

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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“Our” New Century.

ONCE in a way an editor may be allowed to talk about himself. It is generally the worst subject in the world, but not universally. When a Montaigne plays the egoist in literature, the very elect of the earth will listen to him, and go on doing so generation after generation. Of course *we* are not Montaigne, or anything like him. His great name is only adduced as a supreme illustration. What we mean is simply this—that the occasion may arise, say once in a century, when it is permissible for the editor of a journal like the *Freethinker* to talk about himself; not exactly *as* himself, but as the incarnation, so to speak, of his journal's spirit and policy. For the *Freethinker* is not an ordinary newspaper. It never aimed at making money by printing police news, reporting murder and divorce trials, giving the latest tips in the betting world, publishing verbatim accounts of verbose speeches on transient questions, or gathering more or less ephemeral information from the ends of the earth. It never aimed at making money at all. It started in devotion to principle, and has continued in that course ever since. It has always been, and still is—as I trust it always will be—a battle-flag and a rallying cry in the great war of human liberation. When I was tried for “blasphemy”—that is to say, for editing the *Freethinker*—before the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, I told the jury, with a pride which I was entitled to display in those circumstances, that I had fought for my principles, and taken soldier's wages when there were any, and gone cheerfully without when there were none, as I hoped to do to the end. I believe I could say the same thing as honestly now, after the lapse of nearly eighteen years. Of course I have my faults—who has not?—but I have never had a thought untrue to the flag under which I elected to fight. I have never written a line in the *Freethinker* in the hope of any man's favor or the fear of any man's frown. I have never thought of the gain or loss. I have simply said what I thought to all who chose to listen. And when I hear extravagant laudations of our English “free press,” which is fettered in the trammels of commercialism, I feel inclined to say that my own journal is about the “freest” in the kingdom. Not only have I said what *I* thought; I have allowed all my colleagues to say what *they* thought. In all the thousand numbers of the *Freethinker* (roughly speaking) I have never put my pen through a single line of any article from other pens than mine, for any opinion or sentiment it expressed. The contributors have signed their names and taken their own responsibility. And I say that this is honest journalism, of which I, and my colleagues, and the whole Freethought party, may well be proud.

Twenty years of my life have been given—with deductions for collateral work—to the *Freethinker*. That is a big slice out of one man's cake of time. I see there is so much less left, and I have still nothing but the little I can earn from week to week. But I have nothing to regret. It has been twenty years of congenial labor; twenty years of battle for convictions; twenty years of faithful service to the cause which commands my head and heart. And in the darkest hours of my life—of which I have said very little, for I prefer consuming my own smoke—I have turned for relief and consolation to that work, that battle, and that service, and found them a sovereign medicine for every trouble and a wholesome anodyne for every grief.

No. 1,015.

The *Freethinker* started as a monthly in May, 1881. It was made a weekly in the following September, and has continued so ever since. The 1882 volume is minus the number for July 23. That is because the printer was terrorised by the prosecution. He threw up the job when the paper was nearly all set up on a Tuesday morning. But I had a little four-page edition set up elsewhere, and got a few copies pulled for a legal issue, one of which is in the British Museum. Next week the paper came out as usual. “We have been obliged,” I wrote, “to take a shop and set up a printing-office of our own, in order to carry on our enterprise and keep our flag flying. All this has been done in a week, and in the face of tremendous obstacles. The counsel for the prosecution said in Court last week that the *Freethinker* was dead. Nothing of the sort. Like the founder of Christianity, it disappeared late one week and reappeared early the next.”

Perhaps I shall never tell the secret history of that eventful week. For one black twenty-four hours I was nearly in the position of Jesus Christ, when “they all forsook him and fled.” Nearly, but not quite; for one ever-faithful comrade stood by me all the time. Frail in body but firm of soul, he would have gone into the pass of Thermopylæ with me whenever I beckoned him. Nearly three years ago he left my side, under a more imperative beckoning than mine. But he is still as present to me in thought as on the day he died, though not as obtrusively, and in the pauses of my work I sometimes find myself smiling and whispering “Joe.” He was terribly upset and exhausted by the worry and fatigue of that stressful day, so I took him to his lodgings and insisted on his going to bed, whether he could sleep or not. More remained for me to do, but I finished it, and then went to bed myself and slept like a top—my health being then impeccable. The next morning broke peacefully for both of us, for the storm was over, the struggle was ended, and I had won all along the line.

Early in the following year (1883) I was in a sort of life and death struggle, and in March I had to begin my twelve months' imprisonment for “blasphemy.” I often joke about it, though it was no joke itself. Fortunately, I had great physical resources, and I was in the prime of life—just the same age as Jesus Christ was when he was arrested for “blasphemy,” otherwise it would have been a frightful strain to be shut off for so long from all that makes life worth living. It is not generally known that my sentence was, in some respects, the severest ever inflicted on a “blasphemer” in this country. In former days the “blasphemer” was treated very much as a first-class misdemeanant. He was allowed to wear his own clothes, hire apartments in the prison if he could pay for them, see friends, receive and write letters, and have the fullest access to books and writing materials. None of these advantages were enjoyed by me. I was treated in all respects like an ordinary criminal.

During my imprisonment the *Freethinker* was once more at the gates of death. My dear friend and sub-editor, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, broke down, and went temporarily insane; but a committee was formed, with Mrs. Besant at its head, and Dr. Aveling acted as editor until my release. I had left strict injunctions against such “blasphemy” as I was imprisoned for appearing in the paper during my absence. I intended this as a shield to those who might have to take my place. When I came out of prison I went on editing the *Freethinker* exactly at the point where I left off. But for the best

part of a year before that it was a pale copy of its real self. This was partly owing to my own orders, and still more, perhaps, to the fact that the *Freethinker* has always been "personally conducted."

There was talk in parliamentary circles about another prosecution within a year. But it was found that I had anticipated the bigots. I had made myself editor, proprietor, printer, and publisher of the paper, all rolled into one. At every point they found that I was the only person to be attacked; and Sir Hardinge Giffard, now Lord Halsbury, advised them not to give me the opportunity of making any more speeches in the law courts. If they could have put down the *Freethinker* quietly they would have done so, but they had discovered that I could make a considerable noise, and that too many people were apt to listen.

Nearly seventeen years have rolled by since my imprisonment. There has been no "blasphemy" prosecution since, and there may never be another. And through all that period the *Freethinker* has kept along its steady course, improving I hope with the lapse of time. It was eight pages at first, then I made it twelve, and then sixteen, still keeping it at a penny. But the financial strain nearly broke my back. My sub-editor and the regular contributors were paid, anyhow; and tradesmen's bills had to be met weekly. What I had was the glory—and the loss. Finally, I was obliged to raise the price to twopence, in order to avoid absolute bankruptcy. This led to a somewhat reduced circulation, but it enabled me to go on without breaking. The paper has paid itself way ever since, though there was often nothing left for me. Now it belongs to the Freethought Publishing Company, and the duty of upholding it, financially, devolves upon the whole Freethought party. My share is to work as hard as ever for a very meagre pittance.

An advanced journal has had to ask for a gift-subscription of £1,000 in order to live in the new year. I have kept the *Freethinker* alive for twenty years.

G. W. FOOTE.

New Year's Reflections.

THE twentieth century has commenced, and a new year has entered upon its course. It may, therefore, be profitable to reflect briefly upon the past, and also to consider the probabilities of the future. One of the great drawbacks of the age is a lack of adequate individual and general examination. We are too apt, in the great turmoil of life, to pursue a certain routine without asking ourselves why we do so; and many of us are prone to adopt the opinions and habits of our predecessors without even inquiring as to the truth of the one or the value of the other. Secularists, above all persons, should avoid this indifference, inasmuch as the very essence of their philosophy involves activity of thought and non-reliance upon the theological customs of the past. It is the slavish adherence to the follies and errors of bygone ages that has interfered so largely with the social, moral, and intellectual progress of the human race.

"Physician, heal thyself" is most excellent advice, especially deserving of application in these days of "Mind-other-people's-business-instead-of-your-own." Morally, the theological opinions of our neighbors are too frequently considered before personal ethical culture; socially, the condition of the heathen is regarded with the greatest solicitude, while the pitiable state of our own poor is sadly neglected; religiously, the soul's salvation of the semi-savage abroad is deemed of far greater importance than the moral regeneration of the people at home. What has been the result of such policy? The present condition of society, morally diseased to its very core, supplies the answer. After eighteen hundred years of the active reign of Christian theology, what do we discover in our very midst? A deplorable lack of real physical comfort among the masses of the people; a thoroughly unhealthy moral tone, no less in the religious than in the political and commercial world; and an air of artificiality permeating most phases of society. Both in public and private life the real is discarded for the imaginary, and the shadow

is accepted in lieu of the substance. Principle is sacrificed to selfish interest, and fidelity to conviction is made subordinate to popular favor. Theological professions we have in abundance; but a marked inconsistency robs them of true ethical potency. The blessings of peace are preached, while the humane observer stands aghast at the world's record of the blood and carnage of a brutal warfare. Love is exalted to a pinnacle of sublime admiration by the same people who dim its lustre with dense clouds of theological hatred and spite. Liberty is adored in name, while many of its most sacred rights are ruthlessly trampled under the feet of a self-appointed authority. The brotherhood of man is loudly proclaimed at the same time that its fraternal bonds are being divided by the monopoly of wealth and the false ideas associated with class distinctions. The poor are blessed by the teachings of theology, and cursed by the laws and customs fostered and defended by the Church and its priests. Might takes the place of right, falsehood is substituted for truth, and law stands for justice. Society may not be sick unto death; but its health is sadly impaired, and a skilful physician is, indeed, required. Where is the savior of the race to be found? The Church has failed to give the answer. Christianity has proved itself inadequate, after a trial of nearly two thousand years, to solve the problem, How can the present state of society be brought into harmony with the principles of truth, justice, and honesty?

The usual Christian stock-in-trade phrase, "Peace on earth," has recently resounded from the various pulpits; and the very men (with few exceptions) who have uttered the words, with an unpardonable hypocrisy, have done their utmost to support a policy which prevents its realisation. Some professed Christians are honest enough to admit this fact. For instance, the *Church Gazette* says:—

"'Peace on earth' cannot be said to represent the actual state of things, as matters are in this world just now. In the spirit it may perhaps be with us, or with some of us, but in the letter it is certainly not here. Nationally we are engaged in an internecine struggle with an adversary who, though small, is formidable—one whom, though we are forced to meet in arms, we yet have no ill-will against, and whom, should we finally vanquish, we have no mind to ultimately injure. But for the present there is and can be no peace; for that we have to look forward to the future. Nor yet at home is there much more indication of the looked-for beating of swords into ploughshares. For the spirit of internal strife and division is rife among us; nor was there ever a time when the cries of opposing parties and creeds were louder or more insistent. Even within the limits of our own communion there is a schism so pronounced, well marked, and distinctly recognised as to threaten absolute disruption, if not the overthrow of the institution itself. Actually, then, domestic concord is as far from being realised as is the harmony of nations."

Here we have an admission of what may be truly termed the cant and hypocrisy of the Church. Its clergy always talk about their "Master" favoring peace, and yet they are the foremost in producing wars. The Rev. Dr. Parker (in the *Sun* of December 20) writes:—

"A careful calculation has shown that the wars waged by the Christian nations in the last fifty years have involved the sacrifice of three millions and a-half of human lives, and the expenditure of at least £4,285,000,000 sterling, or an average of over £3 and a-half per head of the inhabitants of the globe.....If Peace be a Christian ideal, then it is an ideal which the Church of Christ, at least, should keep always before herself and the nation she professes to lead, and which everyone who has named the name of Christ should seek by example and precept to make a reality wherever his influence extends."

The truth is that Christianity has been the greatest hindrance to peace. Throughout Europe we find nations armed to the teeth, devoting their main energies to the perfection of their fighting material and the victualling of their fighting men, and the keenest of their intellectual forces to the problem of scientific destruction. What can be more detrimental to individual and national welfare than devastating and depopulating countries in order that one warrior may rival another in what is called military glory? As John Bright said at Birmingham in 1858: "I do not care for military greatness or military renown. I care for the condition of the people among whom I live.....Crowns, coronets, mitres, military display, the pomp of war, wide colonies, and a

huge empire are, in my view, all trifles, light as air, and not worth considering, unless with them you can have a fair share of comfort, contentment, and happiness among the great body of the people. Palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions, do not make a nation. The nation in every country dwells in the cottage." Right cannot advance if brutal force remains in the front. Under Christian rule, instead of peace and goodwill having been inaugurated, the centuries that have flown by since those words were supposed to have been uttered have been notorious for their falsehood, disunion, and misery; and up to the present time little or no fundamental improvement has taken place.

One of the most pleasing reflections we have at this, the dawn of the new century, is upon the marvellous changes, and in some respects improvements, which have taken place in reference to the Bible and Christianity. Certain it is that the orthodox religion will not stand the thought-test of the twentieth century; the old mode of expounding its claims and defending its positions has proved inadequate to meet the reasoning requirements of the present time. The rapid progress of general education and scientific knowledge has compelled Christian exponents to change their method of advocacy. In former times the Bible, "every word and every letter," was thrown into the teeth of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and other investigators and discoverers of natural truths. Now, however, Christians proclaim: "Oh! the Bible was not intended to teach physical science." So much the worse, then, for the Bible. No sane person will deny that science has been the greatest benefactor to the world. To it we are indebted for the marvellous improvements so manifest in the past century. If the Bible is "God's word," containing rules for man's guidance, it should teach that which is undoubtedly the guiding principle of his life. We readily grant that the Bible does not teach science, although its defenders once claimed that it did. It professes to do so, however, and much of its space is devoted to such scientific questions as the origin of man, disease and death, and the solar system; only upon all these subjects the Bible writers evidently wrote nothing that we can now accept as scientifically accurate. Is it not strange that Christian instructors did not recognise this fact until the nineteenth century? Why did they continue to inculcate a theory of creation which was thoroughly erroneous, and which is now rejected by every scholar whose intellect is not prostrated before the shrine of blind belief?

Christian apologists, finding it difficult, in this critical age, to defend successfully any one doctrine of orthodoxy, fall back for refuge upon the assertion that the "Christian evidences are cumulative." They urge that the Christian faith must be judged as a whole—a complete system. To this I answer, that if the "evidences" are cumulative, so also are our objections to them. What are the alleged "cumulative evidences" as set forth in the Bible? Practically, they are these:—God, having the power to make man perfect, formed him out of such inferior materials, and organised him so badly, that his weakness was manifested at the first test to which he was subjected. The result was that he fell, and, although God is supposed to be omnipotent, he did not improve the work of his own hand, but, by a cold-water process, actually destroyed the whole of mankind, one family excepted. By and by the human race again multiplied; but wickedness and misfortune still marked their fallen condition. Therefore, God then decided to send his Son, who was of the same age as himself, to correct the errors of the original creation, with the injunction that those who did not believe in the Son should perish everlastingly. Notwithstanding that this belief was necessary to salvation, no provision was made to impart a universal knowledge of this plan of redemption. The consequence is that at the present time, after it has existed nearly two thousand years, only about one-third of mankind know anything about it; and among those the first portion do not understand it, the second portion find its application personally impractical, and the third portion reject it altogether. Thus the weakness, cruelty, and total failure of this orthodox scheme are so apparent that the "cumulative" objections to it are so numerous and powerful as to destroy the force of any supposed "cumulative evidence."

In wishing all my readers a happy and prosperous new year, their earnest co-operation is required in the promulgation of those Secular principles which we all hold dear. We are already reaping rich harvests from the fields sown in the tears and blood of the heroes and martyrs who went before; it surely behoves us, in gratitude to those by whose efforts the task has been rendered so much easier and less dangerous, to plant and sow more abundantly, for the reaping and gathering of those who shall come after. This is a just debt to our ancestry, which can only be paid to our posterity.

CHARLES WATTS.

Relics.

ONE would much prefer to remember a man of genius or high character by some thought which he had left rather than by anything even so intimately associated with him as his toenail. But the reverence for saintly relics which prevails in Roman Catholic countries does not make any such distinction.

A toenail is a concrete object; a thought is abstract, sometimes difficult of comprehension, and often, because of its subjectivity, passed over with lazy disregard. But any silly person, without effort, may bend down and reverentially kiss a toenail or a scrap of timber.

To M. Luchaire we are indebted for a curious account which he contributes to the *Revue de Paris* of the veneration for relics on the Continent. Incidentally he alludes to what must have been noticed not only by the archæologist, but the ordinary visitor to the Paris Exhibition—namely, the wonderful collection of reliquaries gathered together in the smaller of the two Art Palaces. Here were exposed to the gaze of the curious, relics which were venerated or worshipped for centuries past. Notably there was the golden idol encrusted with precious stones known as the image of St. Faith, the Virgin of Conques. This must indeed be an extraordinary idol, for it is said to have worked miracles for over a thousand years. Innumerable pilgrims have passed before her shrine, bringing her offerings, and imploring her intercession—one is not quite assured as to results.

During the Middle Ages this particular image actually owned property, not only all over France, but in England, Spain, and Italy. Occasionally she was taken on tour among her properties, but she does not appear to have visited this country.

This fact seems to be mentioned by Protestant people with some little triumph. But their triumph is without foundation if they think that England is inaccessible to idols or free from superstition. We, even in Birmingham—that "hub of the universe"—manufacture idols for exportation, and presumably for worship.

The tours of the image of St. Faith, the Virgin of Conques, were almost in the nature of royal progresses. At least, they were a source of great interest and enthusiasm in the towns and villages through which St. Faith passed, and where she was credited with working many miracles.

After such a past, an unkind critic observes that there is something grotesque and melancholy in the thought of poor St. Faith playing her part in the great Rarée Show on the banks of the Seine.

Relics have occupied an incredible position in the public life of the past. Instead of swearing with the aid of a Bible, a witness, in the earlier centuries, called God to witness his truth by placing his hand on a relic. When the plague broke out in a city the town relics—which generally consisted of the limb of some revered saint, a piece of "the true cross," or a portion of the garment of a martyr—were brought out of the reliquaries, and taken in procession through the streets.

Before starting on a long journey, or on a dangerous expedition, the traveller made a pilgrimage to some holy place, sanctified as having once been the dwelling, or as having now possession of the relics, of a well-known saint. Also he would try or his friends would attempt to procure for him some little relic, which was placed as a kind of amulet either in the hilt of his sword or in a small bag round his neck. The value of a relic differed according to the holiness of the saint or martyr

with whom it was connected. Then, as now, Jerusalem was the most frequented place of pilgrimage.

France was the honored possessor of that matchless relic, "the Crown of Thorns." Each of the Apostles was represented by a relic, including a lock of hair of St. Peter. Other relics were objects supposed to have been touched by the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Great kings and princes knew that they could give no greater pleasure to their friends and vassals than by presenting them with a relic. One town, famous for its objects of the kind, proudly boasted of possessing a little piece of the fabled manger from Bethlehem, a cupful of the incense brought by the Magis, a finger of St. John the Baptist, and a lock of the hair of St. Mary Magdalene.

One of the mediæval relics was the body of "Saint Genevieve," the patroness of Paris. In 1162 the terrible news went forth that the saint's head had disappeared, stolen by some too ardent devotee. The then king, Louis VII., made it known that if the head was not replaced by a certain day he would have all the monks in the Priory of Saint Genevieve, where the relic had been kept, severely beaten. But, as sometimes happens on less important occasions, the threat had its desired effect, and when, in the presence of the King and the whole Court, the reliquary was opened the saint's head was found intact. It not infrequently happened that several towns believed themselves to be in possession of the same relic, and this caused not a little scandal. Even to-day in republican France there is no town, and very few villages, that has not its set of relics, and now, as then, additions are constantly made to them.

Relics have an interest for hero and saint worshippers as well as for the archæologist and historian. But, after all, it is a limited interest. To my own knowledge, several journalists who made a great howl in their newspapers about the disappearance of the Nelson relics from Greenwich never saw them in their lives, and were never likely to see them, as a matter of pure volition followed by the payment of a threepenny tram-fare.

A toenail or a tuft of hair I have no regard for. For one thing, I am not always certain that they are genuine in the sense of having belonged to the persons represented, and then, if they *are* genuine, they are voiceless objects. A really priceless treasure from a really great man would be a piece of his manuscript containing in his own handwriting some great thought, epigram, or witty observation. But a rational person is not likely to fall into an ecstasy over a boot of Dickens or a piece of Lord Byron's shirt-tail.

Similarly, it is absurd to attach any value to so-called remains of saints, especially as having a curative potency, which, of course, it is idle to suppose they possess. At the utmost they may be supposed, after satisfying a silly kind of curiosity, to possess some inspirational strength. But even that is quite doubtful. FRANCIS NEALE.

Agnosticism Higher than Atheism.

MR. CHARLES WATTS is always courteous and unimputative. His knowledge of Secularism, and the consistency of his expositions of it, I always acknowledge; therefore, in what I say herein I intend no word disparaging to him. Since, however, he asks me to explain what he calls a "change of front" in my opinions concerning Atheism, I willingly do so (from respect for him), and, plainly, lest others should think there is some foundation for his strange surmises.*

Is Mr. Watts a Python? Does he doze half his life away? Is he a drowsy Rip Van Winkle, who slept twenty years at a stretch? That was moderate somnolence. Mr. Watts has slept forty years. Now he awakes and cries: "I am in a state of perturbation; Mr. Holyoake has changed his front. He has taken a 'new attitude.'" Why, bless his oblivious soul, I took it forty years ago, before Mr. Watts went up the Catskill Mountains.

* A valued friend in Newark, a constant reader of Mr. Watts's writings, specially asks me to answer his inquiries.

Early in 1861 I published the *Limits of Atheism*, a lecture delivered in Bendall's Assembly Rooms, City-road, and published it when I was at 147 Fleet-street, and also in the *Trial of Theism*, which Mr. Watts himself printed. In it are these words: "The term Cosmism ought to *supersede* the term Atheism, just as Secularism has superseded the libellous term 'Infidelity.'" For the first time (1861) I used the term "Atheism" as the title of a lecture. [I had then been a lecturer twenty-four years, and had never taken Atheism for a subject.] "Atheism" was a worn-out word, used by priests in hateful senses. One is that it means without morality as well as without God; but "Cosmism" is neither dissolute, monarchical, nor impious. It recognises that the universe *is*, without theorising *why* it is. Cosmism says it cannot explain anything beyond nature. The language of Cosmism is that of Terence:—

I do not say there is no God,
But this I say—I know not.

This is Huxley's conception of Agnosticism. I was then, as the reader sees, in search for a new word, but Huxley was not at hand to supply it. I had the idea, but not the term. I go on to say:—

"Twenty years ago (1840) I stepped forward to defend the *right* of expressing Atheism by those who conscientiously heed it. On Mr. Southwell's imprisonment in Bristol, I took his place as editor of the *Oracle of Reason*, and shared his fate at Gloucester. Under the same circumstances I would do it again to-morrow [as I would to-day]. Because atheistical opinions were attacked by the law, I defended the *right* to hold them *without sharing them*. In all the publications I have edited I accepted the views of coadjutors and of correspondents, and my name is associated in consequence much more with *other persons' opinions than with my own*. When the rights of conscience in Freethought are attacked, to discriminate is to condemn. While persecution is attempted, I make it a point of honor never to pass on the side of persecutors. Then I am most reluctant to enter upon any explanation of my own views on the great speculative proposition of theology, lest it should appear to others as timidity, retreat, or disposition to compromise."

Thus the citation of my opinion, published in 1861, is the only answer I need make now to those who think that the opinions I expressed lately in the *Agnostic Annual* are "*new*." It will be seen that I published the same opinions in the most explicit manner forty years ago. Where, then, is any "change of front"? Where is the "new attitude"? Mr. Watts asks me to account for? Could anything be clearer than these early avowals of my views—more explicit and more decisive, more open and above-board—than the language I have quoted?

Therefore the startled exclamations of surprise which Mr. Watts utters on awakening from his long sleep are forty years too late. No adversary demurred to my statement when it was first made. The "perturbation" comes from friends who have forgotten what they knew.

Mr. Watts says I "prefer to substitute another word for Atheism." I do nothing of the kind with respect to those who are Atheists in their own opinion. I do but propose an additional word for those who are something more. Atheism belongs to those whose convictions it represents. I merely prefer Agnosticism because it expresses another state of mind—that of absolute unknowingness. I defend it as an additional word representing a special state of mind different from Atheism.

But there are Atheists still—brave spirits who believe that the existence of God can be disproved, and say so. To them "Atheism," in its old sense—of denial—is the only honest word. To disbelieve is to deny, and the disbeliever has denial in his mind.

In like manner, the word "Theism" belongs to those who are persuaded in their own minds of its truth. There are noble Theists as well as noble Atheists. I honor convictions which have sincerity in them. John Foster proved that Atheism, logically conceived, requires infinite knowledge of the universe, since in some unexplored portion the secret Deity may be concealed. The same is true of Theism. He must have examined the uttermost parts of nature to know surely that nowhere reside the attributes of self-existence and self-direction. I think the Theist as wrong as the Atheist, but I respect the honesty of both.

Where has Mr. Watts's discrimination gone, which has served him so well in many controversies, that he should declare himself pained that I had charged Atheism generally with "egotism or vanity"? I never did it. I spoke then only of Atheists whose disbelief is born of dissoluteness, and who conceal vice by theological outrage of speech. Mr. Watts has no more sympathy with pot-house Atheism than I have. It is the nobler and thoughtful sort whom we defend.

The essence of the Atheism of the pulpits is the denial of God. That is one reason why I object to the word being applied to me. Mr. Watts says "Atheism does not deny God." Then there is no use or sense in the word. It is a dead word. I decline to carry a dead word about. Take denial out of the word, and you take the soul out of it. My early colleagues did deny God. I published their papers on the "Impossibility" of God. There was denial—bold, naked, and reasoned. Atheism which does not deny God is a corpse. Why should Mr. Watts cling to a corpse? He now declares that Atheism, like Agnosticism, is "without knowledge of God." Then he is no Atheist himself, but an Agnostic; and it is *he*, not I, who have made "a change of front."

He is puzzled as to the difference between "knowing" and "not knowing." "Knowing" is to be *sure* of a thing; "not knowing" is to be without any certainty whatever about it. He asks me to explain the difference between "disbelief" and "non-belief." "Disbelief" is the state of mind of one who has evidence before him, but finds it so insufficient that he disbelieves the proposition to which the evidence relates. "Non-belief" expresses that state of mind where all relevant evidence is absent, and he is, therefore, in a state of non-belief or absolute unknowingness.

Every discerning theologian knows that the Agnostic assertion of unknowingness is far wider—far more defiant and impregnable than the denial of the Atheist who stands upon the defective evidence. Agnosticism is a challenge. It says: "I do not know; do you?" Your assertions have no force. Evidence from the field of facts is wanted." Mr. Watts represents that my preferring the Agnostic name is "gratifying to my theological enemies" What! to remove myself out of their range, to recede farther from them than ever, to use a term which means that the very idea of an originating Deity has no place in the understanding—does that give satisfaction to the theologian? To avow that the very conception of an unknown, inscrutable, and unspeaking cause exists under all causes is outside human knowledge—can that delight the heart of the priest? What! does it cheer the anxious and earnest advocate of supernaturalism to witness the ascending of a term which asserts that the existence of God is a proposition of utter unknowingness, a term which leaves Theism stranded on the shores of speculation? That gives the theologians satisfaction? They are far too shrewd for that.

When Bishop Colenso explained Christianity to the Zulu chiefs, they were too courteous to contradict him; they knew his kindness of heart and his good intentions towards them. They did not argue with the Bishop. They did not express disbelief. They simply said: "It may be true, but we had *rather not believe it.*" The Bishop could no further go. They were beyond his reach. This is the position of the Agnostic. Agnosticism relates only to the knowledge of Deity. It leaves a man to reason, to conscience, to morality, to nature, to the laws of truth, of honor, and the laws of the State. I say of it as I said of Atheism, when we had no scientific term to connect veracity with dissent: Agnosticism is a true, defiant, militant term. There is the ring of absolute decision about it. It keeps no terms with superstition. It is impregnable to attack, save by new facts. It carries you away from the noise-some jugglery of a reasonless theology, and, when on the sea of the future the argosy of evidence shall appear, the Agnostic will be there to receive and to welcome it.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

Mollie: "You have nothing to look forward to." Chollie: "Yes, I have. I have a wealthy aunt who believes in Christian science."

Acid Drops.

WHAT a lesson in toleration may be learned from the dispute as to when the nineteenth century ended. Some assert that it ended a few days ago; others that it ended twelve months ago. One would think that this was a simple question in arithmetic, about which there could hardly be a debate outside a lunatic asylum. Yet distinguished men are ranged on either side, and the more they discuss the point the farther they are from agreement. Now, if honest difference is possible over a matter which is apparently so plain, how inevitable is honest difference of opinion on subjects of greater difficulty in philosophy, politics, and sociology! Where so much is perplexed and obscure, the rule of wisdom is to give and take, to live and let live. Each man should think for himself, and accord the same right to his neighbor. Yes, and accord it cheerfully.

When the great Emperor, Charles the Fifth, resigned his throne, to spend his last days in retirement and reflection, he took a strong fancy for collecting clocks. He had a large number of them; but, in spite of all his attention, he found that no two of them would keep precisely the same time. Whereupon the thought occurred to him that he had been very unwise in trying to make all his subjects think alike in matters of religion.

The *Herald* (New York) prints a number of "messages" from leading American citizens. Here is Mark Twain's:—"A salutation speech from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, taken down in shorthand by Mark Twain: 'I bring you the stately matron named Christendom returned bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored from pirate raids in Kiaochau, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines, with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of poodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies. Give her soap and a towel, but hide the looking-glass.' (Signed) Mark Twain."

"The chief danger that confronts the coming century" was the subject of a number of "messages" in Monday's *New York World*. All sorts of "distinguished" people aired their fads. Of course, they differed greatly as to the chief danger ahead, but equally of course they were all cocksure about it. General Booth was the best of the lot. Here is his answer:—"Religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell." From the Christian point of view this is admirable, and the last clause is a stinger. "Heaven without hell" is just what the Churches are aiming at. But they are bound to fail. General Booth sees the bed-rock truth that heaven and hell go together. They are like God and the Devil—the Siamese twins of theology; and when one dies the other's funeral is approaching.

The most modest answer to the *New York World's* question comes, curiously enough, from the Archbishop of Canterbury. "I have not the slightest idea," he says.

Dean Farrar declares that "the chief social danger" is the "dominance of drink." But that has always been the case ever since Jesus Christ turned a vast quantity of water into wine to keep a marriage party going—apparently for the rest of the week. With such a multitude of Christians about, the liquor question is always a dangerous one.

"The Christmas bells," said the *Daily News*, "with their familiar carols of peace on earth, goodwill to men, are drowned once more in the roar of battle between two Christian peoples." Ay, there's the rub! We pointed it out at the beginning. Whatever are the merits of the quarrel, and whichever side you take, the fact remains that Britisher and Boer are both Christians. Nineteen hundred years after the advent of their funny Prince of Peace they find no other way to settle their differences than the arbitrament of a costly and disastrous war. Had Freethinkers been managing matters on both sides, peace would at least have had a chance.

Which government in Europe has had the most difficult task of late years? The French government. And has it kept the peace, even in the most trying circumstances? Yes. Is it conducted by Christians? No. For the most part it is conducted by Freethinkers.

Dr. Parker's editorship of the *Sun* for that one pious week is still the subject of criticism. An admirer of his, who had heard him often and read most of his books, wrote a long letter to the *Westminster Gazette* to the effect that Dr. Parker owed an explanation to his followers with regard to the three new Bottomley companies that he assisted in floating. A North London paper—the *Tottenham Journal*—has discovered that Dr. Parker's idea of a Christian newspaper includes "fifteen columns of advertisements from such Christian persons as money lenders, quack medicine vendors, and 'on the hire' dealers."

We have not heard that Dr. Parker's experiment has had any perceptible influence on the crime and vice of London. The Christmas season list of offences was about the same as usual, and gambling still seems to be going on merrily, if we may judge by the attention given to it in the newspapers. It remains to be seen whether the "religious daily" will prove a tempting bait to a big capitalist, and whether it will "catch on" if he invests his money in it.

Bitter is the portion of the City Temple. It has suffered no material damage yet, but Dr. Parker has told his assistants to keep their eyes open to give early warning of any injury. The plaint of the City Temple is of rumbling and trembling in the building. When the congregation first experienced these hindrances to devotion they asked themselves what such things could portend. The first idea pointed to an earthquake; but earthquakes do not return every few minutes. When the Somalis were in London they refused to ride on a cable tramcar, because they were sure it was pushed by the Evil One. They would have readily presented the City Temple with an explanation of its mystery. People, however, who worship under Dr. Parker have no fear of Lucifer. Moreover, they soon found that the enemy was the Twopenny Tube. They failed, however, to overcome the annoyance, and to this day the building behaves as if it were haunted, the very crockery rattling in the caretakers' rooms, and the organist, as he sits at his instrument, feeling "a most peculiar sensation" when the trains pass below the adjoining road.—*Daily News.*

By the way, is it not rather sarcastic to say that Dr. Parker and his congregation have no fear of Lucifer? What is it they do fear if not the Devil? Our contemporary's suggestion, of course, is that the City Temple folk do not even believe in Old Nick. But that is an impeachment of their orthodoxy amounting almost to a libel.

"A book rather for Sunday reading than amusement." So a religious weekly reviews a work called "The Makings of a Missionary."

The children were being catechised the other day in a church in the Midlands. The hymn in which occur the lines, "The old man all be put away; the new man all put on," had just been sung, and presently the priest in charge asked: "Now, what do we mean by 'the old man'?" Instantly a hand went up, and a small boy vouchsafed a reply: "Please, sir, Kruger!"

We used to think that the Aldermen of the City of London, who are permitted to sit as magistrates, had a fine and large idea of their power and importance. But a Colonial magistrate at Melbourne has broken the record. A pawnbroker, giving evidence, said he could not sign the depositions, as it was against his conscience as a good Jew to do so at that particular period of the year. The magistrate thereupon uplifted himself, declaring with magnificent dignity: "You must sign your name. I will take the responsibility of anything that may happen to you hereafter." What a sublime contempt for the Courts above is here!

A Leeds tailoress, Selina Hirst, a victim of religious mania, hanged herself by a cord in Ellen Sauring Wood.

Mr. Joseph Hatton, the new editor of the *People*, does not hesitate to express his contempt for Sabbatarian nonsense. He has an article in the latest issue of that paper on "Sunday at Bournemouth." He says: "Bournemouth is in danger of becoming too good. Presently you may expect to be required only to enter the precincts of the pretty seaside town upon your knees. On Sunday you may not bathe or boat or play music, or as much as sneeze, without permission of the grave fathers in council assembled. You may, however, indulge in a shave, buy a cigar, or even a penny bun. But that privilege belongs to the age of darkness when Bournemouth was a pleasant little coast town, the people left very much to their own judgment on the question of how to keep Sunday. The law permits public-houses to be open; Bournemouth cannot shut them; but it can close confectioners' and barbers' shops, and there is a movement on foot with this noble end in view. That accomplished, you may only visit a public-house on Sunday. There you can get drunk if you please, or smoke yourself blind; but you will not be able, even if you are a teetotaler, to buy a cigar at an ordinary shop and have a quiet smoke outside a public-house. The inhabitants of Bournemouth should really strike against this Civic nonsense."

The papers have tried to work the usual Christmas ghost trick. But it won't do, says the *Topical Times*. Even the children, thanks to School Board lessons in physiology and the like, will not swallow the old pill, how'er it be gilded. If papa says he saw a ghost outside the front door, or a big dog in the passage, they talk glibly of liver, fruit salts, and the like. The ghost as a scare topic is as played out as the French invasion.

The "small people" have afforded a number of stories to William Canton, who publishes a volume of *Children's Sayings*. Some of these infantile observations are not only amusing, but unconsciously caustic. A little girl was repeating her prayer:

This night when I lie down to sleep
I give my soul to Christ to keep.

At this point she stopped to look up and ask the startling question: "Will I give him my heels too?"

Much that is delightfully original in the speeches of children is the outcome of their own peculiar logic—often sound enough in its way. Tommy had been hearing about the angels in heaven in their white robes. "Do they all wear white robes, auntie?" "Yes, dear." "And are there very many angels?" "Oh! yes, a great many." "How many?" "Oh, thousands and thousands." "What a big washhouse God must have!"

A little girl, who had been having a delightful day with her dolls, said, meditatively, at bed-time: "I s'all have to leave my dollie's pram behind when Jesus comes to take me to heaven." "Yes," was the reply; but then the child brightened up: "But I 'spect he'll have lots of moons and things for us to play wiv up there."

In the prayers which children are made to offer to some unknown God quaint expressions occasionally appear. Here is the petition of a little girl bending at her mother's knee: "Oh, please, dear God, make me pure, absolutely pure as Epps's cocoa." Not less sincere was the little boy's request, whose father had promised to bring him a toy train back from London: "God bless papa, and bring him home safely, and—and—his luggage!" "O Lord, now's your chance to make me good," another boy shut up in disgrace was overheard saying. "God bless grandmamma, and help her to speak the truth," was the prayer of a six-year-old when he wanted a special blessing for his saintly grandmother. A little boy and girl, whose mother was ill and inaccessible, were overheard discussing their nurse's unkindness to them. "What shall we do?" said the girl, hopelessly. "I'm going to ask father to send nurse away," replied her brother, sturdily. "What shall you do if he won't?" "Then I'll ask God to help us." "But perhaps God won't send her away." "Well, then," said the little chap, in desperate earnest, "I'll see what the Devil can do for us."

A public-house in a provincial town is reported to have been lately converted into a chapel. There is great jubilation, says the *Topical Times*, at this victory of the forces of righteousness over those of evil. Curiously enough, however, such conquests are generally "on the other leg," to use an Irishism. A large Wesleyan building in North London, formerly a chapel, is now occupied by a firm of brewers, and the famous Luther House in Germany is an inn. By the way, we don't think Luther would have been troubled greatly by the change.

A pietist and mystic—by name Albert H. Waters, B.A., Cambridge—contributes to the *Rock* a letter on heaven as he imagines it to be. He says: "I infer from Revelation vi. 14 that the firmament underwent a partition, and that the upper part, the abode of the angels, to which our Lord ascended, departed from this earth. I can imagine it carrying Christ, His angels, and some of the most favored of His saints, through trackless space (as a ship crosses the ocean), far, far away to the Heaven of heavens, where is the eternal throne of God. It is my opinion that the Second Advent, or the Millennium, may be preceded by a return of this firmament, and that the world, no longer under the sway of natural laws alone, will see supernatural wonders such as were in Biblical days. My belief is that Christ, as the Son of Man, sitteth at the right hand of God, unless He is already on the way to judge the world. Many in heart doubt this because they cannot understand how anything but a spirit can traverse the depths of space where none of the conditions of life exist, that airless void where the cold is so intense nothing mortal can live. But on the Biblical firmament was 'angels' food,' and we may believe it had an atmosphere purer than ours, and everything necessary for life, even such as ours, for men like Enoch and Elijah were caught up to it."

The naive remark of the *Christian World*, that there is no more difficult work than that of Christian missions among the Jews, deserves to be framed. Of course, it is a difficult work, and, as a matter of fact, practically impossible. The *C. W.* is aware that the methods by which such work is at present carried on have received severe criticism in times past, and more lately from the writers of an able book just published under the title *The Jew in London*. These gentlemen are not antagonistic to missions, and are at least serious and competent witnesses, who feel it to be "an ungrateful business" to find fault. The number of conversions, it is stated, are very few, and the genuineness of most of them questionable.

It is admitted that the missions aim less than formerly at securing a record of baptisms, and more at merely spreading a knowledge of New Testament history and teaching. "But it

is to be feared that their total effect is mischievous rather than beneficial.....It is necessary to protest against the expenditure of such enormous sums of money upon work that is, from every point of view, unprofitable. The London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews has an income of about £40,000 a year; and a perusal of the Society's own reports is enough to convince most people of the wastefulness of such undertakings."

Medical missions, says the *Christian World*, are carried on by the London Society for Converting the Jews, and, as many East-End Jews are extremely poor, they are naturally glad to take advantage of this help. But the method on which the missions are worked is extremely questionable. Mr. H. S. Lewis, in the book mentioned, writes: "In order to induce Jews to be converted to Christianity, they offered medical missions and soup-kitchens, Sunday-school treats and mothers' meetings. I cannot think this is a right policy from any point of view.....Whilst giving the promoters of these missions credit for honesty of purpose, I deplore their tactics in encouraging hypocrisy and double-dealing." The consequence, we are told, is that the missions are looked upon with contempt by the Jews, and their whole purpose is defeated.

Prince Ronald Bonaparte has given expression to sentiments which are not likely to be very acceptable to some of his contemporaries. He has been interviewed by the *Temps*. He said: "I make no profession of politics. No one would believe me, but I am a very Socialist. I assure you that the mere idea that one of my fellow creatures can die of starvation is perfectly staggering to me." It seems to be a matter of indifference to God, but that is a point of view hardly worth considering. It is something to hear from the Prince that he has so strong a sympathy for his fellow creatures. Whether he calls it Socialism or not does not affect the humane feeling which he evidently possesses, or one's appreciation of it.

Here is a funny story from America:—The Rev. W. C. Jones, pastor of the First Congregationalist Church of Sharon, Pennsylvania, has resigned, alleging as the reason that some members of his church slept during the services. He charges Deacon John S. Williams with sleeping fifteen out of the last sixteen Sundays. A few weeks ago the Rev. Mr. Jones detected Mr. Williams napping while he was preaching. The pastor at once cut his sermon short and dismissed his congregation.

Religious mania was the cause of Mrs. McCartney's suicide at Newry. The poor woman, of whom everybody in the locality seems to speak well, was housekeeper to a firm of local tobacconists. She was well off, being owner of a farm in the neighborhood. Religion, or religious hysteria, was too strong for her, and the other morning she was found suspended by a rope from a hook in her dwelling.

William Gerrard, a Tyldesley cotton spinner, dropped dead in the Wesleyan chapel while a hymn was being sung. There is no moral. Only it wasn't a Secular hall.

The Shetland fishing fleet suffered heavily in the recent severe gale. Twenty-two brave breadwinners are gone, and sixty-seven persons are left desolate and dependent. We suppose this is "Providence." As Holy Scripture saith, "He doeth all things well."

Sir Robert Ball, in his second Christmas lecture for children at the Royal Institution, referred to the greatest volcanic explosion on record. It occurred on August 25, 1883, on the island of Krakatoa, in the Straits of Sunda, about 10,000 miles from England. No less than 35,000 people were killed, and the explosion affected the whole world. Vast waves, some of them seventy feet high, were hurled on the coasts of Java and Sumatra. A Dutch man-of-war was carried a mile inland. The sound of the explosion was heard as far as the middle of Australia, and, in the opposite direction, even in Ceylon and on the borders of China, 4,000 miles away. The agitation went round and round the globe seven times, and such a vast quantity of pumice dust was blown into the air that for a long time it produced gorgeous sunsets over all the earth. Sir Robert Ball did not say how this tremendous convulsion, attended with such a terrible loss of life, affected the question of "Providence," but we daresay he has his own private views on the subject.

Someone has sent us copies of two pamphlets by the Rev. John Alex. Dowie (our "Old Dowie"), General Overseer of the Christian Catholic Church, whose headquarters are at Chicago. They are ostensibly replies to two lectures of Ingersoll's on "Truth" and "The Foundations of Faith." While not intended to be funny, they are extremely mirth-provoking. One laughs at Dowie, if not with him. For instance, he replies to Ingersoll's objection to the doctrine of prayer by producing a cancer in a bottle on the platform, and telling the audience that it came away from a woman who prayed to God for relief after the doctors had given her up.

Dowie surmised that Ingersoll would give that cancer a wide berth. We should think he would.

Old Dowie seems to keep a lot of recovered female patients in stock, brings them to his meetings, calls them up by their names, and asks them to answer him whether the Lord has not done this or that for them. Of course they all say Yes, and that settles it. Amongst all his cures, however, in answer to prayer, there is no case of a cure of imbecility. We should like to see old Dowie, or his God, give an idiot more brains, or turn a fool into a philosopher. We never heard of a God who was able to do that.

We extract the following from the *Church Gazette*:—"The *Freethinker's* blatant sort of talk is exceedingly disagreeable at times, but it has occasionally something worth noting. For instance, this: 'Modern Christianity lives largely by sensationalism. That is at least half the secret of the success of the High Church party. Music, decorations, processions, and ornate ritual appeal to the sensuous nature.....Even the Protestant sect at the other extreme follows.....the same policy. General Booth has always known the value of glaring color, incessant movement, and blatant noise. Make the people feel and give them no time to think is ever the first point in his method.....On all sides the old order changeth, giving place to new, and priestcraft fulfils itself in many ways.' *Fas est vel ab hoste doceri*. Need we be so very sensational? Most of us would prefer something a little more sensible."

We are glad that the *Church Gazette* "occasionally" finds something worth noting in our pages. That it finds us "disagreeable at times" is only natural. But is it not an abuse of language to say that we are ever "blatant"? This word rightly describes the noise that is often made in the streets by the Salvation Army, but how on earth can it be applied to the literary style of the *Freethinker*? Mr. Price Hughes may talk about "blatant Atheism," in his fine Corinthian manner, but the *Church Gazette* should be above that sort of thing.

Why is the Athanasian Creed like a royal Bengal tiger? Because it holds on by its damnation clause.

This objection to the Athanasian Creed has just been re-stated by Canon Henson in a sermon at St. Margaret's, Westminster. He says he would prefer to see it deleted from the Prayer-Book "by reason of the damnatory nature of its last clause." But if all the "warm" things are deleted from Christianity what will become of it? The disappearance of a burning hell is already a dreadful loss, and the substitution of Hades for the hot and strong old word in the Revised Version was in many ways a bad stroke of business. "Hell" makes a man jump, but "Hades" isn't strong enough to frighten a cat off a garden wall.

Maria Gibbons, an old woman of sixty-three years, has been fined 10s. and costs, or ten days, for pretending to tell fortunes at Bradford. On December 15, after shuffling cards, she told a married woman, "sent to her as a decoy," that she "would have two men after her," a dark and a fair one. "The dark man would have good intentions." For this Maria charged sixpence and the price of a drink. We don't think it dear. If Maria had told the "decoy" that the other sex would shun her, we could have understood the complaint that she had been done out of her "tanner." Moreover, if the prophecy was only made ten days before Christmas, Maria has hardly had fair play; for the forecast may yet come true, unless a time limit was set upon its fulfilment. Anyway, why is Maria, who bleeds people for coppers, fined, whilst the palmist, who charges a guinea, and Prophet Baxter and the rest, make fortunes undisturbed out of the credulity of the public?—*Topical Times*.

The Rev. Jacob Primmer, who recently said that during his visit to Paris "he had occasion to go beneath the surface a little," has now taken a turn in another direction. He has been denouncing Scottish dancing. He says he saw "in our burghs schoolboys of seven, eight, and nine years take the girls through the dances with their arms round their waists." Dreadful—is it not?

The proposed erection of a statue of Jesus Christ in front of the new Roman Catholic cathedral in Westminster strikes the *Church Gazette* "as more likely to make the Master a subject of ridicule than to forward the Gospel." And then, as if echoing our observations of last week, it says: "Especially so, when one considers how far modern sculpture succeeds in its artistic object, and when one asks what artist is equal to these things."

Preaching in Westminster Abbey, Canon Gore gave utterance to some noteworthy admissions. He acknowledged that the recent festivities in England were not those of Christmas, but of that Yuletide of our Saxon forefathers which constituted the festival of the winter solstice, long before Christianity was amongst us, and which again and again is shown raising its head over the associations

which belong to the name of Christmas. It is, indeed, a thought, not without suggestiveness, that behind Christmas and behind Easter lie those old pagan festivals. In the old primitive days men necessarily lived in much closer contact with nature than we do. They marked her seasons, and they celebrated the periods of time by the periods of nature, and they marked these periods with festivals.

The winter solstice, the shortest day in the year, the day when nature seems most dead, most profitless—then it was that our forefathers, our human forefathers, in almost all parts of the world, selected to commemorate the life of nature. They were put in mind, by religious feasting and merry-making, that nature, though it seemed so dead, was still alive, that she would show her life again, and that after the winter would come the spring and the summer and the autumn. All these popular associations of Christmas come down from that old Yuletide festival of our pagan Saxon forefathers; they are simply joy in nature and in human life just as it is; they involve no religious effort.

Rev. Henry Pelham Stokes, a Church curate, of Birmingham, is a lucky man. He bought £85 worth of jewellery of an Islington dealer, and paid for the same with two cheques, one for £20 and the other for £65. The first one was cashed, and the second dishonored, though presented three times. The man of God was tried at the County of London Sessions, Clerkenwell, for fraud; but the judge ruled that there was no false pretence of a then existing fact, and ordered the jury to acquit the accused. One could have one's own opinion, his lordship said, of the honesty of the transaction; but it was a question of law rather than of fact.

The Pope closed the Holy Door on Christmas Eve, and still survives. It is said that he is wonderfully well, in spite of his great age. Perhaps he will have to be "translated."

Old Papa Pecci is angry with M. Waldeck-Rousseau for bringing forward a Bill to check the growth and power of clerical associations. The French Premier is a bold man to throw down this challenge to the Church in the spirit of Gambetta. But it has become a question whether the Republic is to strangle Clericalism, or Clericalism to strangle the Republic. And as the Church never forgets and never forgives, the battle will have to be fought out to the bitter end.

An old retired pork-butcher, named Denechau, has been brutally murdered at Angers by two peasants for bewitching their cattle. They knocked him down with a heavy stick, and then stabbed him to the heart, after which they nearly cut his head off, to make sure he could not come to life again. Much sympathy is felt for the murderers, and very little for their victim, as most of the peasants in the district considered that he possessed the "evil eye."

If we believed in the Bible as our forefathers did, we should still be burning witches and wizards by the dozen. But we do not believe in it. We simply pretend to. The law of England makes it criminal to do many things that are taught in the Book which the law of England also declares to be the Word of God. The Bible orders us to kill witches, and the law of England says we shall be hanged if we do. The Bible tells us to anoint the sick and pray over them, and the law of England says that we shall get a long term of hard labor if they die under that treatment. Good old law of England! Grand old Book!

The most popular novel of the day, judging by the sales, is Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*. Things have not altered much since Carlyle said that England contained thirty millions of people—mostly fools.

There is something very childlike and bland about the Rev. R. C. Fillingham, vicar of Hexton. He wants to bring an action for libel against the Bishop of St. Albans, and he asks the right reverend father-in-God whether "in a fair and Christian spirit" he will come into court without a counsel. Naturally the Bishop doesn't see it. If he is attacked, he will defend himself as he can. Nor do we quite see, for our part, where the "Christian spirit" comes into Mr. Fillingham's proposal. Christians are warned in the New Testament against suing each other in courts of law. Why doesn't Mr. Fillingham leave it to God Almighty and the Day of Judgment? Isn't hell hot enough for the Bishop of St. Albans's offence?

The correspondence which has been raging furiously for some weeks past in the *Beverley Guardian* and *Beverley Recorder* is now terminated. The topics discussed have included Sunday Observance, Churchgoing, "Man's Giant Shadow, Hailed Divine," the Higher Criticism, Miracles and Revelation, and the Canon of the New Testament. The Rationalist cause has been espoused by G. H. Brooks, G. Dawson Baker, G. F. (of Lincoln), J. H. D., "Phi," and a correspondent facetiously signing himself "Tar-bucket." The advocacy of our tenets has been such as to bring substantial gain to the principles of Freethought.

The curtain has been rung down in a way calculated to bring disgrace upon English journalism. Indeed, we are inclined to suspect that Mr. Pott of the immortal *Eatanswill Gazette* would have blushed to own such a method. In Canon Noloth's last letter to both papers there is a peremptory intimation that "it is high time this correspondence ended"—an intimation which is significant of much. With due obedience, each editor announces that the correspondence is now closed. Further than this, each paper contains a lengthy leading article professing to sum up the entire discussion. The reviews, however, are so biased as to leave no possible doubt concerning their origin. The *Guardian* article is, if anything, the more unfair of the two, as it misrepresents, without the slightest respect for facts, the entire course of the correspondence. There is good ground for the current belief that both editorials (!) were indited by local parsons. That neither of them was written by the respective editors is perfectly certain, because in the *Guardian* definite reference is made to letters which appeared solely in the *Recorder*, and in the *Recorder* equally precise allusion is made to letters which appeared solely in the *Guardian*. This is letting the cat out of the bag in rather a naive fashion. The whole proceeding is a base prostitution of journalism, and agreeably harmonises with the unsavory reputation for jobbery and corruption which this little minster town has so well earned.

"Most Christians are invalids," says Dr. Parker. Well, the great Pascal said that this was the condition of all real Christians; and he knew Christianity a great deal better than Dr. Parker does. Pascal was a real Christian himself, which Dr. Parker is not.

Dr. Parker adds that "Christians are losing Christ." We should say that Christ is losing Christians. But no doubt it is the same thing in the end.

Mr. Edmund Noble, in his new book on *Russia and the Russians*, shows how much the government of the Holy Czar—who is head alike of the Church and the State—appreciates religious liberty. "The law of Russia," Mr. Noble says, "not only forbids the Orthodox from changing their religious faith; it punishes the offence with the loss of all civil rights, and even permits an offender's property to be taken possession of by his relatives. No proselytism is allowed in any other interest than that of the Orthodox Church. Desertion of the Church is a crime, and it becomes the duty of a father, of a mother, or of other relatives, to inform against the deserter."

The Orthodox Greek Church, in its relation to woman as wife and mother, is thus described by Mr. Noble: "When the new ideas began to enter Russia in the forties and fifties, the female sex in Russia, so far as the masses of the people were concerned, was still living under the conditions prescribed by the Church customs of Byzantine Christianity. From the earliest period of Russian history woman had been treated as a minor, and kept under the perpetual tutelage of some male relative invested with patriarchal authority over her comings and goings. Confined to the *térem*, otherwise called *verkh*, or 'upper room,' she was carefully isolated from intercourse with strangers. As a wife she was the slave, literally the property, of her husband. Not only was he permitted to chastise her: the *Domostroy*, a code of Church rules regulating the family life of the people, enjoined him to do so whenever the wife neglected her duty. It even enumerated cases in which the wife as well as the children could be beaten with the lash, the punishment with this instrument being described as 'reasonable and painful, terrible and yet beneficial. If the fault is great, the chastisement must be more severe; while, if the wife does not show any regret, a still severer punishment must be inflicted.' Meanwhile every precaution, as enjoined by the *Domostroy*, was taken to confine the woman strictly to her household duties, and to prevent her from acquiring any but the simplest household arts."

Major James Pond, the well-known American lecture agent, says some nice things about the Rev. Dr. Talmage in his new volumes of *Recollections*. He made a contract with the man of God to deliver 100 lectures in Great Britain for 100 dollars a lecture, and the travelling and hotel expenses of the whole Talmage family. When the apostle of the poor carpenter's son of Nazareth found he was getting an unexpectedly enthusiastic reception, he demanded 350 dollars a lecture, and refused to go on unless he received it. There was a tremendous haggling between the reverend lecturer and the agent, the upshot being that Major Pond agreed to pay Talmage 250 dollars for each of the 100 lectures. Finding he couldn't squeeze out any more, Talmage accepted these terms, and Major Pond fastened him down with a signed agreement drawn up by an English lawyer. Talmage has been interviewed about the nice things concerning him in Major Pond's book, and his explanation seems to be that he has a bad memory for such ancient details.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 6, Prince of Wales Assembly Room, Broadstreet, Birmingham: at 11, "Faith and Freethought in the Old Century and the New One"; at 3, "Christian Charity in China"; at 7, "Does Death End Us?" (wrongly printed as "Does Death End All?" on the local Bills).

Monday, January 7, Metropolitan Temperance Hall, Blackfriars-road, London. Admission free.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS—January 20, Sheffield; 27, Leicester.—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.

J. E. NIXON.—Next week for acknowledgments. Pleased to have your interesting letter. Mr. Foote has all the materials for the second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* by him, and only wants leisure for the writing. He hopes to find or make some when the winter is over. We are glad to know that you think so highly of the *Freethinker*; also that you reckon our *Darwin on God* of "inestimable value."

W. GARTHWAITE.—We agree with you: the "rank and file" might do a great deal more.

THE unknown correspondent who sends us an extract from *Light*, and bids us answer it if we can, is hereby informed that we see nothing to answer except assertions.

G. A. KERSLEY.—Those who have any practical suggestions to make can make them now. Calling people together to "consider" is an easy matter. The difficulty is to get them to do something afterwards.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—E. Charlton (balance of £1 1s.), 11s.; C. D. Stephens (omitted last week), 10s. 6d.; J. M. McInnes (promise redeemed), £2; G. Harlow, 5s.; J. O. Bates, £1; M. Dye, 5s.; D. Watt, 10s.; T. Holstead, 5s.; G. Freeman, 10s.

W. ROWLAND and J. G. DOBSON.—Will be acknowledged in our next.

G. FREEMAN.—Acknowledged in list. Thanks for your "best wishes for the new century."

R. CHAPMAN.—Very sorry, and can hardly account for it except by the rush of having to bring out two *Freethinkers* in one week. Shall be glad to receive a report. Thanks for the cutting.

M. DYE.—Yes, Mr. Foote is in good general health, though he has been troubled with insomnia lately—a warning, as the doctor says, and as common sense says too, that a little change and fresh air are necessary. Easier said than done, though.

J. P. S.—Acknowledgment next week. We are pleased to hear that your "emancipation" is due to reading the *Freethinker*.

T. HOLSTEAD.—Shilling Week acknowledgments in our next. We are sorry to hear you have been unwell, but pleased to learn you are now better—as we hope you will continue.

W. W. PEARCE.—We hope your good wishes will all be realised; but we shall be fairly happy, in any case, while we can labor effectively and the cause is upheld. Acknowledgment next week.

F. J. GOULD.—Capital work is being done at Leicester. We wish the whole Society there, and yourself in particular, a bright new year.

W. ALBIN and MISS McCRAE.—In our next.

JOSEPH SEDDON.—Your good wishes are reciprocated.

W. H. WARN.—See "Sugar Plums."

G. MULLETT.—Very likely, but, while Robert Taylor was a very clever man, he was not an oracle. Allegorical interpretation of the Bible is good in its way, but it may be carried too far. Look at Swedenborgianism.

HENRY PORTER.—The work you mention will be continued if Mr. Foote can get leisure to complete the second volume in the summer. See next week for the acknowledgment.

E. E. B.—Secular texts, that might take the place of the Christian ones you used to copy out and frame, appear from time to time in our columns. Keep a look out, and you will discover them. Acknowledgment of subscription next week.

R. AXELBY.—Will be acknowledged in the Shilling Week list in our next issue. It is intended to reprint in a permanent form the articles by Mr. Cohen now appearing in our columns. Instead of contributing 2s. 6d. towards the cost of publication, you might take copies of the pamphlet to that value and circulate them amongst your friends and acquaintances.

S. BURCON.—Received: acknowledgment in due course. Thanks for the pretty card and your good wishes. Glad to know you admire what you call our "manly outspokenness." We never cared to waste words, or to conceal our thoughts with them.

E. W. SCOTT.—Thanks.

J. E. SMART.—Your letter could not be answered in time, in consequence of the holidays. We cannot undertake to write, and post you, what would really be an essay. You will find what you want in our *Bible Romances*.

EMMA BRADLAUGH.—We are sorry that the weather prevented you, as it did others, from hearing Mr. Foote's last lecture in the nineteenth century. We are pleased to have your good wishes in our "great fight," also to hear that the *Freethinker* is appreciated by the working man to whom you pass on your copy when you have read it. Passing the paper on in this way, and even passing it round if possible, is one way of promoting our circulation.

E. CHARLTON.—Thanks for your good wishes. See acknowledgment elsewhere.

M. E. PEGG.—Mr. Foote is writing you with regard to lecturing at Manchester. The difficulty has been about the date.

G. W. BLYTHE.—You forget that it is all a matter of cause and effect. One form of crime is as much a result of conditions as another. Patience, common sense, and humanity are needed all round. Mere indignation and ill-temper do not help to diminish crime, and therefore do not help society in the long run. With regard to the other matter, you forget the laws of nature again, and you rather misrepresent what we said.

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks for cuttings.

A. J. H.—Thanks, though we had it already.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—Freidenker—Torch of Reason—Lucifer—Blue Grass Blade—Hereford Times—People's Newspaper—Labor Chronicle—Ethical World—Birmingham Daily Mail—Sheerness Times—Freethought Magazine—Liberator—Crescent—News and Courier (Charleston).

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.

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

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 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.

Shilling Week.

THIS week's *Freethinker*, though dated for the first Sunday in the new year, is made up on Tuesday in readiness for the press on Wednesday morning. It is obvious, therefore, that the first list of Shilling Week subscriptions will have to appear in our next issue. I hope that list will be a long one. It ought to fill at least a column, and I should like to see it twice that length. Every subscription I receive will be acknowledged and finally added to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. This is a grand opportunity for the "rank and file" of the Freethought party to do something for the cause. Good wishes are not worth much unless they are translated into deeds. I call upon the party for which I am always working to display a little practical recognition. Let them send me one shilling, or a number of shillings—just what they can afford. That is worth a whole universe of sentiment. It must be recollected, though, that the subscriptions are not for me. I am only the beggar and receiver for the movement, and my share is simply the trouble and worry. It doesn't do for me to be absent-minded. No, I have to keep "all there," as the man-in-the-street says; and I have to call upon worse beggars than I am—namely, the absent-minded beggars—to pay, pay, pay!

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

MR. HOLYOAKE's article in this week's *Freethinker* occupies the space that had been reserved for "The Twentieth Century Fund." We did not receive it until Tuesday morning, when the paper was practically made up. Mr. Holyoake forwarded it in a roundabout way, posting it to Mr. Watts, who posted it on to us; and, in ordinary circumstances, it would have been held over till next week. But we were anxious to avoid even the appearance of slighting the most venerable apostle of Secularism; so we have made room for his article in our new year's number, where, perhaps, he would prefer to see it.

There is now, therefore, just another chance—which will certainly be the last one, unless a miracle occurs, or something equivalent—for those who have not yet redeemed their promise of subscribing to the Twentieth Century Fund before the close of 1900. If they send to us by Monday, January 7, they will be just in time for the complete list up to date.

Mr. Foote was rather unfortunate in the weather at his last two lectures at the Athenæum Hall. It was a wretched fog on December 23, and still more wretchedly wet on December 30. In the circumstances, however, both meetings were surprisingly good. On each occasion the lecture was followed by discussion.

Mr. Foote delivers three lectures to-day (Jan. 6) in the Prince of Wales Assembly Room, John Bright-street, Birmingham. His subjects are up-to-date, and we hope the advertisement of the meetings will reach the majority of the people who applauded his speeches in the Town Hall on October 21.

Mr. Cohen concluded the course of Sunday evening free lectures at Battersea on December 23, and we learn that there was a distinct improvement in the audience. It was intended to continue Sunday evening lectures at the Public Baths right through the winter, but unfortunately the hall is not available. Last Sunday evening (Dec. 30) Mr. Cohen concluded the course of three lectures in the Camberwell Secular Hall. Largely owing to the rain, no doubt, the audience was a small one. The weather, however, must not bear the whole responsibility. It seems pretty evident that a strong, determined effort at Secular propaganda and organisation is necessary in South London.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Jan. 6). It is some time since the "saints" had an opportunity of hearing him there, and he will doubtless have a good audience.

Branch secretaries and friends in general are desired to note that Mr. Cohen has changed his residence. His new address is 241 High-road, Leyton.

The Annual Dinner of the London Freethinkers, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place on Monday evening, January 14, at the Holborn Restaurant. Mr. Foote will preside as usual, and will be supported, also as usual, by several leading Freethinkers. There will be no collecting cards this time, so those who have nothing to give just then can come without apprehension. Arrangements will be made, too, for more conversation in the course of the evening, and this will necessitate less speech-making.

Mr. G. M. Smith, the famous publisher, tells something to the credit of George Eliot, the famous novelist and Freethinker. She received the large sum of £7,000 for *Romola*. The original offer was £10,000, but she renounced the extra £3,000 rather than divide her book against her own artistic instincts into the number of parts desired by the publisher.

We have received the *Secular Almanack* for 1901, which is a very excellent publication for those who agree with the principles of Secularism. Its calendar of birthdays is a valuable index, and calls to mind the names of many leaders of advanced thought whom we are apt to think of too infrequently, and it includes the names of a large number of great men whom many people will be surprised to learn are Secularists. It is packed with an epitome of the bright, thoughtful, and wise sayings of some foremost thinkers, and is a vade mecum of up-to-date Secularism.—*Labor Chronicle*.

The *Secular Almanack* for 1901, edited by G. W. Foote, contains some interesting articles by leading exponents of Freethought. Mr. Foote himself deals with the progress made during the past year. He believes that in the new year Secularism will enjoy one of the brightest periods of its history, if all Freethinkers work harmoniously together. This may be so, for never were people so disgusted with the hypocrisy and bloodthirsty attitude of many of the so-called teachers of the Christian religion.—*Reynolds's Newspaper*.

Mr. J. Morrison Davidson writes to the *Daily News*, pointing out that neither Bismarck nor Ruskin originated the Old Age Pensions idea. Its real originator was "the sorely-calumniated author of *The Rights of Man*." Thomas Paine proposed the creation of a Public Fund, out of which every young person arriving at the age of twenty-one should be paid the sum of fifteen pounds to enable him or her to begin the world with; and every person arriving at the age of fifty ten pounds per annum (then a living wage) to enable them "to live in old age without wretchedness, and to go decently out of the world." To meet the expenses of this scheme Paine proposed a tax on ground values. Substantially speaking, his scheme was perfect. He showed what ought to be done and how to do it; and it may be said, slightly altering the words of Shakespeare, "to this complexion we must come at last."

The Glasgow Branch has just closed the first half of a very successful winter's work. There have been capital attendances at the lectures, and harmony has prevailed amongst the workers. The Sunday before Christmas was made memorable by a Children's Party, which crammed the hall in every part. The youngsters had plenty to eat and drink—without

which the world is a barren desert to them; they were also supplied with a splendid entertainment, which they heartily enjoyed, and each child received a nice present on leaving.

The Leicester Secular Society gave a free Christmas dinner (the seventeenth consecutive occasion of the kind) to 147 aged persons, irrespective of sect, Christians and non-Christians being alike welcome. The meal was no meagre "charity" purveyance, but a thoroughly good one; and was so varied that, as the Englishman said of his variable climate, a person must have been very fastidious who could not find something to suit him. There was beef, mutton, rabbit pie (hevins!), plum pudding, mince pies, and dessert. A smoking-concert followed.

Mr. Arthur T. Grindley is a candidate for a seat on the new Plymouth School Board, which will be elected on January 23. His address contains a special paragraph headed "Secular Education." He would banish religion from the public day schools, and have taught "truth, justice, and moral courage." We strongly advise the local Freethinkers to plump for Mr. Grindley. We have not the honor of his personal acquaintance, but his photograph, accompanying his address, speaks highly in his favor.

Mr. Andrew Lang, in an article on Lord Monboddoo, who was "a Darwinian before Darwin," though he had little scientific knowledge, confesses that "Monboddoo was an Atheist," as well as an evolutionist.

Parker, "Sun," and Holy Ghost.

[Dr. Parker said, in the City Temple: "I am to edit a daily newspaper for a week, governed from beginning to end by Christian principles, and I ask God to help me."]

WHEN pious humbugs pray to God
To help them in their sinning,
The Holy Ghost must think it odd,
And Satan must be grinning.

If traitors gravely asked their king
To help them in their treason,
'Twould seem a rather funny thing
To common sense and reason.

But P. asks God to lend a hand
In editing a paper,
Though Jahveh Junior's command
Prohibits such a caper.

Ne'er take a thought, says Jahveh, *filis*,
Of what may hap to-morrow,
But live as I did (damn police!),
And loaf, and beg, and borrow!

The press is based on business laws,
And chief of these is "Forethought";
But one of Christ's explicit saws
Commands us to ignore thought.

Christ meant exactly what he said,
In praising what was thriftless;
And showed us by the life he led,
He meant us to be shiftless.

He had "not where to lay his head,"
Because he wouldn't labor;
Nor try to earn his daily bread,
But sponged upon his neighbor.

A paper soon would come to nought
If Jesus were its master;
Dislike of work, and lack of thought,
Would bring it to disaster.

The daily prints would soon be dead
That worried not for morrows;
Their chiefs would have to beg their bread,
As homeless men of sorrows.

In *my* name ask, and God will do
Whatever you may bid him,
Said Christ, the "absent-minded" Jew;
Said Parker: "Now I'll 'kid' him!"

So Joe demanded help from God,
But asked it for the "*Sun's*" sake;
Said God: "The joke's so dev'lish odd,
I'll help him for the pun's sake!"

And so the Lord and Dr. P.
A six-days' "*Sun*" did edit;
But P. took all the £ s. d.,
And likewise all the credit.

Praise God! the God whom Parker knows;
The God whom few can gammon;
The God to whom the Parson goes;
The goddest God-head: MAMMON!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Christianity and Civilisation.—VI.

THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY.

It has become an article of faith with the ordinary Christian that in some manner unspecified, and at some time unknown, Christianity abolished the slave trade. Bearing in mind the facts that it is only within the present century that slavery became illegal in Christian countries, and that even then Christian slave-owners had to be bought out in some cases and *fought* out in others, and also that the traffic in human flesh flourished right through those periods when Christianity was most powerful, besides receiving a fresh impetus from purely Christian sources within the last four centuries, the claim seems difficult enough to understand, and more difficult still to justify. The early Christians would doubtless have heard such a claim with considerable surprise; but what would have been scouted by them as imputing motives and objects alien to their objects is, by sheer force of repeated asseveration, accepted as true by modern believers.

It is not necessary to discuss here the whole question of the nature and origin of slavery. Among early peoples slavery is tolerably universal, and might even be said to be one of the factors that make for civilisation. All we are concerned with is the relation—the historic relation—that Christianity has borne to the traffic. And here an impartial examination of the facts proves conclusively, not merely that slavery is countenanced in the Christian sacred books, but that it flourished unchecked under Christian rule, and, in modern times, added to a greater degree of degradation and torture than was the case in pre-Christian times.

To commence with the Old Testament. The instructions here are clear and precise. The twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus contains explicit instructions of whom slaves are to be bought, with the added assertion that they are to be "as an inheritance for your children" forever. The exception in the case of perpetual bondage is where the slave happens to be a Hebrew. But even here the children born of the union of slaves are to be the property of the master; and at the time of Jubilee the slave, if he cares to avail himself of his freedom, is to depart alone. We shall see this repulsive feature of slave-breeding repeated later in American slavery; at present it is enough to note the scriptural warranty for the practice. But if the slave declares plainly that he loves his wife and child more than even his liberty, the divine reward for such unscriptural affection is that he shall be brought to the door-post of the house, have his ears pierced with an awl, and remain his master's slave for ever (Exodus xxi. 5-6). I do not know that anything could exceed the brutality of such regulations; even that contained in verse 20 of the same chapter, to the effect that a master may beat his slave to any extent short of killing him on the spot, and shall yet be held blameless because "he is his money," must give way to the refined cruelty of making the sacrifice of wife and children the price of liberty, and punishing with perpetual slavery the triumph of the domestic affections. These regulations not only compare unfavorably with the best legislation and teaching of the Pagan world—about which more hereafter—but even with the teachings of Mohammed, who had said: "God hath ordained that your brothers should be your slaves; therefore let him whom God hath ordained to be the slave of his brother, his brother must give him of the food which he eateth himself, and of the clothes wherewith he clotheth himself, and not order him to do anything beyond his power.....A man who ill-treats his slave will not enter Paradise."

There is only one other point that deserves noting in connection with the Old Testament, and that is the market-price of human beings as fixed by divinity itself. The calculation is made for a purpose other than that of slave-buying, but it will stand. From this calculation (Lev. xxvii.), reckoning the silver shekel at about half-a-crown present value, we learn that a child from one month to five years was worth—male, 12s. 6d.; female, 7s. 6d. From five to twenty—male, £3 15s.; female, £1 5s. From twenty to sixty—male, £6 5s.; female, £3 15s. As a basis for assessing damages in a railway

accident, this divine calculation is admirable—from the directors' point of view.

In the New Testament, while we discover nothing abrogating the slave laws contained in the Bible, we find a doctrine of passive obedience insisted on, which has always shown itself to be the greatest support of slavery. Nowhere does Jesus set his face against slavery. He accepted this as he appears to have accepted all the various superstitions around him. Nothing seems to have been further from his mind than the bringing about of a social revolution. And, in addition to teaching a policy of non-resistance, we have, in Luke xvii. 7-10, a direct support of the teaching that a master owes no thanks to the slave for whatever is done by him, and this on the ground that there is no more equality between master and slave than there is between God and man.

I have used the word "slave," instead of the New Testament "servant," because the use of the last word is a fresh piece of clerical dishonesty, and has no business there at all. The Greek word which is translated "servant" in the N. T. is so translated in no other Greek writing. Everywhere but here it is translated "slave"; yet in the more than one hundred instances where it occurs in the Christian Scriptures we get uniformly "servant." The reason for this is obvious. To have rendered it "slave" would have come as a shock to many, inasmuch as it would have placed the N. T. clearly on the side of the slave driver; and as this would have been, to say the least of it, inconvenient, honesty of interpretation is sacrificed to convenience; and conduct that would call down the severest reprobation in the world of general literature is here overlooked for "the greater glory of God."

Paul's teaching on the question of slavery is still more explicit. Servants (*i. e.*, slaves) are to be obedient to their masters in fear and trembling, giving them the same absolute submission as they give to Christ; they are to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; to be subject "with all fear," not only to the good, but also to the bad, for God is pleased when his servants suffer wrong patiently. The runaway slave Onesimus is sent back to his master Philemon, who has "love and faith towards the Lord Jesus and towards all his saints"; and his slaveholding does not seem to have called down any condemnation from Paul. Indeed, his general rule is that everyone is to abide in that condition in which he was at the time of conversion, whether it be married or single, bond or free.* It is difficult to understand, in the face of these texts only, without counting the habits of mental docility inculcated in the New Testament, how it can be reasonably urged that Christian teaching abolished slavery.

The difficulty becomes still greater when we leave scriptural texts for historical examination. For in assuming control of the destinies of the Roman Empire, Christianity had, as a basis for any anti-slavery effort it might have exercised, a strong body of teaching concerning the evils of slavery and the necessity of treating slaves with all possible kindness, and also a growing series of legislative Acts aiming at an improvement in their position. Let us take, first, the doctrinal aspect, and let it be noted that we are concerned with the question only as it presents itself at the time when Christianity began to permeate the Empire.

The recognition of the natural equality of man was one of the cardinal doctrines of the powerful school of Stoicism. Zeno, its founder, had declared that "All men are by nature equal; virtue alone creates a difference between them"; and this principle was not only emphasized by his followers, but by many others. Plato and Aristotle, Zeno and his philosophic rival Epicurus, in Athens, Seneca and Macrobius with many of the lawyers in Rome, dwelt upon the duty of kindness to slaves. Seneca, above all, praises those masters who live on familiar terms with their slaves, and reminds them that they are men like themselves, and therefore they should "live gently and kindly with your slave, and admit him to conversation with you, to counsel with you, and to a share in your meals." And in his treatise, *On Benefits*, he says: "No one is precluded from virtue; it lies open to all, welcome to all, invites all, whether well-born, freedmen, slaves, kings, or exiles; is indif-

* See Eph. vi., 1 Peter ii., 1 Cor. vii., Ep. to Philemon.

erent to family or income, and content with the actual man.....Men's bodies may be subject to masters, but the mind remains independent."

It was these teachings and opinions, co-operating with the development of the Empire, that led to a long series of legal enactments which materially raised the status of the slave class. The right of inflicting death on the slave was withdrawn from the master; private prisons for slaves were suppressed; and the master who omitted to tend his slave when sick lost all claim over him. In the case of excessive cruelty magistrates were appointed to hear complaints, and the slave might obtain either freedom or a more indulgent master. It was forbidden to expose slaves in the arena as gladiators against their will. It was forbidden to sell separately husband, wife, and children—a practice common enough with nineteenth-century Christian slavery; while under certain conditions, under the Antonines, a slave, in the absence of direct heirs, shared in the possessions of his master.* In the face of this movement, Lecky may well say that "The slave code of Imperial Rome compares not unfavorably with those of some Christian nations."

Added to this, we have always to bear in mind that the slave in ancient Rome was by no means the miserable, degraded being he became under modern Christian rule. The Roman slave was usually a member of the household, often eating his meals with his master and mistress, and was on a footing of tolerable familiarity. In addition, every art and science, every mechanical pursuit, every branch of literature, numbered slaves amongst its most prominent exponents. At one time medicine was almost entirely in the hands of slaves. Teachers, too, were usually slaves. Plautus, Cœcilius, Phædrus, Terence, Epictetus, were slaves, enjoying positions of dignity and respect, even sharing the friendship of the Emperor himself.† This alone establishes a vital difference between Pagan and Christian slavery. In ancient times the slave might gain his freedom at the price of a few years of good behavior, or, at least, he might be certain of winning the respect of all by mental industry or moral worth. Under nineteenth-century Christian rule his slavery was practically perpetual; while every effort, legal and otherwise, was made to prevent him acquiring the rudiments of an education.‡

The moral of the comparison between ancient and modern slavery was well expressed by Professor Cairnes in one of the best treatises written on the question of slavery, published during the struggle between North and South in America:—

"In antiquity precautions were taken to prevent the slave from breaking his chains; at the present day measures are adopted to deprive him even of the desire of freedom. The ancients kept the bodies of their slaves in bondage, but they placed no restraint upon the mind and no check upon education; and they acted consistently with their principle, since a natural termination of slavery then existed, and one day or other the slave might be set free, and become the equal of his master.....The education of slaves amongst the ancients prepared the way for emancipation. The prohibition of the education of slaves amongst the moderns has naturally suggested the policy of holding them in perpetual bondage."§

And Lecky declares with equal truth that "the modern slave trade has been carried on upon a scale and with circumstances of atrocity little known to the ancients."||

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Walter Savage Landor.

"What I write is not written on slate; and no finger, not that of Time himself, who dips it in the mist of years, can efface it."
—Landor.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR cast the spell of genius upon all who came near him. Southey, who had so many opportunities of judging, has left a magnificent tribute to his memory. Shelley was no less enthusiastic. De Quincey, Carlyle, Dickens, Emerson, and Charles Lamb have all combined in their various ways to render affectionate tribute to "that deep-mouthed Boetian," as Byron calls him. Browning dedicated his "Luria" to him; and Swinburne, who wears the imperial purple of the great poets, has written a most melodious poem to the "old lion's" memory. How lovingly he refers to him!—

I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend.

It is given to few to inspire such love among friends, or such fear among enemies. A link between two literary ages, Landor stands a herculean figure, towering above his contemporaries, ever ready to do battle for liberty.

Landor's period of literary activity extended over seventy years. He was a poet embodying revolutionary aspirations in classic language. He was a literary dramatist of great power. Above all, he was a critic in the widest sense of the word.

The *Imaginary Conversations* is his monumental work. In them he introduces us to a great procession of historic forms—from Plato, in far-off Greece, to our own Porson; from Hannibal, of old-world Carthage, to David Hume; from Seneca to his own friend Southey. He has treated of them all; kings, statesmen, fair ladies, writers, philosophers, prelates, and scientists of all ages and of all types. Epicurus talks philosophy in his garden; Montaigne laughs at the worthy Scaliger; Melancthon reproves Calvin.

How perfectly, too, has Landor caught the relations of the French Court and the Great Lying Catholic Church in the conversation between "Louis XIV. and Pere La Chaise," when the young King confesses the most damnable crimes and the obsequious confessor imposes the most trifling penances. The *Imaginary Conversations* prove beyond doubt that Landor possessed real dramatic gifts. Scene succeeds scene, each richer and fuller than its predecessor, supplementing one another, and go to make a really magnificent picture of

Life, like a dome of many-colored glass.

When Landor is at his best, not many are so perfect as he. There are few things in literature more pathetic than Landor's treatment of the unhappy Anne Boleyn. He represents the pious and hypocritical Henry coming disguised to see Anne in the condemned cell. Very touchingly does he express her womanly desire to see her child:—

Could I, could I kiss her but once again! it would comfort my heart or break it.

For a long time Landor's work was "caviare to the general." His chief work was venomously and ignorantly described as "the adventures of seven volumes, which are seven valleys of dry bones." The partial eclipse of his reputation is the more remarkable because Landor was an author of real and unmistakable genius. In nearly every page of his writing one finds high thinking and rare eloquence. As was said many years ago, a well-edited selection from his works would be "one of the most beautiful books in the language—that is to say, in the world." Although he addressed a scanty audience while he lived, he looked confidently forward to the future. "I shall dine late; but the drawing room will be well lighted, the guests few and select."

The chief of Landor's other books is undoubtedly *Pericles and Aspasia*. Another of his works, *The Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare for Deer Stealing*, according to Charles Lamb's epigram, could only have been written by "the man who did write it, or he of whom it was written." It is probable that Landor's verse will be represented for posterity by a few lyrics, such as "Rose Aylmer" and the sympathetic

* See Lecky, *Morals*, i., pp. 304-5-8; ii., pp. 62-4; Gibbon, Bury's edition, i., pp. 39-40; Renan; *Marcus Aurelius*; Congreve's *Politics of Aristotle*, p. 497.

† For fuller treatment see Gibbon, i., p. 41; Lecky, *Morals*, i., pp. 304-5; Babbington, *Fallacies of Race Theories*, pp. 89-93.

‡ Between 1830 and 1849 the following Acts were passed in America to prohibit colored people receiving any education:—In South Carolina anyone teaching a slave to read or write, or assisting others to the same end, was punished with one hundred dollars fine or six months' imprisonment. In Virginia the punishment for "assembling with negroes" for a similar purpose was the same. In Georgia the penalty for "teaching a person of color to read or write either written or printed characters" was five hundred dollars fine and imprisonment at the discretion of the court. In Louisiana it was twelve months' imprisonment, and in Alabama from two hundred and fifty to five hundred dollars fine for the same offence. See Cairnes's *Slave Power*, pp. 105-6.

§ *Slave Power*, pp. 106-7.

|| *Rise of Rationalism*, ii., 232.

lines on the death of Charles Lamb. The single stanza, in his best manner prefixed to one of his last books, epitomises Landor's life and aims in four lines:—

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved; and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Landor's poems are full of delight for those who care for concentration and restraint in literature. Landor was "fully dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love." Withal he was a typical Englishman, with an appetite for the heroic. He showed this when, on Napoleon's invasion of Spain, he went over and, with his own energy and money, raised a regiment with whom he marched to the seat of war. Landor was, above all, an artist; but he was also a man of action.

Landor has been called a "grand old Pagan." His sympathies were most certainly Secular rather than Christian. The eternal arrogance of priests always roused his opposition. Now and again he expresses himself with unusual vigor on religious matters. Writing of the Bible, he makes Melancthon say to Calvin:—

"The book of *good news*, under your interpretation, tells people not only that they may go and be damned, but, unless they are lucky, they must inevitably."

And again:—

"The unsoundness of doctrine is not cut off nor cauterised; the professor is. The head falls on the scaffold, or fire surrounds the stake, because a doctrine is bloodless and incombustible. Fierce, outrageous animals, for want of the man who has escaped them, lacerate and trample his cloak or bonnet. This, although the work of brutes, is not half so brutal as the practice of theologians, seizing the man himself, instead of bonnet or cloak."

In another page he returns to the attack:—

"There is scarcely a text in the Holy Scriptures to which there is not an opposite text, written in characters equally large and legible; and there has usually been a sword laid upon each."

He has a sly hit at spiritual intoxication:—

"At last the zealot is so infatuated, by the serious mockeries he imitates and repeats, that he really takes his own voice for God's. Is it not wonderful that the words of eternal life should have hitherto produced only eternal litigation?"

He closes the conversation with the magnificent words: "There is nothing on earth divine besides humanity."

Carlyle said of one of Landor's last literary efforts, published when the "old lion" was over eighty: "The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians! The unsubduable old Roman!"

The last few years of his life were spent in peace. On reading of Swinburne's visit to the old man shortly before his death, one is reminded irresistibly of Turner's superb picture, *The Fighting Temeraire*, towed to her last berth, bathed in an atmosphere beautiful and serene, and transfigured by the last glance of day's expiring glory. The symbolism even of that great painting is exalted in our present contemplation of a like harmony between the memories of brave old Landor and his abiding quiet from all troublous things, for whom for ever—

All winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

MIMNERMUS.

Confucianism and Christianity.

A CHINAMAN'S SERMON.

WU TING FANG, the Chinese Minister to the United States, addressed the Society for Ethical Culture, at Carnegie Music Hall, New York, on a recent Sunday morning. His subject was "The Teachings of Confucius." The following passages of his address are extracted from the *Charleston News and Courier*:—

"In the strictest sense of the word Confucianism is not a religion. It is not a system of doctrine and worship. It is perhaps easier to say what Confucianism is not than what it is.

"The immortality of the soul is a beautiful doctrine, I admit. I wish it were true, and I hope it is true. But all the reasoning of Plato cannot make it more than a strong probability. And all the light of modern science has not brought us one step further. Now, Confucius would be called an Agnostic if he were alive to-day. There were four

things that he would not talk about—extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual being. 'How are we to serve spiritual beings?' he was asked. 'When you do not know how to serve men how should you hope to serve spirits?' he replied. Horace Greeley said that those who discharge promptly and faithfully their duty to those who linger in the flesh have but little time to peer into the affairs of those who have passed away. Confucius was intensely human and practical. He did not spend time speculating as to what will happen after death."

The minister then compared the practical teachings of Confucius with those of Christ. He read a passage from the New Testament, directing that evil be not resisted with evil, and that if a man smite you on one cheek you should turn the other cheek. Of this doctrine Mr. Wu said:—

"This, it seems to me, is meekness with a vengeance. I am inclined to think that no sensible man has ever followed this injunction faithfully. A man who will smite you on the cheek is a dangerous man, and needs no second invitation. A man who will take your coat is a thief, and would doubtless take your cloak, too, if he could lay his hands on it."

"Love your enemies. Such a standard of excellence is too high for humanity. There is no likelihood that many people will follow it. At this very moment Christian missionaries are calling for bloodshed and vengeance, and Christian armies are devastating the land, sparing neither age nor sex. There is indeed a vast gulf between doctrine and performance. Could you love one who had killed your father or destroyed your home? Confucianism does not require such a thing. It enjoins that kindness be requited with kindness, and an injury with justice. It does not sanction retaliation in a vindictive spirit, such as, I regret to say, is shown by some persons professing to be governed by the tenets of Christianity.

"The most striking instance in which the teachings of Confucius and of Christ meet is of the Golden Rule. Confucius put it negatively, to be sure—'Do not do to others what you would not wish them to do to you'—but anyone who will follow that rule, either way it is phrased, will be a thoroughly good man.

"A good Christian is a good Confucian, and a good Confucian is a good Christian. I do not believe that heaven is an exclusive place. The advocates of various religions are trying to make a private park of it for their own adherents. Whatever Heaven may be, I believe it is a place for all good men, irrespective of dogma. The Chinese are an eminently practical race. Confucius did not run away from the world, but did his duty in it. He teaches men to do good for the sake of good, and not for any promise of reward, or through any threat of punishment. The world is gradually coming to Confucius. One of the signs is the growth of Agnosticism. I will not say whether people are growing more callous or more civilised, but they are no more terrified when the terrors of the next world are proclaimed from the pulpit."

Correspondence.

"DR. PARKER'S RUSHLIGHT."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I say a few words in support of your remarks concerning Dr. Parker and the *Sun*?

One does not know whether to marvel most at the ignorance of the man who actually supposes that magistrates have the power to inflict the "cat" for Hooliganism, or at the unreasoning brutality with which he "knows" that the "cat" is a cure for crime without need of reference to the official facts or figures which prove the contrary. When he advises "trying" the lash, is he aware that, according to a return ordered to be printed by the House of Commons, from 1816 to 1821 over six thousand men and women were publicly flogged in this country, and that crime was about ten times greater than it is now, without flogging, and with double the population?

Dr. Parker's experiment of editing the *Sun* for a week has, indeed, produced some curious results. "I delight," he says, "to lead the devil a hard life." I assure him that the devil never had a more agreeable time than during the years when the lash was a common every-day punishment.

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

The Secular burial of the late Mr. Marks, of Sheerness, has aroused the orthodox zeal of the Rev. Eustace Tozer, pastor of the Alma-road Congregational Church, who has preached a special sermon on "Some Points in the Creed of the Sceptic." The reverend gentleman started with the old wheeze, "There is no God." That shows his accuracy. Then he went on with another old wheeze about the awful immorality that would come upon the world if it gave up Christ. Finally, he dwelt upon "the crown" that was laid up for him and other Christians in glory. Well, the only comment we have to make is that if Mr. Tozer were to put on that crown shortly the world would not lose much from an intellectual point of view.

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, "The Significance of Evolution."
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.
SOUTH METROPOLITAN TEMPERANCE HALL (Blackfriars'-road): January 7, at 8, Mr. G. W. Foote.
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "Present Tendencies in Popular Literature."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 7.15, J. W. Cox
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, C. Tennant, "Creation."
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): G. W. Foote—11, "Faith and Freethought in the Old Century and the New One"; 3, "Christian Charity in China"; 7, "Does Death End Us?"
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, W. J. Cox, "Christ and Christmas."
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, G. Faulkner, "Criticism of Tyndall's Belfast Address"; 6.30, J. P. Turnbull, A lecture.
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): John M. Robertson—11, "The Darwinian Law in Morals"; 6.30, "What is Happening in South Africa?"
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, M. Bergmann, B.Sc., "Miracles."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, "South Africa." Descriptive reading. With lantern illustrations.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Original Poetical and Prose Readings; with Vocal and Instrumental Music.
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