In newspapers and encyclopædias, in schools and universities, error is everywhere to the fore, and sees with complacency that it has the support of the majority.—Goethe.



## Freethought in Belgium.

Not least amongst the revelations which surprised the English delegates at the International Freethought Congress at Paris was the stamp of power displayed by the Belgian section. The Congress only paid due homage to the zeal and initiative of the Belgian Freethinkers when it fixed the seat of the International Federation at Brussels and committed the details of the reorganisation of the international movement into the hands of the workers there, appointing as editor in chief of the organ of the Federation, *La Raison*, M. Léon Furnémont, the Deputy for Charleroi.

Belgium is no doubt a small place on the map, but it bulks largely in the world of Freethought. Amidst the teeming multitudes that swarm over its restricted area the Freethought propagandist is almost ubiquitous, conducting the campaign against Christianity with equal zeal and intelligence. A brief account, therefore, of the work carried on by our comrades in the tiny kingdom will, I am sure, be acceptable to my readers, and may, perhaps, encourage English Secularists along the path of friendly emulation.

During the last two or three years the record of the movement in Belgium is one of continuous progress. In 1891 a hundred Branches existed, having 10,000 members; and in September, 1892, the number of Branches had grown to 125, with more than 15,000 members. In 1898 the Branches had reached 200; and shortly afterwards, in the beginning of last year, the number had mounted to nearly 250. Even then new Societies, as in the Borinage, were in course of formation; and in the environs of Liège there is scarcely a commune, however small, that does not boast its Freethought Society—the Society at Ougrée having no less than 400 members. Belgian Freethought journalism is represented by *La Raison*, ably edited by J.-B. Demoulin, and *De Rede*. The first, written wholly in French, is published at Brussels, and is the organ of the National Federation of Belgian Freethinkers; the latter, written in Flemish, is the organ of the Flemish Federation, and is published at Gand.

Enthusiasm and energy are the characteristics of Belgian Freethought. An illustration of this is furnished by the account of the function which took place on December 18, 1898, when a new standard was "inaugurated" at Nessonvaux, in the Liège district. Every train reaching Nessonvaux during the afternoon brought new contingents of demonstrators, bearing with them their banners. As the representatives of the various country Branches arrived they formed themselves into marching array, flying their respective banners as they went along, each person wearing in his button-hole a pansy, the sweet little flower emblematic of Freethought. More than six hundred persons were present at the ceremony, and speeches were delivered by a number of able exponents of our views, including, notably, Pierre Fluse, a working weaver, who is known as one of the chief orators in the country.

Here is another instance. In January, 1899, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the first Society belonging to the Central Federation took place at Jolimont. A procession bearing twenty-nine banners, and consisting of many thousands of members, took part in the *fête*. The first speaker was Jules Gilles, the honorary president, who was moved to tears as he stood beside the banner under which he had proclaimed the principles of Freethought during a quarter of a century in all the surrounding villages, and he wept with joy to think that what had been a road to Calvary for him twenty-five years before had now become a triumphant procession. As the white-headed veteran kissed, amidst his tears, the banner endeared to him by so many memories, the whole assembly was moved to sympathetic admiration. All this bespeaks numbers, enthusiasm, and organisation.

The Belgian Freethinkers occasionally enjoy the luxury of debate. An interesting discussion took place at Jolimont last year *à propos* of the aforementioned celebration. The disputants were M. Jules des Essarts, editor of the *Journal de Charleroi*, a well-known Freethought advocate, and M. Schyns, a Protestant minister. The subject was the character of the Apostles. Nearly a thousand people flocked from all parts—from Mons,

Charleroi, Brussels, and elsewhere—to pay, on a Sunday be it noted, in order to witness the *post-mortem* examination of the founders of Christianity.

By the way, the inauguration of new banners seems fatally doomed to lead up to debate in Belgium. In the very heart of the country, at Solre-sur-Sambre, a new banner was recently unfolded. The ceremony was an imposing one. A magnificent procession formed outside the local headquarters of the Freethought Society with bands, banners, and ensigns, and marched through the principal places in the commune. The local *curé* had publicly prayed for rain, but heaven, by some stupid mistake, sent a strong wind instead. Happily, God and his priest were frustrated, for the Town Hall was available, and a large audience—for a detached district—estimated at from five hundred to eight hundred, listened to the various speeches and wickedly applauded. A farcical Christian named Papette opposed, and sent his audience off into screams of laughter at the expense of God and his Christ.

One of the notable features in connection with Freethought in Belgium is the Rationalist Orphanage at the Chaussée Aelseberg, Brussels. It was founded in 1896 by a Freethinker, M. Adolphe Deluc, and is solely maintained by the subscriptions of the party. The Orphanage is established at a well-appointed building, having all the latest hygienic appliances. The number of children at present stands at thirty-five; but it is hoped, as funds pour in, that the family of little ones cared for and trained under Freethought auspices may increase. The orphans are of both sexes, and appear to be treated with intelligence and kindness. The education given them is purely secular, without any admixture of religion. The principle is adopted of the co-education of the sexes, and one of the objects aimed at by the founder is to show by experience that the reality of Secular morality is, on the plane of education proper, practically superior to the fictions of religious superstition. It is gratifying to find that each issue of *La Raison* evidences the receipt of subscriptions gathered from societies and individuals for the maintenance of this worthy institution. M. Deluc died only a few months ago at the ripe age of eighty-nine, but the Orphanage which he established will not, it is hoped, suffer because its founder has passed over to the majority.

The literature of Belgian Freethought deserves a moment's attention. Numerous tracts, written in both French and Flemish, are distributed far and wide by the various Branches. A whole library of pamphlets is issued at remarkably cheap rates from the office of *La Raison*. They are well printed, and, in some cases, illustrated; and the marvel is that so much reading matter, and of such excellent quality too, can be got out at such low prices. One of the most remarkable issues is the *Catechism for Grown-up Children*, a genuine literary curiosity, originally issued\* in the year VIII., and, on account of its dangerous onslaughts and insinuations, suppressed, and all but wiped out by that remorseless craven, the Church. The author of the *Catechism* is unknown, but it is supposed to have been written by a priest converted to Freethought. This invaluable propagandist tract, containing twenty-eight pages, twelve illustrations, and a fine pictorial front page, sells at fifteen centimes (three-halfpence). Another very interesting publication is a little handy *Almanack of Freethought*, issued annually at Liège, published under the auspices of the "Federation of the Basin of the Meuse." It contains sixty-four pages of useful information—short articles, poems, anecdotes, and pithy selections from pithy minds—and is priced at fifteen centimes. It circulates throughout the whole country, and obtains, as it deserves, the support of the various Branches.

Belgian Freethought is of vigorous growth. It is earnest and intelligent, and creates an energetic type of propagandist. Amongst its leading figures are: M. Léon Furnémont, a splendid orator, one of the old guard; M. Jules des Essarts; M. Felix Meert; M. Joseph Thirion, president of the Rationalist Federation in the Basin of the Meuse; my friend, M. J.-B. Demoulin, the editor of *La Raison*; and a host of other choice spirits, some of whom have been named already.

\* Published then as *Catéchisme des Christicoles*.



It is reassuring to know that the interests of the movement are committed into such trusty hands. Free-thought under their guidance becomes no narrow sectional movement. The two vigorous races—Walloon and Flemish—thanks to the activity of our Belgian *confrères*, are now being awakened from their superstitious slumber. The work of their redemption is growing day by day.

Time and education are on the side of our Belgian brothers. Reaction here in England, or there in Belgium and elsewhere, may triumph for a brief space, but the twin forces of sceptical science and popular progress will ultimately sweep the old priestly cobwebs to the ground. I rejoice that my presence at the International Freethought Congress at Paris brought me in contact with the refined and thoughtful men who are doing service for humanity by ridding the popular mind of the bogey of religion.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

### Are there any Lower Slopes?

"MIMNERMUS" writes of the minor poet as browsing on the lower slopes of Parnassus. This description starts the thought that "Mimnermus" uses the term "minor poet" in a sense different from that of Edgar Poe, who writes, in his interesting and acute essay on *The Poetic Principle*, as follows: "By minor poems I mean, of course, poems of little length.....I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase 'a long poem' is simply a contradiction in terms." And Poe goes on to demonstrate with great acumen his contention. Minor poems are to Poe not the greatest only of all poems, but the only poems that can be wholly great, and the minor poet, or the writer of minor poems, the greatest of poets. The poet can never be sufficiently inspired to write a long and perfect poem nor a reader be excited by even a perfect long poem, for more than a brief time—half an hour, Poe suggests; and this suggestion seems to limit a poem for unwaning effectiveness to, say, 250 or 300 lines. After exceeding that length its influence begins to fail. The perfect long poem, then, as to form, would be a succession of minor poems, and of this we have an instance in James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*, *Sunday up the River*, and *Sunday at Hampstead*, whereby "B.V.," in practice, endorses Poe's views; whilst, in his *Weddah* and *Vane's Story*, he considerably outruns Poe's line limit, although in these two pieces there are well-marked sections and parts which seem to hint at a sense, on "B.V.'s" part, of the risk of taking either poem at one reading.

In the *City*, however, not only does "B.V." divide into sections, but he continually varies his form of verse also, and so constitutes what Poe considers the only possible form of the long poem—namely, a succession of short poems—as contrasted with the long poem merely cut up into lengths more or less short. Now, I have always found *The City of Dreadful Night* readable without diminished interest from first line to last; but before I came across Pope's essay I don't know that I'd ever thought why it was so to me. Perhaps, if pushed for a reason, I should have fallen back on its varied metre and clearly-defined episodes and interludes. Each of which, whilst in itself a whole, yet formed a perfect part in a larger scheme. But Poe's essay saved me the trouble of thinking out a reason; for no sooner had I read his definition of the only possible long poem that would not be "a contradiction in terms" than I said to myself: "Why, 'B.V.' has done it, and precisely on Poe's lines"; possibly did it with Poe's opinion in his mind, for "B.V.'s" admiration of Poe was deep and warm. At any rate, Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* seems to me, judged by Poe's standard, the most perfect long poem in our language, for its variations resemble those of a fine symphony in number and charm, and the excitement of the reader's interest is kept at the maximum throughout by the very means triumphantly used by the great masters of tone; presenting the theme in so many variations that to the end we want more, and taste no "sad satiety." *The Fairy Queen* and *Paradise Lost* sate us very

quickly, and even some of Shelley's poems, to say nothing of several of Browning's, threaten to cloy and fail for lack of this true musical method adopted by "B.V." and contended for by Poe. Finally, I do not think Poe admitted any lower slopes to his Parnassus, hardly any degrees in poetry. A writer of verse, to Poe, was either a poet or not a poet: if the former, he was free of the Parnassian Republic; if the latter, he could not enter at all. I feel that this is the right view, and that Dekker and Lovelace and Peel and Greene and Herrick and Suckling are not to be set on any lower slopes than Chaucer and Marlowe and Shakespeare and Milton, each of the former six having done work in *quality* as good as any of that done by the latter four poets. And as Poe, to quote him for the last time herein, says: "As yet they [the Quarterlies] have not insisted on our estimating Lamartine by the cubic foot, or Pollock by the pound; but what else are we to *infer* from their continual prating about *sustained* effort?"

J. H. B.

### Who doth Hear?

A PRAYER from someone's breaking heart, entreating  
A cherished life, is raised to "him on high":  
"I fear, Lord, that my loved one's life is fleeting;  
Hear me this time; O do not let him die!"  
The moments speed, and even draws the curtain  
About a corpse and one whose faith sincere  
Says, still and ever: "He will live, I'm certain;  
I've prayed to God for him I hold most dear,  
*And God doth hear!*"

Behold one longing day by day for pardon  
From that dread Judge Fear's eyes discern above—  
A Judge whose heart at wails of woe may harden,  
Or may be moved to pity and to love;  
Now, calm in confidence and high elation,  
The "culprit" looks aloft and knows no fear;  
Anon he cries: "Is there for *me* salvation?  
Pardon me, Lord, and make thy pardon clear!"  
*But none doth hear!*

Poor human wrecks are day by day beseeching  
The Lord to give them joy of life again;  
And trembling hands feel for those hands far-reaching  
Of him who stoops to mortals in their pain.  
Each mournful plaint upon the air is wasted,  
No Hand from heaven to earth doth e'er appear;  
And none that "living water" ever tasted  
Which still the Christian craves with sigh and tear—  
*No God doth hear.*

There is no God, or none who heeds the placing  
Of sorrow, joy, and love in mortals' lives;  
Of no avail ourselves in dust abasing—  
The battle is to him who nobly strives.  
Man is man's savior! All the god-host banish!  
Let but the hand of one true friend be near  
To grip in hours of darkness, troubles vanish:  
A *brother's* all we need when life is drear,  
*For HE doth hear!*

JOHN YOUNG.

### Not One, but All.

We drain all cisterns, and, waxing greater by all these supplies, we crave a better and more abundant food. The man has never lived that can feed us for ever. The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person who shall set a barrier on any one side to this unbounded, unboundable empire. It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightens the capes of Sicily; and, now out of the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men.—*Emerson.*

"It is a great comfort," said the Cornfed Philosopher, "to find that the Ten Commandments read 'Thou shalt not,' instead of 'I shall not.'"—*Indianapolis Press.*

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—*Judge.*



## 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. Cohen, "Christian Missions in Africa, India, and China."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Famines in India."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, H. Snell, "The Religion of the Body."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road: 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "The Negro in America."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, E. Leggett.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies; 7.30, F. A. Davies.

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

### COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): A lecture.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. P. Ward—11, in the Bull Ring; 7, in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street. For particulars of afternoon, and subjects for morning and evening, see Saturday's *Birmingham Daily Mail*.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Dramatic Entertainment by the Society's Dramatic Class.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (1 Grainger-street): 3, Monthly meeting.

GLASGOW (119 Brunswick-street): Charles Watts—11.30, "Scientists of the Victorian Era"; 2.30, "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" 6.30, "Secularism: Its Necessity and Superiority."

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Nicholls, "A Debatable Subject."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, G. W. Foote—11, "China and the Christian Powers"; 6.30, "Does Death End Us?"

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Stanley Jones, "Right Hon. A. J. Balfour and the Foundations of Belief."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. A. Rogerson, "The Lowest Forms of Life." With lantern illustrations by Mr. Flatters.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday evening: Vocal and Instrumental Music, Recitations, etc.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "The Isle of Man."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 28, Athenæum Hall. November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—October 28, Birmingham. November 4, Manchester. 18, Birmingham. 25, Sheffield. 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Glasgow.

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