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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Holy Wedlock.

THE Christian faith, and all the rites and ceremonies built upon it, could hardly have presented more paradoxes and imbecilities of inconsistency if it had been specially designed for that purpose. The more we examine it, the more we are inclined to regard it as a huge joke—a serio-comic interlude in the endless æons of existence, a subject for the laughter of gods and men. If there is any Supreme Being at all, and if he had anything to do with the origin of Christianity, he must surely be an Almighty humorist of the very first water. For, otherwise, how is it possible to accept the faith offered to us by Christian priests, and, at the same time, preserve a solemn countenance? Christianity, if we can trace any design in its origin, must have been intended to contribute to the gaiety of nations. True, it has run off, in the passage of the centuries, to bloodshed and infamous persecution—to crusades, religious wars, massacres, holocausts, inquisitions, and other relentless attempts at the extermination of co-religionists and heretics. But now that it is one of the “grey faiths rapidly creeping to its doom,” its aspects as a ludicrous imposture once more appear. In the present day it is simply feeble—and funny.

What can be more comical than the attitude of Christianity in regard to the contract of marriage? It calls it a sacrament, and endeavors to invest the prescribed ceremony of the Church with a sanctity which is at once unexampled and impossible. And yet this dictatorial and domineering Christianity is, at its very inception, founded upon a violation of a marital contract. How, according to its own records, did its founder come into the world? There is an honest working man—a carpenter, who espouses, in all good faith, a Jewish maiden. While he is away, probably laboring with simple devotion and zeal for the building up of his little household, a seducer comes in. It does not matter whether he is called the Holy Ghost, or bears the name of any other of the gods who, according to mythology, had an inclination for the “daughters of men.” It is sufficient that, after his visit, Joseph’s betrothed is *enceinte*, and eventually bears a child which Joseph knows is not his. This humble carpenter seems to have been an amiable sort of fool, and to have listened to Mary’s explanation and to have been influenced by a dream. He accepts the situation. Suppose, however, he had been a strong-minded man, and had slain her at once, as many a man has done, when he found himself dishonored. Suppose he had been an Othello, and Mary had been Desdemona; where would Christ and Christianity have been?

Spiritual pranks of this kind are not so easily played to-day. No husband of the present century would be so readily appeased. Filthy lucre, if he were of a mercenary nature, might close his mouth; but he would retain his own conviction as to the deceit practised upon him. More likely he would seek in the Divorce Court a dissolution of his marriage. Perhaps, after a time, he or she might determine to marry someone else. That could easily be done at a registry office. But now—and here the comicality of the business comes in—the Christian Church, or at least that important (perhaps by far the most important) section, the High Church, would raise a stern barrier to the approach to its altar. It would say peremptorily: “No re-marriage for a divorcee.” It would declare any preliminary marriage by a registrar to be no marriage at all. In its view the

union would be adulterous, and any offspring from it simply bastards.

Now, could pious impudence rise higher? The very existence of the Christian Church is based upon an illicit connection. “Oh, but it was by the Holy Ghost,” say they. “Holy Ghost be damned!” would be the exclamation of any common-sense husband at the present time. “She’s *enceinte*. That’s enough for me, because it was not by me. Call the other fellow what you like. It matters not; the resultant fact is the same.”

And Joseph, if he had had an atom of manly spirit and ordinary discernment, would have said, and been justified in saying: “The Holy Ghost be damned!” This, to Christian ears, may sound like blasphemy, and may be described as coarse. As to the blasphemy, the priestly bogey of the “unpardonable sin” has no terrors for any rational person. As to the coarseness, that exists in the Gospel narratives, which are placed indiscriminately in the hands of the young. For the word “damned” we are indebted to Christian theology.

This, however, is not an endeavor to shock Christian people, as will be perceived when we submit the following question: Why should the Holy Ghost have selected an espoused woman for his “overshadowing”? If the Christian Church invests with so much sanctity the marriage tie, why could not the founder have elected to make his advent on earth in a different fashion? It was surely not impossible for the Almighty to have otherwise arranged for the Davidical descent which appears to have been desired, but, according to the genealogies, does not seem to have been achieved. The whole story is a blundering reflection on the Almighty.

And it is mighty particular too! Not only are divorcees excluded from the sacramental rite, but there is a persistent opposition by the High Church section, supported by the bishops in the House of Lords, to marriage with a deceased wife’s sister. On social and domestic grounds a legal option in this matter should be allowed. There are no obstacles in the shape of consanguinity. The clerical opposition is entirely Scriptural, and that breaks down upon examination.

A memorial has recently been presented to the Bishop of Madras by 3,526 members of the Church of England in South India in favor of marriage with a deceased wife’s sister. The Bishop replies that “not a single authority in favor of such marriages can be adduced for fourteen hundred years after Christ.” Well, what does that matter? We are not to be ruled in the twentieth century by the absence of precedents up to A.D. 1400. The Romans, who were much more sensible than modern High Churchmen and others of the so-called Church of England, allowed these unions until Constantine’s conversion. In A.D. 355 the law was changed, and they were forbidden. The opinion of the Church and its traditions are of no consequence to rational persons. But, for the information of the pious, the Marriage Law Reform Association have issued a pamphlet containing the opinions of the Hebrew Professors of forty-eight Universities, and those of Greek Professors of thirty-five Universities. These are almost unanimous in saying the Bible does not forbid marriage with a deceased wife’s sister. The Rev. F. E. Warren, rector of Bardwell, Bury St. Edmunds, recently wrote that it was “not a matter of scholarship.” We should think not. It is one of common sense. But he says the prohibition is an inference from Scriptural teaching generally, and more especially from Leviticus xviii. 16 and Ephesians v. 31. Yet the passage in Leviticus

prohibits marriage only with a wife's sister "in her lifetime, to vex her." Ephesians v. 31 says nothing about the wife's sister, but simply that "for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

This is enough on the deceased wife's sister question. Everyone does not want to contract that union, or, if he did, he needn't trouble himself the toss-up of a brass farthing what the Church thinks about it. He would be a perfect fool if he troubled himself at all about the controversy which has raged so long—except he cared to do so in an academic way. Why one mentions it here is simply to show how superfine and hair-splitting the Christian Church has become in these latter days—the said Church owing its origin to the clumsy expedient of the Almighty, through the Holy Ghost, getting an espoused woman with child.

It is a curious thing, too, that God's favorites in the early days, according to the Old Testament, were unrestricted polygamists. They had as many wives and concubines as they could afford to keep. Solomon had a perfect harem. "But, oh," say the Bible jugglers, "that was under the old dispensation, which was abrogated by the advent of Christ." Was it? Then why go back to Leviticus in regard to the deceased wife's sister. But *has* polygamy been condemned by Christ? The *Church Times* recently was obliged to admit: "There is no passage in the New Testament directly forbidding polygamy; but such passages as 1 Cor. vii. 2, St. Matt. xix. 5, and Eph. v. 23, indirectly point to an exclusion of any such practice." Let the reader turn up these passages, and he will see that, if they point to anything, they do so very "indirectly" indeed. He will see that there is no clear pronouncement on this subject in the cited texts, which are all that can be adduced by the most diligent searchers. At some future time it may be worth while dealing with them fully.

This blatant Christian Church, which confessedly commenced with a violation of a marital tie, makes a huge fuss about its marriage ceremony and its nuptial blessing. Why? Well, if we must state the truth, it is largely—fees. Perhaps not entirely so; influence also is desired. The parson wants to capture you all through the chapter. There is the churching of your mother, the baptism of yourself as a child, confirmation, communion, marriage, and the reading of the Burial Service over your remains. The parson must figure all the way through.

The clerics have anything but a modest notion of what is due to them. Take the following letter, which appears in the *Church Times* of July 5:—

"It has lately been my lot to be present at a good many weddings in London, and I am anxious to know if any of your readers can suggest anything which may be done in the direction of inducing the congregations on these occasions to behave better than they generally do at the present time.

"This afternoon I happened to be at a very large wedding in a very well-known West-end church, and it proved no exception to the rule. The behavior of the majority of the congregation was positively indecent. They flitted hither and thither before the service began; they sat, they talked, they laughed, and they chatted; and, for all the world over, it might have been a drawing-room instead of a church. Most of the people appeared to treat the whole matter as a kind of huge joke, and anything like reverence, or even attention to the service, apparently never occurred to their minds. Such a state of things as this does not reflect much credit upon the 'Flower of London.'

"That to many the fact of the marriage service being a religious ceremony, or, indeed, a religious act at all, does not occur, may readily be believed, when their own married lives come to be looked into a little bit; but for the sake of those who do think seriously about it, and who, moreover, are far enough behind the times to recognise and believe in the sanctity of the marriage rite, they might at least have the politeness to hide their feelings until they leave the church.

"One often wonders why these people come to the church at all. Could not they be persuaded to stay away? I believe they could be spared. It would be much simpler if they could arrange to go direct to the bride's house, and there play games until the others return from church."

Yes, "one often wonders why these [or any people] go to church at all." Perhaps the greatest wonderment is with the parson, if he has sufficient acuteness to

realise what a humbug he is, and how worthless all his rites and ceremonies are. If he deceives himself into attaching value and importance to the inanities he recites, he doesn't deceive other people. The majority of men are able to form a pretty correct estimate. If they sanction the pious nonsense in a passive kind of way, it is mostly for the sake of the weaker sex, who are now the main support of the clerics.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Christianity and Slavery.

JUDGING from personal experience, I should be quite justified in saying that, for glaring misrepresentations of facts and subterfuge in dealing with questions affecting their religious views, orthodox preachers of Christianity excel all other public advocates. These theological exponents assume that they have upon their side the truth, and nothing but the truth; and their hearers, being ever ready to believe what is told them without questioning its veracity, indulge in delusions and the most palpable errors. The accuracy of these allegations was strikingly shown at a recent meeting in Hyde Park, where the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale was lecturing upon Christianity and slavery. I happened to be present, and deemed it my duty, at the conclusion of his address, to point out some of his fallacies and misrepresentations. During the forty years of my public life it has never been my misfortune to listen to such audacious misstatements as were made by Mr. Woffendale on that occasion. Evidently the following words of St. Paul still have some force: "For if the truth of God have more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" It is not my intention to deal here with all the perversions this man of God indulged in. My present purpose is to prove that slavery is a Christian institution, and that its abolition was persistently and vehemently opposed by the leading Christians of the various denominations, including the Presbyterians, to which Mr. Woffendale belongs.

It may be as well, however, to cite two instances to show how recklessly he talked, and how illogical were his conclusions. With an air of self-supposed triumph he exclaimed: "Here I am as a Christian condemning slavery in Hyde Park, while certain Freethinkers in the past supported it. So much for Freethought and liberty." What sublime reasoning! Oh, shades of our great logicians, why hold aloof from this poor Presbyterian minister? Thinking he might see his lack of logic, I adopted in my reply similar language to his own, and said: Here I am as a Secularist condemning slavery in Hyde Park, while certain Christians in the past supported it. So much for Christianity and liberty. Now, I can go "one better" than my opponent. For instance, can he mention a prominent Freethinker who to-day supports slavery? He cannot; but I can cite a professed Christian who, in America recently, defended slavery from a public platform. The celebrated Hobson, of Santiago fame, gave an address at a point near Detroit, Michigan, to the Lake Orion Assembly on last Memorial Day. During his remarks he spoke as follows of slavery:—

"I believe that slavery, as it had existed from the foundation of our nation, was a part of divine Providence to redeem a part of the benighted races of Africa.The condition of slavery with the highly-cultured people of the South was, indeed, a beneficent one. Instead of the fact of slavery being a blot, I consider it, in all its elements, a credit to the South. And to it we must ascribe the remarkable progress made by the colored population in so short a time."

Mr. Woffendale also cried: "Show me the Atheists who, in the early struggles for the freedom of the slave, sided with the work of emancipation." The fact is, every opponent of slavery was an Atheist to the Christians' God, who, if the Bible be true, originated it. Even William Lloyd Garrison was charged with "heresy and infidelity" because he opposed the traffic in slaves, and Parker Pillsbury wrote: "To the popular prevailing religion we are infidels, and mean to be." Let Mr. Woffendale produce evidence that Christ and his early followers ever uttered one word against the

organised slavery which existed in their time. He cannot do so, for nowhere in the New Testament is this accursed evil denounced; on the contrary, the Bible emphatically endorses this inhuman traffic. "The rights of men and of nations," says Francis William Newman, "are wholly ignored in the New Testament, but the authority of slave-owners and of kings is very distinctly recorded for solemn religious sanction.....It is but one part of this great subject that the apostles absolutely command a slave to give obedience to his master in all things, 'as to the Lord.' It is vain to deny that *the most grasping of slave-owners asks nothing more of abolitionists than that they would all adopt Paul's creed.*"

It is quite clear that the Bible sanctions slavery, and that its laws for the regulation of the wrong are of the cruellest kind. In Leviticus (xxv.) "the children of the strangers" are to be "bondmen for ever." And in Exodus (xxi.) we read:—

"If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free. Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever."

Such brutal treatment is worthy only of the Christian's God. But we are told that that was under the old dispensation, and has no binding force upon the followers of Christ. The pertinent question then arises, Why was it allowed at all? Further, why did not Jesus repudiate such injustice and brutality? Instead of doing so, he says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.....Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled" (Matthew v. 17 and 18). The truth is, slavery is endorsed in the New Testament, for we read: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters as worthy of all honor." "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters." "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." St. Paul returned a runaway slave to his master; and although he sent a letter asking for kindness to the slave, it does not alter the fact that the very act of returning him at all gave a sanction to the institution. When it is remembered that the proper translation of the term "servants" as used above means slaves, it will be seen that the New Testament was in no way opposed to slavery.

Probably no one will deny that the humanity of many professed Christians prompted them to denounce slavery, but that does not alter the fact that the prominent upholders of the evil, both in this country and in America, were recognised as Christians. The most stubborn opponents of the Abolition Bill in the House of Commons were the followers of Christ, and the measure to abolish our slave-trade in the West Indies encountered the most determined opposition from the Christian bishops in the House of Lords. In America it was the same. Even Wilberforce himself declared that the American Episcopal Church "raises no voice against the predominant evil; she palliates it in theory, and in practice she shares in it." It is stated in *The Life and Times of Garrison* that at an American Convention held in May, 1841, he proposed: "That among the responsible classes in the non-slaveholding States, in regard to the existence of slavery, the religious professors, and especially the clergy, stand wickedly pre-eminent, and ought to be unsparingly exposed and reprov'd before all the people." Theodore Parker once said that, if the whole American Church had dropped through the Continent and disappeared altogether, the anti-slavery cause would have been further on. He pointed out that no Church ever issued a single tract among all its thousands against dealing in property in human flesh and blood, and that 80,000 slaves were owned by Presbyterians, 225,000 by Baptists, and 250,000 by Methodists. Parker Pillsbury's work, *Acts of the Anti-Slavery Apostles*, presents a strong

indictment against the Christian Church for its conduct in supporting slavery. The following are a few of the citations from many that could be given if space permitted.

Bishop Soule declared:—

"I have never yet advised the liberation of a slave, and I think I never shall."

The Rev. Wilbur Fisk, D.D., President of the Wesleyan University in Connecticut, declared:—

"The relation of master and slave may, and does, in many cases exist under such circumstances as frees the master from the just charge and guilt of immorality..... The New Testament enjoins obedience upon the slave as an obligation due to a present *rightful* authority."

Speaking of the Baptists, Pillsbury writes:—

"In New Hampshire and Maine, where their great strength lay, they reviled the anti-slavery movement, and expelled both ministers and members for anti-slavery fidelity."

Enough has been said to prove that the teachings of the Bible and the conduct of Christians have been in favor of slavery. It should also be borne in mind that, according to Lecky and Gibbon, Christianity did not in many respects improve the position of the slaves. And, moreover, let it be remembered that the first public act against slavery came from the Atheists of France, when it was declared that black and white men should be regarded as equally free. The result of this Atheistic declaration was that the negroes of St. Domingo were liberated.

CHARLES WATTS.

Atheism and its Critics.—III.

WHEN I commenced writing these articles, I did so in response to a number of requests that had reached me from time to time for some clear statement on the question of Atheism. Since writing the first instalment, I have been further asked not to dismiss the subject without discussing the relation between that and Agnosticism. I accede to the request, not altogether unwillingly, and yet not so willingly as might be. It is never a matter of pleasure to me to have to discuss differences with other Freethinkers in place of fighting a united battle against a common enemy, and yet it is a matter of no small importance that Freethinkers should have perfectly clear and distinct ideas upon such subjects, for it is only in proportion as these exist that we can hope to make our position permanently secure.

One very pronounced difficulty in dealing with Agnosticism is that its protean forms render it as difficult to grapple with as religion itself. Agnosticism is rapidly becoming a word that covers all classes—from the man who indulges in a "Worship of the Unknowable," and who reminds one very strongly of a Methodist local preacher minus his creed, to the scientific thinker whose Agnosticism is absolutely indistinguishable from Atheism. To say that a man is an Agnostic is very little more of an indication of his precise position in the world of thought than to call him religious would say to which of the world's creeds or sects he gave his allegiance. For the semi-religious school of Agnostics Mr. Spencer himself is partly responsible. His elaboration of the Unknowable as the common meeting-ground of Religion and Science, the printing of it in capital letters, and the various solemn invocations addressed to it in various parts of his works, were as delightful a gift as was ever made by a great thinker to the believers in a religion which he had himself shown to have originated in the fear and ignorance of savages. It is useless pointing out to a certain class of people that to know that the Unknowable exists is a suicidal proposition; that the only way to prove the existence of an Unknowable would be to say nothing whatever about it. Mr. Spencer, the greatest evolutionist of modern times, has asserted its existence, and it is part of the ironies of life that those who are often minus the intellectual ability to assimilate the really valuable part of his teaching should cry, "Lord, Lord," for that portion of his writings which reflects least credit upon his abilities.

One justification urged for this semi-religious Agnosticism as against Atheism is that it adopts a more

"reverential" attitude towards the "ultimate cause of existence." But why, in the name of all that is reasonable, should one profess reverence towards something of which we know nothing? Reverence is clearly out of place towards anything which does not possess at least intelligence, and we cannot assume that this hypothetical Unknowable is intelligent, since that would destroy its character as an Unknowable. Reverence towards our fellow creatures is a reasonable sentiment enough; but what is there reasonable about an expression of reverence towards something which at most—and even this illegitimately—can only be thought of as a force? The truth is that this profession of "reverence" is nothing but a flickering survival of religion itself—"the ghost of a religion," as Mr. Frederic Harrison, I think, rightly called it. Numbers have reached the intellectual stage at which they can perceive the unreasonable character of religious beliefs, but they have not yet managed to effect liberation from the feelings and sentiments that have been encouraged by those beliefs. In other words, the evolution of the emotional and the intellectual sides of their natures has been unequal, and for these the "Unknowable" has simply served as a peg upon which they could hang their surviving religious feelings that have been robbed of other support. The religious Agnostic thus represents a transition form, interesting enough to all who study how curiously decaying types strive to perpetuate themselves, but which is bound to be brushed on one side in the process of intellectual evolution.

On the other hand, rational or scientific Agnosticism, so far as I can discover, differs in no material respect from a properly understood Atheism. It is at most only a later and less objectionable form of Atheism. Professor Huxley, who claimed to be the originator of the phrase, explained that he adopted the term "Agnostic" "as suggestively antithetic to the 'Gnostic' of Church history, who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant." So far, good. But it is obvious that it is not merely an expression of individual ignorance, but an assertion of general ignorance on such subjects; not merely "I do not know," but also "You do not know, either." And, in thus avowing disbelief in God, and declaring that others are in precisely the same condition if only they examine themselves carefully, Agnosticism is, to repeat what has been said so often, indistinguishable from Atheism.

Mr. Bailey Saunders (*Quest of Faith*, p. 7) calls Agnosticism a "plea on behalf of suspended judgment." But suspended judgment on what? On the question of the existence of the gods of the various 'ologies? Surely not. Mr. Saunders can hardly mean that we are to refrain from expressing an opinion as to the existence of those monstrous emanations of the human brain, the gods of the various religions. And, if not these, what is there to suspend judgment about? Suspension of judgment implies at least that we understand the question on which we refrain from passing sentence. But God in the abstract is not an understandable term at all. In this case we are not waiting for evidence to decide a question; we are simply unable to understand what the question is. Theism, in brief, is not a theory clearly conceived and intelligibly expressed; on the one side there is a set of clearly man-made deities, whose actual existence no competent student would hesitate to deny, and, on the other, a bundle of terms which, taken separately, cancel each other, and which, taken together, are altogether unthinkable.

Professor Huxley further defines Agnosticism as follows:—

"Positively, the principle may be expressed: In matters of the intellect, follow your reason so far as it will take you without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: In matters of the intellect do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable."

Now, this is good enough advice, and advice which I hope everyone—and especially Freethinkers—will follow. But why call it an Agnostic principle? It is as good a rule in matters of the intellect as "Thou shalt not steal" is in matters of morals; but it seems as unjustifiable to call the former an Agnostic, or Atheistic, principle as it is to call the latter Christian, or Jewish, or Buddhist counsel. To my mind it savors rather too strongly of a tendency to give rules of

evidence, or principles of mental integrity, a sectarian label, and comes dangerously near the Christian method of describing various virtues as "Christian," and then assuming that they are inseparable from Christianity. I do not mean that Professor Huxley intended this—indeed, he asserts that the principle is as old as Socrates; only it seems that one might as reasonably say that Agnosticism consisted in the rigorous application of the multiplication table. Agnosticism, on Huxley's own showing, necessarily stands as the negation, or at least the rejection, of Theism. Apart from cancelling Theism, the term is either meaningless or useless.

Ultimately, then, we come to this: The Agnosticism that consists in a "worship of the Unknowable," or in the profession of a feeling of reverence towards the Cosmos, is upon all-fours with the religious feelings of the most hidebound believer. It is, in fact, the religious feelings, but without any of their apparent justification. Worshipping the Unknowable is more ridiculous even than worshipping Huxley's "wilderness of apes." The apes *might* take some intelligent interest in the antics of their devotees; but to print our hypostatized ignorance in capital letters, and then profess a feeling of profound veneration for it, is surely as ridiculous an object of religious veneration as the world has yet witnessed. After all, an absurdity is never quite so grotesque as when it is tricked out in scientific phrases, and paraded as the outcome of profound philosophic thinking.

And, on the other hand, the scientific Agnosticism which proceeds by a dual analysis of the God-idea and of the capabilities of human faculties is really identical with Atheism—or, rather, it *is* Atheism in its most recent phase, and armed with the newest of scientific weapons. Agnosticism, to be rational, cannot merely say, "I am without knowledge"; it must indicate what it is that it is ignorant of. This confession of ignorance is not temporary, but permanent; it is not asserted of one individual, but of all; and it is necessarily, therefore, a cancelling, or a negation, of Theistic ideas. Where, then, is the difference between scientific Agnosticism and Atheism? It is not in method, and it is certainly not in result. The only apparent reason for preferring Agnosticism to Atheism would seem to be that it is less objectionable to the general public; and this, as a matter of fact, is the reason given for its adoption by more than one person. And on this there are two comments that may be made. It may be quite true that to needlessly excite popular prejudice against an opinion is an unwise procedure, since it is with public opinion that we have to deal ultimately. But, on the other hand, it is an ill way to set to work to teach the public the value of an opinion by showing our readiness to modify it in the face of popular pressure. An unswerving consistency in the face of opposition will generally persuade the more thoughtful that there is at least a case for examination, while a readiness to give way—to seek shelter for old doctrines under a new name—will just as generally be hailed as a justification for the opposition that has been offered.

And, secondly, it is at least an open question whether one robust thinker is not worth at least a hundred timid ones. There is no want of liberal thought, of a kind, to-day; but what is needed is the liberal thought with a backbone to it, not that which is content to merely exist. To my mind it is a matter of practical certainty that one fearless thinker of the type of Charles Bradlaugh will do more to advance public opinion than a thousand who have constantly before their eyes the fear of offending someone, and whose energies are constantly employed as to the best methods of avoiding offence. To live easily, and at the same time hold advanced opinions, is a consummation devoutly to be wished; but ease of existence is paid for with a pretty high price when it is purchased by the sacrifice of one's integrity of character or independence of speech.

C. COHEN.

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

"Poor Creature!" said the Little Curate.

NOTHING astonishes me more than the shallow contempt which Christians often exhibit towards the great classical philosophers. With one of these—Aristotle—I invite the reader to keep company for a few minutes.

* * * * *

Aristotle was born, 384 B.C., at Stageira, a sea-coast town of Northern Greece. His birthplace overlooked a splendid bay, and behind it orchards rose in terraces. I mention these details because I agree with Robert Owen that the circumstances of a man's birth have a good deal to do with his character. Aristotle was bred in an environment of fresh air and fruitful gardens. In one of his philosophical works he suggests that a city-state will be quite large enough if it contains 100,000 persons; as if, beyond that limit, the people would degenerate into an unwholesome crowd. Anyhow, it is a fact that Aristotle was born in a little city, and I may just say, in passing, that our great modern philosopher, Herbert Spencer, was born at Derby, which is a comparatively small place. Aristotle became a pupil of Plato's, and heard the master's discourses in the plane-tree groves of the Academy at Athens. Plato was a dreamer, a poet, a man of imagination; Aristotle was matter-of-fact, exact, a close observer, an embodiment of common sense. Platonists and Aristotelians—we need both species of thinkers. Let us have both noble dreams and hard facts. Aristotle was for some years tutor to young Alexander—afterwards the Great. It was a remarkable coming together of characters—the great Sword and the great Brain. History has dealt justly with tutor and taught. The militarist Alexander is remembered chiefly by soldiers and schoolboys. The philosopher Aristotle is still classed among the intellectual forces of the world. The great Sword is rusted; the great Brain still exerts its influence. At the age of fifty Aristotle came to Athens and established a college—the Lyceum; and in the covered walks (*peripatoi*) he expounded the Peripatetic doctrines. On the death of Alexander he was treated with disrespect, was accused of impiety, and quitted Athens, and died soon afterwards in the sixty-third year of his age. One of the greatest thinkers of all time left the world as an exile, a fugitive from the heresy-hunters.

Aristotle thinks of God as the cause of all things, the power that moves the different parts of the universe, and as the supreme Reason which lives everywhere, and saves the world from going to ruin and confusion. But he says God has no moral qualities; that is, we may not speak of God as either good or bad; he is so far above human weakness that he has neither faults nor virtues. We may not accept this doctrine of God, but we can see that it is superior to the vulgar ideas held in the Christian world to-day. People talk of God as loving, angry, hating, sorrowing, laughing. Aristotle lifts God higher, and describes him as pure Thought. It is Aristotle's way of saying that the grandest quality of man is his capacity to think, to speculate, to reason, apart from all disturbing emotions. Aristotle's God is no figure bleeding on the cross or handling the destroying sword. His God is high and pure as starlight, and represents the masterhood of mind, logic, intellect.

A great part of his writings deals with Physics—that is, the nature of the world about us. He would have nothing to do with the absurd notion of creation—the notion that there was no world at all until God thought of it, and called it out of nothingness. He believed the universe was eternal. Also he believed the earth was a globe, and that it was motionless, standing in the centre of the cosmos with the heavenly bodies moving in grand circles around. Of course, he was wrong. When we call him great, we do not mean he was never in error. His mistakes were but the petty slips which he made in his climb towards truth. Aristotle's biology brought him into touch with Darwin. He said the soul of man in childhood differed not from the soul of the lower animals; and that was a hint at the affinities and processes which modern science groups under the conception of Evolution. It is stated that in his works on Natural History he has described five hundred different

living creatures. He displays a marvellous patience in his accounts of the organs and functions of animals, and he advanced beyond mere details; he made classifications (Vertebrate and Invertebrate, etc.), and sketched the unity and connection between the orders of the animal world. From animals he passed on to man and man's psychology. Just as he examined the construction of reptile or worm, so he carefully analysed mental activities, and especially that wondrous power of Recollection by which we call events from the dead past and make them live again. He exposed the secrets of the reason, and invented new categories, or classes, into which to divide all phenomena under the heads of Substance, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Location, etc. The three-fold cord of the Syllogism was first clearly illustrated by him. On steady, critical observation of facts he strongly insisted. Facts must be compared; the more comprehensive the sweep of observation, the better. Observation led to the realisation of the ideas of laws which give association and harmony to scattered facts.

The noblest part of his work was yet to come. We want ethics as well as physics, and men must be gentlemen as well as students. Aristotle, the man who searched more into the recesses of nature than any other man of his age, felt that his scheme of Knowledge was unfinished until he outlined the laws of human conduct. This he did in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He explains how all conduct has an aim, an end. Why do we eat, breathe, work, wrestle? Our supreme aim is happiness. Alexander Pope echoed the Aristotelian teaching:—

O happiness! our being's end and aim!
Good, pleasure, ease, content, whate'er thy name!
That something still which prompts the eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, and dare to die.

We reach happiness (the highest form of which is philosophic contemplation) by way of virtue. And how is virtue attained? By practice only. We become builders by building; harpists by harp-playing; and so also we become just by doing just actions. Aristotle, in fact, was the first sage who made a lucid explication of the doctrine of habit. He who conceives this doctrine aright will no longer accept the shallow belief in "conversion." The Christian idea of conversion resembles the mediæval Sicilian legend of a boorish peasant who drank a golden elixir, suddenly assumed the manners and speech of a gentleman, and lived at court till he died of old age. Another doctrine of Aristotle's is that of the Mean. According to this principle, Good Temper is the midway quality between excitability and sullenness, Generosity between lavishness and stinginess, and so on. In one passage of the *Ethics* Aristotle pictures the Greek gentleman—he is friendly to his equals, polite to his inferiors; he will be open, both in his enmity and his friendship; he will never toady to men or to prejudices; he will not gossip; he does not care to be praised himself nor to blame others; he would rather have what is noble than what is profitable; he is slow in his movements and speech, avoiding noise and fussiness. Aristotle closely linked ethics with politics. The very conception of morality implied a social environment. Hence, we must study man in relation to the State; and, with this view, Aristotle wrote his work on Politics. There is a saying that we should think twice before we speak once. Aristotle thought 158 times before he gave his conclusions on politics; I mean that he wrote the history of 158 different States. His political ideal included the stability of the family institution; each citizen's title to land and liability to military service; and education till the age of twenty-one for all citizens. He upheld slavery, but it was not the awful degradation of negro-slavery which was reserved for the Christian countries to realise. Certainly slavery is an abomination; but let us rid ourselves of modern industrial slavery before we howl at Aristotle.

Whatever Aristotle's faults may have been, he had the right spirit—the secular and positive spirit. All his work was a study of facts, of real life. He had a passion for knowledge. "Oh, teach me more!" he always seemed to be saying to the skies and the earth. Nor did he want knowledge for the sake of piling up learning as millionaires pile up coins. He valued it as an aid to human progress. He made all science lead up to the order and comfort of the State. He gave his

genius to the service of man. Nothing is worth calling genius unless it makes the world happier and more beautiful.

* * * * *

"Poor creature!" said the little curate.

"Who is a poor creature?" I asked.

"Aristotle."

"Why?"

"He was a Pagan; his mind groped in heathen darkness; he knew not the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"Well," thought I to myself, "of all the superlative insolences".....

F. J. GOULD.

Rationalism.

REASON THE SUPREME GUIDE TO TRUTH AND THE ONLY INFALLIBLE AUTHORITY IN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.

IT is rather remarkable that, notwithstanding the large and important part that Rationalism, or Reason, has played in the general affairs of the world, yet, as a general rule, no sooner is this term "Rationalism" mentioned than it is instantly supposed to contain a purely anti-theological and anti-Christian significance. The reason for this, however, is not very hard to find. Supernatural or dogmatic theology postulates, or asserts without proof or reason, an infallibly-inspired system of opinion concerning certain matters, as God, the soul of man, its duties and its destiny, and suchlike, and is, therefore, fixed conservative and non-progressive in its nature, whereas the sciences and all other matters of human interest confess their dependence on the experience and reason of the human intellect as these are developed in the individual and the race; and, therefore, reason, in its highest forms and latest developments, is quite at home in all secular matters, and gives rise to no unfriendly feeling; but in theology, as historically developed, it is the proverbial bull in the china-shop, and creates havoc all round. And thus it comes to be that Rationalism has such an anti-theological ring about it.

But, notwithstanding this hatred of the theologians to Rationalism, its universal importance can no longer be ignored by them, for the leaders of the world are all Rationalists now, and any system of theology which is not rational cannot command their assent or support. If the orthodox theologians could only fall in love—an honest love—with reason for a little while, and give it the same place in their theology that they do in other matters, they would soon see how foolish they are in claiming an infallible revelation, and that theology, if it is to have an existence at all, in any form, must be scientific; and, when it can be this, religion need no longer be the foe of Rationalism, but rather its warmest friend.

But what is Rationalism?

Well now, strange as it may seem, in its historical significance Rationalism, instead of being anti-Christian, was meant to be pro-Christian. It seems the term "Rationalism" was first used in the middle of last century by certain German divines, who, in their contests with the Deists and Naturalists of that time, endeavored to show that Christianity, rightly understood in its history and teaching, was in harmony with reason, had the support of reason, and was rational; and so they were called Rationalists, and their interpretation of Christianity Rationalism. But, as we have already observed, Rationalism is altogether incompatible with supernatural theology, Christianity included. This these German divines soon discovered, and they proved to themselves, what was already known to the Deists and Naturalists, that, while a man could be a Christian or a Rationalist, he could not be both at one and the same time. Thus, instead of being the champions of Christianity, those well-meaning divines were regarded, by friend and foe alike, as being its most dangerous enemies. This, since that time, has been the fate of all those Christian leaders in any branch of the Christian Church, in any part of the Christian world, who have made any attempt to rationalise Christianity and make it believable to earnest, rational-minded men and women. So much, then, for the

historical significance of the word "Rationalism." What we have now to do is to discover its derivative sources, and its general, and not merely its anti-Christian or anti-supernatural, significance; though we hope to have something to say on the latter aspect of our subject before we are through, for the bearing of Rationalism on theologies of old kinds is as of much importance to the world as is its bearing on any other matter. Theology has had, and probably will continue to have, in some form or another, a powerful influence on human action; and, therefore, it is necessary that Rationalism should exercise its guiding power in matters theological, so that the influence of theology may be for good and not for evil, may be shaped in such material and applied to such ends that it will have the support of reason, and not be eternally antagonistic to it.

What, then, is the scientific and philosophical meaning of Rationalism? It is simply the application of reason to the investigation and solution of any, or of all, the problems of life. And what is reason? What is the nature and function of reason? What is the place and authority of reason? And what part has reason played in the progress and history of the individual and the race? We do not, of course, think we will be able to give a complete answer to these questions, but we hope to be able to make at least such answers as will be true, stimulating, and suggestive.

First of all, then, what is the nature and function of reason? Reason has been defined as "a faculty of the mind by which it distinguishes truth from falsehood and good from evil, and which enables the possessor to deduce inferences from facts or from propositions." To our mind, this seems to be a very good definition of reason, and gives a very high nature and use to it. But we must remember that, while reason is the highest faculty of the intellect, it is not an independent faculty, but needs the normal activity of the general bodily functions, and of the external senses and perceptive faculties acting upon their respective objects, as conditions precedent to its ability to rightly perform its highest function of separating truth from falsehood and good from evil. Reason may "deduce inferences from facts or from propositions." In the former case, if it is acting rightly, its dictator must be true; in the latter case, its dictator may be true, and will be so if the propositions themselves are true; but, if the propositions are false, then, no matter how logical or correct our reasoning may be, our conclusions must be fallacious. This shows the importance of being sure of our facts before we go ahead with our reasoning; and it shows that reason, *per se*, is not everything—its data must be correct. Just in the same way, no matter how good an arithmetician you are, and no matter how correctly you may sum up a column of figures, if you have made false entries into it, your account must be false. But that is no reason why you should decry the intellectual power of numeration, and shout Carnal arithmetics! carnal arithmetician! The lesson should rather be, Be sure of your entries, and then go ahead with your calculations. So with reason: be sure of your facts, and then go ahead with your reasoning, and do not attempt to reason without them if your object is to find the truth.

The nature of reason is to infer, to deduce, to interpret fact. It does not, of itself, create or discover fact; fact must be proved by our own perception or the perception of valid witnesses. But we may reason in a world of fancy, or gratuitous supposition, as well as in the world of fact. When we do so, our conclusions can be nothing else than fanciful, seeing they have no causal connection with fact. We do not object to Calvinism so much on the ground of the lack of reasoning capacity evinced by it, or its want of logic. We rather admire Calvin as a logician. What we do object to is his utter contempt of natural fact, and his adherence to propositions, and his reasoning on propositions, which have never been proved true, and which are now proved to be absolutely false. He reasoned in a world of fancies, and his conclusions are of necessity fanciful. That reason must have fact for its basis, and in giving a final judgment on any matter it must have all the facts involved in the case, is illustrated by the process of adjudicating upon any question in dispute, and by the anxiety of the parties concerned to do what they can to suppress the facts which their reason suggests will go against their side. In this process of adjudicating, the weight or balance

of evidence may shift a hundred times, and be now on this side, and then on that. It is only when all the evidence is in that a final judgment can be given, and until then the judge must be agnostic, for without all the facts he can form no authoritative and final judgment, no matter how good a reasoner he may be, and no matter how just a judge. He may have tentative judgments, shifting from one side to the other as the weight of evidence shifts, but he knows they are tentative, and they do not affect the soundness of his final judgment when all the facts are placed before him. This is a very laborious exercise of perceptive intellect and reason; but there is no other way of reaching a true decision, and no person's opinion in any matter is of any value unless he has been able, and willing, to undergo the necessary intellectual labor involved in forming it. Many of our orthodox friends, or rather friends who think they are orthodox, shun this labor as the devil is said to shun holy water. They remind us of an old American judge out West, when the administration of justice in that part of the world was more rough-and-tumble than it is even to-day. He had been hearing a case tried before him, and, after listening to the evidence of one of the parties, was on the point of giving his decision, when the counsel for the other party intervened, and told him he had still to hear the evidence from his side. "But," said the judge, "if I wait to hear anything from you, I won't know what judgment to give; whereas, if I give my judgment at present, what that will be is as plain as a pikestaff."

I think you will all admit that this judge, while he showed considerable shrewdness in avoiding intellectual labor, was hardly a Solomon, and that the temple of justice could never be reared by him. Yet such a frame of mind is too common.

Many people, though they won't take the trouble to think, and to find out all the facts necessary to correct thinking, will yet have opinions, and dogmatise about them as if they had been the results of a life's study. Such conduct and presumption we repudiate as being inconsistent with the nature and function of reason, and unjust to those who have acted in harmony with it; and we repudiate it as much, indeed more so, when the person guilty of it is dressed in a tall silk hat and a suit of solemn black, as when he is clothed in a muldoon cap and a suit of dongaree.

J. MACDOUGALL.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

CHRISTIAN scientists say they have not been affected by the heat in New York; indeed, they say it is a delusion. When you have faith enough you can be as hot or cold as you please. Evidently it won't make any difference to these people whether their ultimate destination is heaven or hell.

Recently that episcopal flunkey, the Bishop of Peterborough, in his annual charge to the clergy of Northampton, expressed a hope that incense would be used at the Coronation of Edward VII. This has aroused so much adverse comment that the Right Rev. Father-in-God has judged it expedient to state that his remarks must not be taken as "either official or semi-official." Many people will think that incense is not the only sacerdotal feature that might be dispensed with on the occasion alluded to.

Some little time ago the *Lancet* and other medical journals created a mild sensation by pointing out the dangers attendant upon the sipping of wine by communicants, one after another, from the same cup at the celebration of Holy Communion. The loving "brethren in Christ" have taken alarm, and the superior sort have adopted the plan of individual Communion-glasses. But this is not enough. An ingenious person has applied himself to the designing of an apparatus for filling the cups from the bottles in which the wine is stored. It is worth while describing this invention, because it shows what devices the faithful will resort to rather than "trust in the Lord," even in connection with this most solemn rite of the Church, said to have been instituted by Christ himself.

The contrivance to assist in preserving communicants from possible harm is thus described by the inventor: "A long tube suspended over the glasses is provided with a series of small spouts on the under side, and a handle is fixed midway between the ends of the tube for use in steadying the filler. The tube is connected with the wine-bottle through the medium of a flexible tube, and half-way between the filler

and the reservoir is a small suction bulb, which draws the wine and discharges it into the glasses, there being no pressure needed, or other complicated mechanism, to get out of order."

Fancy the Apostles with such a "controption" on the table of the Lord's Supper!

Mr. Frank T. Bullen, the sea-story writer, relates an amusing incident in the course of his sailor life. On one occasion a clergyman was rescued from a shipwreck, and, when safe on land, he inquired: "Did I really appear scared when we thought all would be lost?" "I can't say that you were scared," replied a sturdy Jack Tar, "but for a man who has been trying to get to heaven all these years you appeared most reluctant to accept the opportunity."

A Sunday-school superintendent, who happened to be a draper, and who was teaching a class of very little tots, asked, when he had finished explaining the lesson: "Now, has anyone a question to ask?" A very small girl raised her hand. "What is it, Martha?" asked the superintendent. "Why, Mr. Brooks, how much are those little red parasols in your window?" asked Martha.

A Caledonian preacher, observing a well-known member of his congregation asleep during the sermon, turned towards the offender and said: "James Stewart, this is the second time I have stopped to waken ye. If I need to stop a third time, I'll expose ye by name to the whole congregation."

Dr. Armstrong Black, of Toronto, criticising Dr. George Adam Smith's book on *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, observes that the Church "feels that the hour may be near when the New will need the Old Testament as much as the Old the New, if anything authoritative is to be left her at all."

The Rev. E. Flecker, M.A., in his *New Translation of Isaiah* with explanatory notes, says it must be confessed that there is no certainty that the last twenty-seven chapters belong to Isaiah. The way in which this latest of commentators reads meanings into the text may be inferred from his notion that Isaiah "intended to devote himself to the practice of medicine," because in chapter vi. 10 "he mentions fatty hearts."

In one of the recent thunderstorms the tower of Wilton Church, Taunton, was struck by lightning. This sort of occurrence shows the Divine impartiality. He doesn't favor even his own conventicles.

A number of stories are told of the new Bishop of London, which are more or less genuine. The *Christian Age* publishes one which is clearly false, as told of Dr. Ingram. It says: "One day the Bishop was in his beloved East-end." By the way, he seems to have traded pretty well on that East-end stepping-stone. Wouldn't it be well for him to give it a rest? Here, however, is the *Christian Age* story: "He noticed a dirty little urchin playing beside the gutter. 'Hallo, my little man,' said the Bishop, who is a great lover of children, 'what are you doing there?' 'Making a kerfreedral,' was the reply. 'A cathedral,' exclaimed his lordship, 'but where's the bishop?' Dr. Ingram's sense of humor, always keen, was quite overcome when the small boy answered, 'Please, sir, I ain't got dirt enough to make a bishop!'"

Of course, this story is a grey-bearded chestnut—current when the Bishop was in nickers. The references to "his beloved East-end," his being "a great lover of children," and his "sense of humor, always keen," are *Christian Age* embellishments.

We talked of Philpotts, the Bishop of Exeter (says Sir M. E. Grant Duff in his *Diary*), and Coleridge mentioned that his reputation for saying sharp things began early. One of the guests at an undergraduate's party in Oxford sang a song much out of tune. Then Philpotts was called upon, but he declared that he had not a note in his voice. "If you can't sing, you must make a speech or tell a story," said his friends. "If I am to tell a story," replied the bishop, "I think I should say that I should like to hear — sing that song again."

A collector of Bombay has among his curiosities a Chinese god marked "Heathen Idol," and next to it is a gold piece marked "Christian Idol."

In the recent sultry weather the standing motto of the Evangelical journal, the *News*, reads rather funnily: "A nation which finds its happiness by its own fireside."

The women of Chili and Kansas are prepared to make sacrifices for their religion. In the former land, which is famous for lovely girls and their most beautiful eyes, the people are great church-goers, the women doing most of the praying. Wherever a woman or a girl goes to church

she wears a black crape shawl over her head. This is said to be done to make all equal in church, and there is no looking around to see who has a new bonnet. Their sisters in Kansas, moreover, subdue vanity to the extent that in many towns all headgear is removed as soon as the wearers are seated in church.

Could a more perfect example of self-abasement be imagined, short of the scourge? The plan, however, would hardly work in this country, for if there were no display of headgear—no chance of exciting the envy of others—the feminine attendance, we can be quite sure, would very soon fall off.

Rev. R. A. James, Baptist minister at Llandaff, charged his nephew the other day with stealing a teatray of the value of 2s. The chairman, after hearing the prosecutor, said he thought the whole thing was rubbish, and the sooner the case was ended the better. Eventually the Bench intimated that they had heard enough, and dismissed the charge, which, the chairman added, ought never to have been brought. Rev. R. A. James may now ponder over the injunction: "If a man would have thy coat, give him thy cloak also." Instead of prosecuting his nephew over the tray, he should have made him a present of a tea-service to use in connection with it.

A prayer-book, dated 1707, which belonged to Queen Anne, has recently been sold for £30. It contains the form "At the Healing," or, as it is more generally known, the ceremony of touching for King's Evil. That ceremony is now an exploded superstition, but it is not more absurd than the Christian Science craze, or sillier than the prayers for rain and fine weather which are still retained in the prayer-book.

In the height of a storm, the other Sunday, the old Tithe Barn on the glebe land in the vicinity of the parish church of Kingston, Isle of Wight (where divine service was going on), was struck by lightning and totally destroyed. Dissenters should perceive in this the finger of God.

What the *Rock* correctly describes as "the usual farce of hearing objections and then ignoring them" took place the other day, when the appointment of the new Bishop of Oxford was confirmed. Where is the use of continuing these absurd formalities?

The *Church Times*, in its superior way, talks of "a familiar type of amateur upper middle-class Agnostics." We suppose the sting in this is the term "amateur." Well, we can't all be professionals. But are there not any amateur Christians?

In a recently-published history of the Society of Friends allusion is made to the steadfast adherence of members of that persuasion to the injunction of Christ, "Swear not at all." It is mentioned that during more than two centuries no Quaker, either in this country or the United States, has been convicted of perjury on affirmation. This cannot be said in regard to some other Christian Churches, whose members have no hesitation in "kissing the book."

We hardly expected that the *Church Times*—of all religious papers—would fall foul of the vicar of Gorleston's invitation to Mrs. Brown Potter to give a dramatic recital in his church. The *C. T.* refers to it as the "Gorleston frivolities," and talks about the "incongruity" in introducing dramatic features in a church service. But is not that exactly the distinguishing characteristic of church services of a Ritualistic type? Are not these services intensely and elaborately theatrical?

A London lady writes to the *Christian Science Journal* stating that she had suffered for years from astigmatism. "As soon as I realised that Christian Science was the truth I went to a healer to be treated, and after the first treatment I was able to read the Bible and *Science and Health* without my glasses, but if I tried to read anything else my eyes ached."

It is the concluding words of this statement which will naturally excite the most astonishment. Did she try to read something else of equally clear type as these two sacred volumes and try to read it first, before her eyes were tired with other reading? Or are we to suppose that there was something specially miraculous about the power to read these two books only? Christian Science, it would seem, bids fair to fill lunatic asylums as well as graves.

The following is rather good as proceeding from the *Church Times*: "It should be noted that the spirit of intolerance is not confined to Romanists; we have plenty of it in England to-day; and, wherever certain forms of Dissent get the upper hand, we find traces of the same spirit at work. The truth is that men with strong convictions on religion are not content to let the truth, as they conceive it, have its way; they must needs resort to unspiritual weapons.....We are opposed to any and every system which imposes belief by secular aids."

Someone writes in a fine frenzy to the *English Churchman* on that dreadful book, *Creed and Life*, by the Rev. C. E.

Beeby, vicar of Yardley Wood, near Birmingham. He quotes some of Mr. Beeby's propositions, as, for instance, "That Jesus is God is a proposition which involves an absurdity" (p. 23); "the language of the so-called Athanasian Creed is utter nonsense" (p. 24); "to say our Lord was born of a virgin is nonsense" (p. 35); "belief in his miraculous birth was the parallel to the legend of miraculous virgins in the mythologies of Asia" (p. 39); "the doctrine of the Atonement has no *rationale*, and the whole system of Latin Christianity falls down like a house of cards" (p. 48); and so on, with the story of the resurrection and the credibility of the alleged witnesses.

"The fact," says the writer in the *English Churchman*, "that a large body of well-known infidels pose in the Church as bishops and clergymen has at length enabled the Jesuits to hold England up to execration upon the Continent as the sole cause of the present spread of impiety, and to say that, unless they (the Jesuits) are speedily enabled to re-establish the Inquisition here, all Christianity will be jeopardised."

The reading of the Burial Service over the remains of Robert Buchanan seems to have struck more than one of the poet's friends as an absurd incongruity. Coulson Kernahan took objection to it in the *Sunday Sun* of the other week. Now Mr. A. Stodart Walker writes to that paper observing that "the whole ceremony might have been the prompter of ridicule." Mr. Walker, however, dissents from the belief of Mr. Henry Murray that, had Buchanan lived much longer, he would have become an Atheist. Still, he quotes the following lines of the dead poet:—

The creeds I cast away
Like husks of garner'd grain,
And of them all this day
Does never a creed remain.

The tender care of the Lord for his servants is truly marvellous. A New York paper publishes the following news item from Idaho:—Shortly after midnight, May 28, a fire broke out in the residence of Rev. I. T. Osborn, two miles north of Halley, resulting in the death of Mrs. Osborn and her young son. Mrs. Osborn's life was lost in an effort to save her boy, the burning roof crashing down upon them as she tried to escape with the child. The charred remains were discovered next morning. Mr. Osborn was in Shoshone, where he conducted religious services.

Orthodoxy is assuredly on the decline in Scotland. According to William Wallace, in the *Fortnightly Review*, all the Scottish churches are becoming alarmed at the appalling reduction in the number of young men who are seeking admission into the ministry. In the Church of Scotland alone the number of students of divinity has fallen in twenty years from 245 to 108. No doubt the greater material attractions of other professions in a country so wealthy as Scotland now accounts to some extent for this reduction; but the main cause, unquestionably, is the growing disinclination on the part of the abler young men at the Universities to enter into engagements which would bind them for life to preach what they regard as "a creed outworn."

A negro preacher, charged with criminal assault, was recently lynched in North Carolina. He was the Rev. D. H. Jones, of La Grange, and his accuser Mrs. Noah Davis.

The Rev. Clarence Young, an Evangelist, was convicted of bigamy in Newark, New Jersey (June 19). He married a woman in New York, and another in New Jersey last autumn.

Lay Preacher John Thompson Hall, of the Episcopal Church, was arrested in East Orange, New Jersey, at the instance of Sir Percy Sanderson, the British Consul-General, on a larceny charge.

The Rev. Charles G. Adams, an Episcopal minister, formerly of New York, shot and killed Dr. John G. Jessup, a dentist, in Berkeley, Cal. (June 18). The Rev. Adams was beating his daughter, who appealed to Dr. Jessup for protection. On being told he must cease abusing his family, Adams fired at Jessup, who died the next day.

The sexton of Wickham Parish Church, near Gateshead-on-Tyne, committed suicide the other day by hanging himself in the fire-hole of the church. The poor man might have selected some other place for the termination of his earthly existence, but perhaps he thought there was some ecclesiastical fitness in passing from one fire-hole to another.

One often hears of the calm, peaceful influence of religion. Three sisters living in 127th-street, New York, recently found Christ, and were seized with religious frenzy. Threatening to do violence to themselves and others, they were removed to the Bellevue Hospital.

"I am Elijah," says old Dowie. One difference, however, has suggested itself. Whereas Elijah is said to have been fed by ravens, there is no doubt that Dowie is fed by gulls.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 14, at 6.30, Freethought Demonstration at Brockwell Park.

To Correspondents.

ARTICLES by F. Ryan and "Mimnermus" have, unfortunately, to be held over till next week from want of space.

E. PAINTER.—Miss Vance handed us your kind donation, which shall be used as you intended.

W. HEAFORD.—Pleased to hear from you on your travels. Hope you conveyed our best regards to the Belgian Freethinkers.

ESS JAY BEE.—Thanks. In our next.

J. CROMPTON.—Acknowledgment sent by post as desired. Many thanks. You will probably look out for the sequel in this week's *Freethinker*.

J. G. BARTRAM (Newcastle) writes: "I was very sorry to read of your trouble. I have spoken to many friends here, and I can assure you that you have the genuine sympathy of all."

J. PARTRIDGE.—Just like you. There is no worker in the movement for whom we have greater respect.

E. OSBOURNE JONES.—Much pleased to hear from a recent young recruit. Your suggestion is a good one, but we could not find time to carry it into effect in the present emergency. You will see what we are doing, and it will doubtless meet with your approval.

GEORGE JACOB.—With regard to that old public-house sale for a colossal sum, we told you at the time that we took the figures from a London newspaper—the *Echo*, if we recollect rightly at such a distance in time. As you would "like now to hear what Mr. Anderson has to say," we beg to inform you that you will find a letter from him in the midst of our this week's "Personal." We agree with you that "man is a queer animal to deal with," and those who give advice freely are often the queerest.

MRS. WATMOUGH, newsagent, Newgate-street, Newcastle-on-Tyne—a most central position—always keeps a good supply of the *Freethinker*. She also stocks the new *Age of Reason* and other works issued by the Freethought Publishing Company.

J. E. C. NAEWIGER.—Let us hope things will improve from a propagandist point of view in Hull, and that our own forthcoming visit to the city will prove "a veritable Pentecost"—as you put it.

E. CHAPMAN writes: "South Shields friends are surprised and grieved to hear of your financial difficulties, and trust some way out will be found immediately. You have our sympathy and confidence. If any general subscription is started, South Shields will be more than willing to bear its share in the honor of assisting you in upholding Freethought."

G. H. McCLUSKEY (Devonport), in the course of a long and encouraging letter, thinks that Mr. Foote, in any other walk of life, would have earned a very handsome income, and that it is a shame he should be forced to make such a statement as that in last week's "Very Personal." "I hope hundreds will do a little," this correspondent says, "to lessen the worry that must be wearing you out. The wonder to me is that you get through so much work under such trying conditions."

W. G. GILES sends us the following resolution that was carried unanimously by the West Ham Branch: "That we, the members of this Branch, having read and considered the statement made by Mr. Foote in the current number of the *Freethinker*, wish to assure him that he has our heartiest sympathy in respect to the unwarrantable and cruel attack made upon him by Mr. G. Anderson, and we pledge ourselves to stand by the President of the N. S. S. in the crisis through which he is passing."

J. A. B.—Glad to have your letter. It is the more valuable from one who has watched our statements in the *Freethinker* all along. You will see that our discovery of documents is of the highest importance from a personal and party point of view. The contribution you refer to has been in type waiting for the suitable space.

THE FUND FOR MRS. FOOTE.—J. Crompton, £1 10s.; E. Painter, £4; J. H. R., 10s.; J. P., 10s.; G. F. H. McCluskey, £1 1s.; Annie W. Huty, 10s.; W. Tipper, 5s.; W. H. Spivey, 5s.; Mrs. Brown, 5s.

B. STEVENS.—Thanks for your supplying the omission. Would it not be better, though, if you replied to Mr. Cohen when he has finished? But you must try to be a little serious.

F. SCHALLER.—Sorry to hear of your illness, and hope you are better.

SEVERAL "private" letters have reached us, which we are not at liberty to refer to in this week's *Freethinker*, though we may in the next.

JOHN BLAND, who has often subscribed to Funds in the *Freethinker*, though not under his own name, as he was in the police force, replies to Mr. Anderson's attack by sending £1 for a share in the Freethought Publishing Company, and 2s. 6d. for a year's subscription to the N. S. S. This is all he could scrape together at the moment, but he says that if an appeal to the party is made he will send 10s., even if he has to deny himself something in order to do it.

W. H. SPIVEY reminds us of the old motto, "Save me from my friends." But he hopes there are a good many left of the sort not contemplated in the motto.

G. DIXON.—It would be well, as you say, to avoid bankruptcy, but Mr. Anderson has pressed on by every means of summary jurisdiction, and has refused to fulfil his own private and public pledge. We are obliged to you for your promise to do your very best. What can be done towards clearing away the whole difficulty will depend upon the resources that are placed at Mrs. Foote's disposal.

M. DYE.—No doubt we have some "real friends," and we reckon you as one, though you have to regret that your sympathy cannot take a sufficiently substantial form.

A. E. E.—We appreciate your letter, but we hold it over, as we have no room for correspondence on the subject this week except in this column. Perhaps there will be others to keep yours company next week.

DR. R. PARK.—Received with thanks. Shall appear.

W. TIPPER.—Yes, the ways of men are often odd. Thanks.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Chicago Sunday Herald—Newcastle Leader—People's Newspaper (Queensland)—Liberator (Melbourne)—Boston Investigator—La Raison—Secular Thought (Toronto)—Freidenker—Blue Grass Blade—Public Opinion (New York)—Buddhist Tracts (Burma)—La Réforme.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Still Very Personal.

WITH A LETTER FROM MR. ANDERSON.

AFTER last week's *Freethinker* left my hands I made a most important discovery of documents in the case between Mr. George Anderson and myself. To explain their character it is necessary to go back a little. I have said all along, and I repeated it under examination before Mr. Registrar Hope, that Mr. Anderson assisted me in drafting the preliminary circular with regard to the Freethought Publishing Company. What I asserted was that I wrote a first draft and submitted it to him; that he did not quite like it, and that he wrote with his own hand another draft which he thought an improvement upon mine; that I then wrote a final draft on considerably different lines, though keeping to the main features of the project; that this draft was printed and sent out by post as an appeal to Freethinkers, and that one of these circulars was forwarded to Mr. Anderson. He, on his part, affirmed that he did not believe he ever saw the printed circular, though he might have done so, and he certainly did not repudiate it as it affected himself; but he had nothing to do with its drafting, and he never in any way authorised me to commit him to a promise of taking five hundred or any other number of Shares.

Now the documents I have discovered prove that I was entirely right, and that Mr. Anderson was entirely wrong, for they are the very documents which I referred to in my evidence. I thought I had destroyed them, as there would be no particular reason at the time for keeping them. But, as luck would have it, I did keep them. I found them, quite accidentally, on looking into a packet of papers which I thought related exclusively to the affairs of the late J. M. Wheeler. How they got there puzzles me; but there they were, and that is the only point worth talking about.

Document Number One.—This is my first draft of the preliminary circular. That it passed through Mr. Anderson's hands is proved by his own handwriting.

These words occur towards the end—the “I” in them being myself:—

“Before referring to this matter in the *Freethinker* I desire to ascertain, by means of this circular, how much support I can count upon from a certain number of sympathisers. The anonymous friend I have referred to is ready to invest two, three, or even five hundred pounds in the project, according to circumstances. Mr. George Anderson, whose name is so well known to the Secular party, is also ready to invest —.”

I stopped at the word “invest,” and left the rest of that line, and the whole of the next line, blank. Mr. Anderson himself filled up the vacant space with these words—“Five hundred pounds, should the number of Shares subscribed be sufficient.”

These very words, without the slightest alteration, were adopted by me in the final draft. So that, when I informed “The Friends of Freethought” that Mr. George Anderson was ready to invest five hundred pounds, should the number of Shares subscribed be sufficient, I was using his own phraseology.

That first draft, by the way, bears my signature, and is dated June 1, 1899—the final printed circular being dated June 19.

Document Number Two.—This is Mr. Anderson’s draft, submitted by him as a substitute for mine. It is written in his own hand throughout—in pencil, and fills five folios of the size of ordinary note-paper. The fourth folio opens thus:—

“I have mentioned this matter privately to a few friends, and have promised for about 1,000 Shares.”

Mr. Anderson wrote that with his own hand for me to say to the Freethought party. The “few friends” were himself and the anonymous supporter, for I had not mentioned the matter to any other person; and the 1,000 Shares were, of course, made up by adding the two five hundreds together.

Fortunately, I did not adopt Mr. Anderson’s language in my printed circular. I preferred something more definite. Mr. Anderson may have acted on his instincts, and I acted on mine; and it is very lucky that I did so.

Document Number Three.—This is vastly important. It is one of the two printer’s proofs of my final circular. One I revised and returned to the printer. The other I must have posted on to Mr. Anderson. “Unnecessary work,” in the second paragraph, was altered to “undue labor,” and this correction was made in Mr. Anderson’s copy too; in order, no doubt, that he might have the precise document I intended to circulate. At the end there was a “Form of Reply.” This he must have filled in and returned to me immediately. But, instead of putting it with the other replies, I must have placed it aside with Documents One and Two. All along I have had a vague idea that Mr. Anderson did sign *something*, but I could not recollect what it was, and I thought it best to hold my tongue on the subject.

The “Form of Reply” may be remembered by Freethinkers who received my circular, but I print it in full again for the sake of others:—

FORM OF REPLY.

I.....hereby undertake to subscribe for..... Shares in the proposed Limited Liability Company to acquire and carry on the *Freethinker* and its associated publishing business, on condition that the whole 5,000 Shares, or a reasonable number, are subscribed for, and that not more than 10s. per Share will be called up in 1899.

Signature.....
Address

Mr. Anderson filled in this “Form of Reply” with his own hand. His solicitors do not deny his handwriting; indeed, it is unmistakable. “George Anderson” is written twice—first after “I,” and secondly after “Signature.” His address follows—“35A Great George-street, Westminster, S.W.” And now for the number of Shares written in the second blank space. He did not write 500. Either his memory was bad, or he was whittling down his promise. What he wrote was “Three Hundred.” Not in figures, but in letters, as here printed; so that it will not do to say that there was a slip of the pen, and that he meant “Thirty”—as his counsel insinuated before the Registrar.

These three Documents, so wonderfully preserved, and so luckily discovered, prove who told the truth

about these promised Shares. Mr. Anderson has called me a “liar”—as well as worse things—in the presence of persons I need not name, because I had said, and affirmed in an affidavit, that he had promised to take Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company. He denied to them, as he denied through his solicitors, that he had ever promised to take any Shares at all. “Show me my writing!” he said—relying on the fact that I had not been able to produce it. There was the publication of his promise in the preliminary printed circular, and during ten consecutive weeks in the *Freethinker*. But he pooh-poohed all that, and declared he was not responsible for it. Only one thing would convince him that he had given a promise. “Show me my writing,” he said, “and I give in.” Well now, I have produced his writing. But does he give in? Nothing of the kind? He still stands like Shylock for his pound of flesh. And there is no judge to tell him that he must now draw his victim’s life-blood in cutting it out—“nearest his heart.”

Mr. Anderson’s action turns his mistakes into falsehoods. He stands by them in spite of the clearest evidence. He takes the position that he will not be responsible for a moral obligation. He will only do what the law enforces. Practically he asks, as Shylock did, “Is it so nominated in the bond?”

What a position for a rich man! What an attitude for one who has spent a lot of money in advertising his readiness to give £15,000! What a spirit for the founder of a Freethought Institute!

When I found the Three Documents aforesaid, I hurried with them to my solicitors, and we made an immediate application for the rehearing of the petition for a receiving order. Mr. Registrar Hope fixed the following Monday morning for the rehearing. In the interim the Three Documents were shown to Mr. Anderson’s solicitors, and copies were supplied to them, on their own demand. It is to be presumed that they communicated with their client, and received his instructions how to proceed on the Monday. I cannot possibly suppose that he is ignorant of my discovery. I have to assume that he is aware of the fact that his own handwriting is in evidence—at least in moral evidence—against him.

Mr. Anderson might have taken an honorable and a dignified course. He might have admitted that I was right as to the promised Shares. He might have protested that his own error was due to an infirmity of memory. He might have intimated his intention to apply for 500, or at least 300, Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company. He might have offered me reparation by cancelling the debt for which he is pursuing me. He might, at any rate, have agreed to receive it from me in reasonable instalments.

That is what he *might* have done. What he *did* do was very different. When the Monday morning came round, his solicitor and counsel attended to press his technical advantage to the uttermost. The plea set up was that there was nothing *legal* in Mr. Anderson’s promises. And on this miserable plea, larded with libellous sneers and misrepresentations, which I had no means of answering *there*, they secured the dismissal of my application.

I make no complaint as far as the Registrar is concerned. He has to administer what he conceives to be the law, and I do not presume to teach him his business. But law and equity are not always identical. Nor are legal decisions always correct. They are sometimes reversed on appeal. And I have a right of appeal in this case. Whether I shall avail myself of it is a question I must decide before next Monday. I am advised that it is worth doing, on condition it is done well, but not otherwise. Mr. Anderson has plenty of money. It will not hurt him to employ a first-rate counsel. And a second-rate counsel would be of little use in opposition to one of the “big guns” of the profession, for the weight of counsel always tells, even with the best judges and the fairest juries. I should have to deposit £20 in court straight away, and another £50 or £60 would be required to fight to a finish.

Meanwhile I have to report that Mr. Anderson has addressed a letter to the *Freethinker*, which he evidently thought I should hesitate to insert. But I have no such hesitation. I am very glad that I have provoked him into saying something. When he began pursuing me,

I wrote suggesting that he should see me, and he replied, on the back of my letter, that he suggested I should see his solicitors. I wrote him another letter, pointing out that his interests, whatever they were, could not possibly be prejudiced by a private interview, and that the interests of the Freethought movement might possibly be subserved. To that letter he vouchsafed no reply. He speaks now, however, and through his own mouth, not through the mouth of his solicitor. And this is what he says:—

ANDERSON AND FOOTE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I see in your last issue that you have allowed Mr. Foote to occupy about five columns of your paper in an effort to vilify me.

If I were to tell the story in my way, I could put it in a strong opposite light, proving that I had not altered during these ten years in my efforts to assist by money him and the cause.

It was the change that I lately found in him that determined me to bring an action at law. And as I heard him state in his evidence on the 29th ult. that he had received the whole of the £1,000 for which he sold his business, and that he had also sold the whole of the Deferred Shares £1,000 at a loss, if I heard aright, of some £200, he should now be in a position to resume to me payments in part if not in whole of his debt to me, but which he had suddenly stopped during the latter month or two of last year, without giving me a reason why he had done so, and at the only time during ten years that I thought he was better able to make me payment of any considerable amount.

I have been for years and am yet sorry for him. I have always thought that as President of the N. S. S. he should have remuneration as President, and I addressed the Society with that view and sent my subscription, but I believe nothing came of it.

When I see the strides made by the "Salvation Army" in a few years and the apathy in the N. S. S., I say "there is something rotten" in our management.

It seems to me that we are fonder in quarrelling among ourselves than in assisting the movement, and improving our race.

Should you publish this letter next week, I desire to not have any more to say on the subject. Should you not, I may feel it desirable to circularise the Branches with a detailed statement of my money transactions with Mr. Foote, that they may know both sides and then judge.

I am, &c.,

GEORGE ANDERSON.

London, 5th July, 1901.

Now I ask my readers to note something very significant. Mr. Anderson does not venture to contradict a single statement of fact in the whole of my address to them in last week's *Freethinker*. He merely says that he could tell the story in a different way; which, after the episode of the promised 500 Shares, I am quite prepared to believe. His assertion that I tried to "vilify" him is sheer nonsense. I wrote with studied self-restraint, carefully avoided epithets, and tried to let the facts, in chronological order, speak for themselves. Moreover, I submitted the proof to my solicitors before publication. If the facts "vilify" Mr. Anderson, I cannot help it; that is his affair, and not mine.

Mr. Anderson says he noticed a change in me. Well, there was *one* change. I turned fool for once, and paid him two sums of £50 each, without taking precautions against his pocketing the money instead of purchasing Shares with it in the Freethought Publishing Company. Had I *not* paid him that money, he could not have sued me at all, for his debt was barred by the Statute of Limitations; and if I had taken a receipt for the money, its terms would have provided against the possibility of this. I should have got him to fill in an Application Form for Shares, and then have paid for them on his behalf. But, I repeat, I was a fool for once. I trusted Mr. Anderson too implicitly. And I apologise for it to all who have an interest in my good judgment.

The reference to my Deferred Shares is very disingenuous. Mr. Anderson says I have sold them, but he does not say that he was after them. His solicitors tried to get them into their possession as "security." But they had no commercial value at the time, and I declined to place them under the control of an enemy of mine, who had also proved himself no friend to the Company. They carried no dividend, but they carried voting power. I therefore resolved to place them in

friendly hands. I did not sell them for £800, as Mr. Anderson suggests, but for £200; and the purchaser only bought them to assist me and the Company at a moment of danger. The market value of that 1,000 Deferred Shares was just nothing; and they were made so chiefly by Mr. Anderson's failure to keep his promise, thus depriving a small Company of £500 of working capital.

It would have been honest on Mr. Anderson's part to refer to the use I tried to make of that £200. I offered it all to him—every penny of it—on condition that he took the Shares he had promised to take. He declined the offer, and declared that he had never promised to take any Shares. What was I to do then? Pay the money over to Mr. Anderson unconditionally, and leave him still pursuing me for £167 interest, with the chance of his getting a judgment against me for that, and making me bankrupt in default of payment? No, no; I was not foolish enough to do that. I used the money in other ways, and none of them discreditable. For instance, I bought a number of Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company; and thus, to some extent, atoned for the loss occasioned by Mr. Anderson's desertion.

I must further observe that Mr. Anderson's pursuit of me had really nothing to do with the sale of those Deferred Shares. He overlooks the chronology. He set his solicitors at me in November, they were in the full tide of litigation in January, and my Shares were not sold till March.

Can it be that he wanted to get hold of those Shares very badly, in order to wreck the Company, or to work against my position in it, or for *another reason*, which I will not indicate at present, although I may *have* to before the end?

Mr. Anderson is *technically* right in stating that I received the £1,000 for which I sold my business; but he knows very well, unless his solicitors give him no information, that far from all of it passed through my hands. He knows that one creditor alone had nearly £400 of it. Mr. Anderson received £100 from me direct, and I would have strained myself to find him more if he had not betrayed me in the matter of his Shares.

With regard to the "something rotten" in our movement, I beg to say that conduct like Mr. Anderson's is one of the worst forms of rottenness. Moreover, I wish to point out that Mr. Anderson's actual contributions—apart from contingent promises—have not of late years been anything like what he would have been expected to give, and would probably have given, if he had belonged to a Christian Church. I may also observe that it would be a very sorry "Salvationist" who pursued General Booth into the Bankruptcy Court for a couple of hundred pounds (and nearly as much interest) advanced to enable him to carry on the *War Cry*.

The last paragraph of Mr. Anderson's letter is certainly peculiar. He may circularise the N. S. S. Branches till Doomsday for all I care. I have already made a "detailed statement" of his "money transactions" with me. I stated in last week's *Freethinker* that the sum-total of his old advances to me (the latest in 1893) was £375, of which more than £170 had been repaid him, on his own showing. I also stated that, besides those old advances, I had never received any money from him privately. This he does not contradict. I reaffirm it, and ask him to contradict it if he can. If he is able to do so, he need not circularise the N. S. S. Branches. I will publish his contradiction for him in the *Freethinker*.

Perhaps this is a suitable place to tell of one "money transaction" that Mr. Anderson attempted with me. It was after he had declined to see me, and after he had placed "the matter" in the hands of his solicitors. Early in December he sent me a letter. As I opened it I thought "Is he coming to his senses?" When I read it I smiled. He informed me that he wished to make Christmas presents to some Freethought workers. A list of names and amounts was appended, the total being £20. I was asked to distribute that sum according to directions, and to deduct it from what I owed the benefactor. I was also told that the persons named had been written to, that they might know what to expect. But of course I declined to act as Mr. Anderson's almoner in such a fashion—and in such circumstances!

And now a word about Mr. Anderson as the weeping,

reluctant avenger. He admits that I have been badly paid, and says he is "sorry" for me; and he displays his sorrow by driving me into the Bankruptcy Court for what to him is a trivial sum of money, and by taking steps to sell up my home and turn my wife and children into the streets. Really, I do not know what to make of this gentleman. Is he doting, or is he a super-subtle humorist? Is he serious, or is he laughing? Is he playing Nemesis or Mephistopheles? Is he too dense to understand what he is doing, or is he a nice calculator of where he can inflict the greatest pain?

To compare small things with great, I am only vulnerable, like Achilles, in a single spot. Consign me to prison, bid me walk through rows of levelled spears, send me on the most desperate forlorn hope, show me that I must stand single-handed against a host of passionate enemies, persuade me that I must fight till certain death in the Thermopylæ of Freethought, and I trust I could face my fate with a smile. But I cannot look on the suffering of those I love. The pain in a child's eyes unmans me. I am found faltering "there where I have garnered up my heart."

This is a moment, therefore, and these are circumstances, in which I may reasonably venture to appeal for help from my friends throughout the kingdom, and even in other lands where the *Freethinker* goes to its subscribers. To have kept this paper going for twenty years is in itself no small achievement. Had I done nothing else but that, I should be entitled to some consideration at the hands of the Freethought party.

What I shall do will depend on the means that may be placed at my service. I may lodge notice of an appeal on Monday, or I may let the action take its course without further opposition. The financial prospect on Monday morning will decide. Behind this there is the question of my home. I should like to save it, and my books with it. But to do this I should have to find someone who would purchase (if necessary) from the Official Receiver. And that someone ought to be *my wife*. Whatever is sent in to me—or to Miss Vance, who has my fullest confidence—should be sent *expressly for Mrs. Foote*.

My friends will take particular notice of this condition. It is not my object to collect money for the benefit of Mr. Anderson. He is not in need, and I am. His family is in no danger of distress, and mine is. So I must ask all who forward a donation to mark it *expressly for Mrs. Foote*. It will be for her absolute use at her own personal discretion. G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

ANOTHER Freethought Demonstration will be held this evening (July 14) at Brockwell Park, in connection with the Camberwell Branch. Mr. Wilson's brake will serve as a platform, and the list of speakers will include Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen. South London Freethinkers should advertise this Demonstration amongst their friends and acquaintances, and thus help to secure a great gathering.

The Annual Excursion, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, took place on Sunday, and was thoroughly successful. A special train conveyed a large number of the "saints," and a good few of their children, to Box Hill and Dorking. And as the scenery is beautiful there in every direction, and the weather was all that could be desired, the excursionists had a really good time. "Creature comforts" were obtained at various places, and a general tea was provided at the "Wheatsheaf" at 5 o'clock. Most of the workers in the Freethought movement in London were present. Mr. Foote was there, with Mrs. Foote, and three children—though one of them is only technically a child, being, in fact, a "young lady" of sixteen. Mr. Watts brought an American visitor with him, Miss Creswell, a friend of that veteran Freethinker and grand old man, Dr. E. B. Foote, senior, of New York and Larchmont Manor. Mr. Cohen was there with Mrs. Cohen and the baby, which he evidently looked upon (and quite naturally) as the latest wonder of the world. Mr. Moss bore himself like a prosperous Borough Councillor. Miss Vance, of course, was up to eyes in business, getting through it with her usual efficiency, though certain all the time that a flood, or an earthquake, or something, would spoil the day before it was over. "Chilperic," as *Freethinker* readers know him, came up smiling with his wife—a happy couple. But we must pause here, or we shall have to make a list of nearly "everybody who is anybody" in London Freethought circles.

Amongst the lot was Mr. Bater, of the Finsbury Branch.

You cannot tread on the tail of his coat without knowing it—especially if you are a Christian. Now it was reported to him that the Church parson had warned his congregation against the "infidel" excursionists. This he took as a personal affront. So he resolved to "contaminate" Dorking—that was one of the parson's words—to some purpose. He, therefore, arranged for a pitch with the constable, and started a Freethought open-air meeting in a conspicuous part of the town, pressing Mr. Easton, Mr. Moss, and other speakers, into the service. They had an orderly and attentive audience, and no doubt did some good. Mr. Munton had brought some *Freethinkers*, and Mr. Leat sold them, clearing out the last two copies at half-price, on the butcher and greengrocer Saturday-night principle. On the whole, Mr. Bater was satisfied. He considers he got level with that parson.

Now that the Annual Excursion is over it is time to begin seeing about the Children's Party, which ought to take place at the end of August. Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, will be very happy to receive subscriptions forthwith. Of course, there is no charge of any kind made to the children. They are entertained all day gratuitously, and everybody should be glad to give a trifle towards such an object.

The Hull Branch took its Annual Trip to Aldborough on Sunday. Over a hundred "saints" foregathered, including several cyclists. Some came from Beverley and some from Lincolnshire. The weather was splendid, and the function was a complete success.

On Sunday last the Birmingham "saints" had their Annual Outing, and were joined by friends from Stourbridge and Wolverhampton. A drive was taken to the Clent Hills. Old Sol beamed approvingly on the ungodly party. About forty partook of a substantial tea. Everybody present, including three little dots, had a royal "good time."

Mr. W. Heaford writes to us from Brussels, explaining that his absence from home on a brief holiday was the cause of his not joining the Excursion on Sunday. Mr. Heaford went over the Rationalist Orphanage in the Belgian capital, and speaks of it in the highest terms. "A smarter, better-dressed, healthier body of youngsters," he says, "it would be hard to imagine. They are as merry as crickets, and seem simply to adore their teachers. It is in all respects an admirable institution, and I should like English Freethinkers who doubt it to look at it themselves. The building is in an excellent open situation in a good neighborhood. The grounds attached are spacious, with a considerable kitchen garden. Altogether, I am delighted with the institution."

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, in the *London Sun*, after protesting against the King's being obliged to concern himself with the religious differences between Catholics and Protestants, says: "But Charles Bradlaugh is dead—or there would, in truth, have been a 'C.-B.' to lead us in this crisis."

Two Sunday Fishers.

(A Legend of Dorking.)

ROD in hand, two fishers stand—
Two Sunday fishers, silent and slim—
Their rods are tilted like clothes-props grim.
They have cursed and sworn on their ricketty winches,
Clawing their poles like two atrophied finches,
That no bite will they have, no parch will they slake,
Till somebody hauls out some sort of "take."

Eyebrows knit, two fishers sit
With their eyes on their floats—starting out of their
sockets;
There's a sound like the wailing of Nordenfeldt
rockets.

The night grows blacker. But little they think
Of the change passing over that terrible brink;
They have baited their hooks with bated breath,
And they lean far over that sink of death.
There's a gurgling noise, a sickening thud,
As they sling their hooks out into the mud.

High and dry, two fishers lie
On the rammed down bank of a banked-up dam;
There's a leather-winged Devil with festive grin,
Hooks each fisher under the gills,
And jerks him gently under the fin.
"A fisher am I by choice," laughs he;
"Who fishes on Sunday—fishes with Me!"

MORAL.

Go fishing on Sundays—fine sport in the end!
Better chance being "spoofed" by Old Nick than a
Friend;
'Twere ten times worse to be "hooked" in a church
By some parson who lies "high and dry" on his perch.
Lastly, don't "slake" when you start out for gudgeon,
Or, instead of just one fiend, you'll meet—hic! a
"dudgeon."
G. GUARDIABOSCO

The Power of Prayer.

THERE once knelt a man of God in prayer,
 And he said : " O Lord, who art everywhere,
 There is much that we ask thou must need refuse,
 But I—well, Thou knowest I'm Hugh Price Hughes !
 " I do not crave for the stars or moon,
 But send me, O Lord—and send it soon—
 One thousand pounds ! " And he named a time
 In which to send it—O faith sublime !
 Well, the coin rolled in, and the last day came,
 And this godly man—Mr. What's-his-name ?—
 Counted all there was ; when (*vide* report),
 " Good God ! " said he, " why it's ten pounds short ! "
 " There's but one hour more ; send it all ! " said he—
 " Send the balance, and thou shalt surely see
 What faith is MINE ! " And, strange to say,
 The balance came ere the close of day !
 Now, *wasn't* it strange that God should send
 The exact amount ? But, if you'll lend
 Your ears to me, you'll think it still
 More strange what follows—I'm sure you will !
 For the very moment this friend of God
 First prayed for the needful a woman trod
 The floor of a garret, with babe at breast,
 And *she* prayed to the Lord, with heart distressed.
 She asked for bread—that the Lord would give
 The wherewithal that her babe might live ;
 But she asked in vain, for, ere eventide,
 With cold and hunger her dear one died !
 Another mother, the self-same night,
 Prayed, when a storm was at its height,
 That her sailor son the Lord would save,
 Yet he found, withal, a watery grave.
 And since that time, and before, who knows
 What prayers unanswered have been ? but those
 Who doubt (blasphemers !) had best beware—
 For didn't God answer Price Hughes's prayer !

J. A. B.

Correspondence.

SCIENTIFIC DOGMATISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The *Freethinker* directs all its attacks against the Christian Churches as though they were the only opponents to Freethought. There are several disadvantages in this practice. In the first place, the writers have to keep saying much the same thing over and over again, so that their articles become monotonous and pall upon the literary appetite. Moreover, when a particular intolerant institution is baited with a virulence out of all proportion to the importance of the institution itself, and to the exclusion of criticism on any other forms of intolerance, it produces the effect of the critics being possessed by a monomania and an animus against the particular institution inveighed against, and the reader discounts their statements or accepts them with a large grain of salt. The Christian Churches have received so many buffets of late that they really seem to be acquiring a little of that greatest of all intellectual gifts, intellectual humility ; moreover, they are becoming decentralised—with the exception of the Church of Rome, which has, however, quite lost its intellectual supremacy in a sea of self-contradictory dogmas—and, with decentralisation, are acquiring the faculty of seeing a thing from more than one point of view.

On the other hand, a dogmatic Church of much greater importance than the Christian ones—the Scientific Church—is growing up in the midst of us—a Church which, if by a happy accident it has seldom or never employed the infamous methods of Christian savages, has repeatedly attempted to stifle truth with ridicule, scorn, and ostracism, has often succeeded, and, as a Universal Church, is likely to be still more successful in the future. Even in bygone times, in their nascent state, the pullets of science, on their way to market in a bunch, with pendent heads and under the shadow of imminent strangulation or decapitation, mauled and pecked each others' nobs with a rancor known only to pure, intellectual narrow-mindedness ; and we have had many indications of what the dogmatic Church of Science is likely to become in the near future now that it practically rules the roost.

With respect to many scientific dogmas, it is perhaps well that an authoritative body should impose them, and that persons whose wits or self-conceits are so faulty as to prevent acceptance of the dogmas should be disqualified to hold positions of responsibility, particularly in conditions where science is an important factor. But the habit of dogmatism, which, within certain limits, is a glory of science, tends to break its just bounds, and involves regions where it is out of place. The real dogmas of science are few ; they are general in character, and, though new facts cannot exactly change them, a new fact may completely change the significance of

the dogma. For instance, when the Newtonian theory was first generally accepted, no doubt many sciolists firmly believed that the planets traced actual circles in space round their central luminaries ; but we now know that, owing to the drift of all cosmic matter in one direction or another, this is not the case, but that suns and planets furrow space with infinite series of infinite waves and ripples, superposed one upon the other, so that the cosmos much more resembles a stormy sea than an infinite number of orreries placed side by side.

" Phlogiston," " cataclysms," " imponderable matter," " the fixity of species," " the intuitive perception and absolute truth of geometrical axioms," all these terms described ideas and points of view which squared, and sufficiently well, with the amount of positive knowledge that had been accumulated when they were invented ; but invoked as spectres, when a brighter dawn was breaking, they have frequently been employed to perpetuate the night by Cuvier, Whewell, and many other first-rate men of science. It is still worse when sciolists abuse the authority of a great name for the purpose of suppressing new facts. This happened not many years ago. A Scotch naturalist (I forget his name) had made a number of observations on coral reefs which seemed to throw some doubt upon Darwin's famous theory, and it was openly admitted in scientific circles that Darwin's " authority " was too great for any scientific society to give a hearing to the new facts, much less to qualify the previously accepted theory out of deference to them. And so they were quietly suppressed. They were tied up in a bag with a few stones of official scientific sloth and intolerance, and quietly dropped into the sea. Science, like religion, has now become a profession, and, in both cases, to the individual functionary, the question of his bread and butter is of much greater importance than abstract truth ; hence new facts involving the revision of old theories are looked upon with suspicion by the scientific professor as involving trouble, expense, and a certain amount of humiliation and recantation, added to which is the growing conviction that science cannot discover absolute truth, and that the human mind is incapable of perceiving it, so that it is better to employ the mind on new inventions and new scientific applications rather than in search for what, after all, is undiscoverable.

It has thus come about that conformity is beginning to be prized above truth and accuracy, and ephemeral and transient scientific dogmas are imposed by science with the same acrimonious intolerance that fashion exhibits in imposing a particular form of hat or coat or gown, provided it be unæsthetic and ridiculous enough.

British sciolists are further tainted by that incurable hues of the British, moral cant, which is the curse of that people. The British scientific theory is that only the pure-minded, the moral person, has the power to tear the secrets of nature from her unwilling bosom. There is not a shred of evidence nor the smallest foundation in fact for this theory. It is purely the offspring of the rank moral stupidity of the British scientific goat. It is wholly and solely the outcome of that animal's perverted phantasy, and seems to have sprung from the empty noodle of the British scientific noodle, much as Minerva is supposed to have sprung fully armed from the head of Zeus. But it is a rare instrument for the suppression of truth, or, for that matter, of the truth seeker, by the modern scientific Torquemada ; by its help any petty personal antipathy can magnify what it dislikes in the object of it into an incapacity for the discovery of scientific truth, and then, when the results of his investigations have been shamelessly repressed as made by an immoral and, therefore, incompetent person, with an impudent refinement of hypocrisy truly British, he is cited as a conclusive proof that no scientific truth can be discovered by the vicious and impure-minded. On the whole, therefore, the *Freethinker* would do well from time to time to turn its attention upon the British scientific fanatic and his intolerance instead of invariably concentrating it upon the perhaps less mischievous British believer.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

THE DECALOGUE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of last week Mr. Neale quotes at the end of his long article the three first commandments of the Decalogue, and then makes the following comment : " One would appeal to a wider and more impartial audience, and ask, Is it possible to conceive a more contemptible caricature than this of a Supreme Being who might be supposed to rule the universe ? "

Courtesy and politeness forbid my stating how well-informed persons would view this comment, and, indeed, the entire essay which it concludes. But I ask leave to say that neither Mr. Neale nor anyone else can show these three commands are unworthy of the Supreme Being. At present I can say no more, being quite unable to imagine what reasons can be produced to justify such language.

Let me thus illustrate my position. Lord Milner has in England admirers and detractors. Now, suppose some detractor were to print the South African despatches, and then calmly inquire : " Do not these show Lord Milner utterly unworthy the post given him by Government ? " I suppose some admirer would reply : " Your ignorance alone

prompts your comment ; produce your reasons for disparaging his lordship, and I will make an example of them."

I ask Mr. Neale to produce his reasons for writing as above. Then, with your kind permission, I undertake to prove them utterly weak and worthless.

HENRY J. ALCOCK.

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.): Closed for the summer.

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11, Stanton Coit, "Ethical Ritual and Ceremony."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and War."

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack; 6.30, Freethought Demonstration—G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, and C. Cohen.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Prayer and Providence."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "I was in Prison."

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, C. Cohen, "How Man Made God."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY: 7.30, E. B. Rose, "Old Trinities—and a New One."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, C. Cohen, "Woman and Christianity"; 3.30, W. Heaford, "Is Religion Necessary?"; 7, S. E. Easton, "The Scheme of Christianity."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Jesus and his Apostles"; 7.15, E. White, "From John the Baptist to Judas Iscariot."

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, F. A. Davies.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, C. Cohen, "Something Superior to Christianity."

VICTORIA PARK: A. B. Moss—3.15, "Jesus and his Apostles"; 6.15, "The Bible as a Guide."

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, E. B. Rose, "Blasphemy: Real and Fictitious."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. P. Ward—11, in the Bull Ring; 3, Stratford Road (opposite the Ship Hotel); 7, in the Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, Broad-street, "What Christianity has Done for Women." Wednesday, at 8, in the Bull Ring; Friday, at 8, at Nechell's Green.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "The Stoics."

MANCHESTER BRANCH: Picnic to Hebden Bridge for Hardcastle Crags, from Victoria Station at 11 a.m.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Members' Quarterly Meeting; 7, G. Berrisford, "Did Jesus Christ Rise from the Dead?"

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