

# THE Freethinker

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## Political Assassination and Public Liberty.

THE assassination of President McKinley at Buffalo, together with the comments in many papers on the subject, suggest some reflections that one may, perhaps, fitly set down in the columns of a journal whose policy must be in large part to guard public freedom. It goes without saying that everyone not a lunatic, every sane and healthy-minded person throughout the world, must look with horror and dismay at such crimes as that which has stricken the American people. All crime is to be condemned; and, of course, murder is one of the greatest crimes. Personally, I am inclined to think these murders of crowned heads and presidents are the work, in most cases, of individual madmen. The talk of desperate and wide-extended "plots," which fills the newspapers after all these affairs, is more likely to be police and journalist stuff than anything else. A man who is going to do a deed like that at Buffalo does not, one would think, take 10,000 people into his confidence. The very statement is absurd. And it is the fact that these crimes are the result of individual fanaticism that renders the case so hopeless. There is really no means whereby a ruler can effectively be protected against a single madman who is determined to kill him, and to surrender his own life for his act. That is part of the risk of the profession, as King Humbert is reported to have said.

If, on the other hand, these crimes be really the result of some general teaching, and if the assassins are merely the representatives of numbers of people similarly minded, then the problem is very much deeper, and requires infinitely delicate handling. If, as one report alleges, there are a hundred thousand Anarchists in the United States, and if any large proportion of that number are potential assassins, there is assuredly "something rotten in the state of Denmark" which needs grappling with. And mere police measures are not the means by which to grapple with it. As Mr. Page Hopps says: "These brutal and blundering manifestations of rage or discontent are outward and visible signs of an inward and social malady." And the social malady which produces swarms of assassins cannot be cured by creating swarms of detectives and spies.

It is here, in my view, that we reach the chief lesson which ought to be enforced at this juncture by those of us who value liberty. Most newspapers are ranting against Anarchists, and calling out for repression of all kinds. Numbers of resolutions of sympathy with America and with Mr. McKinley's family have expressed "indignation" at the crime—a phrase which seems, in the circumstances, ridiculous. There is no use fulminating against dangers that very few people will fall into in any case. Not many persons are likely to join murder-clubs, so that abusing homicidal Anarchism is grotesque futility. It is something worse than futile to discredit—as some journals have sought—Socialist parties as being responsible in any way for such occurrences. Those who recklessly bring charges of inciting to murder against politicians and organisations which they know for the most part to be innocent are themselves playing very dangerously with fire.

Rather should we set ourselves against the evil into which many will fall and are falling—the evil of reckless repression and counter-violence. Already people here, there, and everywhere, are calling out for a senseless vendetta, which can only end in a tyranny far more

dangerous than is involved in anything that has happened. Inoffensive people are arrested and thrown into gaol on the least suspicion, and the Anarchist violence is replaced by government violence; whilst we may be sure that on the plea of combating Anarchism all kinds of unpopular opinion and propaganda, which those in authority dislike, will be interfered with. It is part of the insensate folly of these violent "Anarchists" that, assuming them to be desirous of promoting the cause of human freedom, as many of them undoubtedly are, the chief result of their actions is to frighten many timid people into the reactionary camp, and make the work of real progress even more difficult than it is. But we must protest against the panic-mongering, and proclaim that wholesale repression will merely complicate the disease.

For the political lesson we can but say that freedom and science are the only real and permanent cures for crime. So far as these assassinations represent the existence of people driven mad by the misery around them, they are a warning, and he is a foolish guide who has no solution but the gallows. By all means let men caught red-handed be dealt with by the ordinary tribunals of justice. But it is for the statesman or the public teacher to seek the causes of social disease. Some part of the cause of this criminality is to be sought in the doctrines of violence openly proclaimed and acted upon by so many of the capitalist rulers of to-day. People brought up in an atmosphere of militarism, where brute force is continually glorified and wholesale bloodshed advocated as a means of settling international disputes, are not likely to develop a high ethical ideal. And certainly one feels bound to say that most of the capitalist politicians have forfeited the ethical right to condemn the crime at Buffalo. Mr. McKinley, who thought it proper to slay the Filipinos in order to bring them into subjection, or Mr. Chamberlain, who thinks it proper to slay the Boers for *his* purposes, cannot with any consistency sit in judgment on an Anarchist who uses a revolver to effect some object which he fancies is beneficial. All violence is to be condemned, and, as a beginning, the ruling classes must themselves set a peaceful example in their own behavior. That would, at least, be the beginning of the real cure.

FREDERICK RYAN.

## The Moral Difficulties of Theism.

In my recent articles on "Atheism and its Critics" I expressly left out of view the moral problems raised by Theism, and their attempted solution. This I did because it seemed to me that the question of the existence of God, and that of his goodness, were quite distinct. Existence does not involve goodness, although goodness does involve existence. Yet it is plain to all who observe, that usually it is the moral difficulties that give rise to scepticism rather than purely intellectual ones. More people have been first led to examine the whole question of Theism from witnessing a sudden and unmerited catastrophe, or by observing how ill-bestowed are the rewards and penalties attending human life; a far greater number have been led by these causes to a reconsideration of their religious position than by any others.

And this is only what one might expect. A study of primitive religions makes tolerably plain the fact that fear is their predominating feature. Men do not worship the gods out of any feeling of love, but rather the reverse.

They bribe their deities for the same reason that a Russian peasant tips the police officer—because they anticipate injury otherwise. Their moral sense is not revolted at the character of their deities, for the simple reason that it is a reflection of their social state and customs. It is as the moral sense develops that the injustice of the gods punishing good and bad alike forces itself upon the human conscience; and, as the social state is purified of some of its grosser forms of wrong, the contrast between that and God's government becomes more glaring, and consequently calls for a greater number of apologies.

An apology for God in the shape of an explanation of why there is evil in the world has just reached me in the form of a sermon, by the Rev. G. St. Clair, on Kingsley's pathetic poem of *The Three Fishers*. Pity it is that preachers or hearers do not realise that all these apologies are in themselves some sort of a condemnation. A God whose methods require so much explaining and justifying must needs arouse some suspicion. Justice is, after all, not such an exceedingly difficult thing to understand; and, when there exists as much doubt of its being as there is in the present instance, it is extremely probable that the doubt is more than justified.

Let anyone put to themselves this simple question: "Would I act as God is presumed to act if I possessed the power and wisdom ascribed to him?" I know that to religious ears the question will sound exceedingly blasphemous; yet, blasphemy on one side, what is there unreasonable about it? After all, when we speak of God's justice, or God's love, or God's wisdom, we are applying human language and using human judgments. Justice, wisdom, and love have no meaning apart from human or animal existence, and either we *are* applying human measurements to God when we use such terms, or the statements become meaningless jargon.

There is nothing unreasonable in the question; it is simply an inconvenient one—for the Theist. And what sort of an answer are we compelled to give to such a question? We look round upon the world and find injustice, suffering, misery, everywhere. The animal world at large is filled with these, and in the human world they are far from being absent. Wrong does not always meet with its punishment, and right does not always meet with its reward. Deadly diseases lurk on all hands, and the knowledge wherewith to combat them is of infinitely slow growth. Disasters by sea and land overwhelm the imagination with the intensity of their horror. Thousands of people are born into the world preordained by the combined influence of their ancestry and their environment to a drunkard's, a suicide's, or a criminal's grave. Would infinite power, wisdom, and love, if wielded by a being of only ordinary human goodness, tolerate such a state of things for an instant? The actions of most people supply an adequate answer to the query. The very people who protest that everything is as it is for the best are usually trying to make things a little different to what they are. Those who attempt to justify the existence of laws whereby children suffer from inherited complaints or diseases are prominent in attempting to check the operation of such forces. Man's inhumanity to man may make countless thousands mourn, but man's humanity to his fellows should also cause the "Father of All" to feel ashamed of his conduct to his children.

But, needless to say, Mr. St. Clair does not put such inconvenient questions as the ones I have asked, and consequently does not attempt an answer to them. His apology adds nothing new to the subject, although he states the old defences with a display of more than the average ability. The fishermen went out into the West to get food for wife and family left behind; and these, looking out over the stormy waters, hoped and prayed for the safety of their loved ones. A picture that might reasonably have touched the heart of "Our Heavenly Father," as it might, and would, touch that of any earthly parent. And the answer of God to their prayers and the fishermen's struggles was "Three corpses..... out on the shining sands," and three husbandless wives and a number of fatherless children weeping for those who would never return.

And how does the preacher justify the ways of God to man? First, by the platitude that it is all perfectly natural; "there is no harvest without labor." But the

very sting of the indictment is that there is often labor without any harvest. These men were laboring honestly and earnestly, and for the best of all purposes—for the support of such as were dependent upon them. And this harvest was—death. How many men put their best energy into a plot of ground, to raising a breed of cattle, or in scouring the seas for food; and God, "who doeth all things well," forthwith sends a scorching heat or drenching rain, a devastating blight or an all-devouring storm, and the harvest reaped is destruction, despair, and death. What answer can be made to this complaint?

Here is Mr. St. Clair's answer: "The forces of nature are giants which may be tamed and controlled. They have no malevolence in them. They never do harm to man on purpose.....The accidents occur mainly through our ignorance, or carelessness, or want of skill—because we know too little about the forces, or are not vigilant in watching them." Well, but how does this meet the case? Is ignorance or want of skill such a fearful offence that it is to be punished with death? Would a man be excused who pleaded that *he* inflicted death on a subordinate for the same reasons? Why, human forethought does just what almighty wisdom and love declines to do. Around dangerous machinery it places a protecting girdle that will prevent the ignorant or the unskilful being injured by it. The man who placed an incompetent workman in charge of a dangerous piece of machinery would rightly be held responsible for all the damage it caused. Can we honestly absolve God from the same degree of responsibility?

Is it any reply to this to say, as Mr. St. Clair does, that we have to learn by experience? True; but that is because there is no other method of learning—at least, so far as the race is concerned. But if we could learn without a long and tedious experience, should we not gladly do so? As a matter of fact, the whole art of civilisation consists largely in enabling us to dispense with this experience. One generation learns a lesson at the cost of much pain, much misery—probably many deaths. The next generation has the same lesson already prepared for it, and gets the benefits of the lesson without the experience. Here, again, human methods are an unanswerable impeachment of the "divine method of government."

And, in addition, it is not always those who go through the experience who reap the benefit of the lesson. A man goes down a disused well, for the purpose of cleaning it out. Foul gases have accumulated at the bottom, and he is suffocated as a result. Who is benefitted by this experience? Not the man who went through it; he is dead. Those who benefit are probably those who hung behind, waiting to see if it was safe. If there is a God, would it not be quite justifiable to picture him, not as a loving parent, but rather as some almighty ogre, only yielding up his secrets when human lives are offered up in return?

And the weeping of the women—wives of the three fishermen—what of that? Mr. St. Clair's answer is ready: "The women would not grieve if they had not loved." True; but could they not have loved without the grief? Grief may be "the measure of affection," but it is certainly not its cause; and the valuable thing in the world is the love we have for one another, not the grief we feel at separation. Is it the best conceivable arrangement that love should only be learned through suffering, as Mr. St. Clair believes? As a matter of fact, it is not so. Pain and suffering as often kill love and develop a self-centred egotism as they knit its bonds closer together. Do any human parents seek to develop their children's affections through suffering? Clearly not. Why, then, should it be so with God? Why continually befool ourselves with expressions of admiration for actions when performed by God, and expressions of indignation when we find man behaving in the same fashion?

But, argues the preacher, there is still the future life, where we may rejoin our loved ones. Exactly. There is still another chance given to God Almighty to correct in another world the blunders he has committed in this. Man is much more forgiving than his assumed Creator. Only one wonders why, if God desires union, he should ever have arranged for separation, or why we should assume that any other state of existence will be

ruled by different principles to this one? If there is a God at all, he must be in this world as well as in the next; and if things are not right here, there is clearly no reason for believing them to be any better elsewhere.

Here end Mr. St. Clair's apology and my criticism. The problem raised by Theism is, at bottom, simple enough. The ascription of human qualities to God—love, wisdom, power, etc.—opens him to precisely the same judgments as a human being. Judged by human standards—and we have no others to which to appeal—the government of the world is open to distinct and emphatic condemnation. Nature—which, on the Theistic hypothesis, is the expression of God's character—is so far repugnant to human notions of justice that civilisation consists very largely in checking or reversing the ordinary action of natural forces. Unless the whole process of civilisation is a delusion, man finds himself, and must continue to be, in a constant and progressive "enmity with God." And this enmity must continue to develop until the whole of Theism is rejected as a useless hypothesis, as idle in theory as it has shown itself dangerous in practice.

C. COHEN.

### Professor Harnack's Collapse.

It will be remembered that, not long since, Professor Harnack's work, *What is Christianity?* caused some considerable turbulence in orthodox circles in consequence of its heretical utterances. The position there taken by the Doctor is that the Gospel of John is not a trustworthy source of information in reference to the life of Christ; that the New Testament account of the supernatural birth of Jesus is unhistorical; and that the Gospel miracles cannot be critically relied upon. Whether or not the Professor discovered that he had gone too far in his heresy, we cannot say; but last month he delivered a lecture on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the University of Berlin, in which he sought to allay the anxiety which his former criticisms had caused among a certain portion of the Christian world. In order that his latest effusion may not be misunderstood, we here give the principal part of the extract from his lecture as reported by the Berlin correspondent of the *Christian World*, in its issue of August 29:—

"His theme was 'The Position and Aim of Theological Faculties.' He strongly opposed the suggestion that the present scope of the faculty, as usually understood in most universities, is too narrow and restricted from the point of view of the scientific investigator. The contention that a theological faculty should have several chairs for teaching the general history of religion, rather than the particular history of the Christian religion, is a view which he cannot share. In theory, he admitted, much might be said for such an idea. The theologian does well to have a complete view of the whole 'ladder' of religion, to understand the connection of one religion with another, to grasp the notions which led nations to rise from impure faiths to others more pure and reasonable. Further, the work of missions to which the Church has now set itself seems to demand that missionaries should be instructed in the general science of religion, as well as in the religion which they are to teach. But, continued Dr. Harnack, 'whether or not a durable and worthy civilisation is possible without the preaching of the Gospel may be answered either affirmatively or negatively. One thing is certain: the nations who are now dividing out the earth among them must stand or fall with the Christian civilisation. Whoever knows this religion knows all; whoever is ignorant of it knows none. We wish to see the theological faculties remaining as they are—faculties for the investigation of the Christian religion. The Christian religion is not one of many: it is *the* religion. And it is *the* religion because Jesus Christ is not a Master among many, but *the* Master, and because His Gospel satisfies the inborn wants of mankind."

We have omitted the Professor's extravagant eulogy of the Bible, wherein he regards it as superior to all other books, and as giving to every age "fresh treasures," for the good reason that he does not say what those "treasures" are. They cannot include historical accuracy, for the Doctor has admitted in his writings upon the Bible that in many respects its history is doubtful. They do not comprise statements of facts in reference to scientific questions, for, as Archbishop

Sumner has said, "The Scriptures have never revealed a single scientific truth." And Dean Farrar, in his work, *The Bible: Its Meaning and Supremacy*, denies that the Bible is an authority in scientific matters. He says:—

"If that were so, how useless has such an anticipation of the scientific toil of years proved itself to be! If that be so, how comes it that all the leaders of science, and discoverers of new truths, have found their bitterest critics among religious teachers? and how comes it that the cosmogonies, which were asserted to be based on Scriptural data, have been so glaringly ludicrous?" (p. 149).

Neither are the "treasures" to be found in any unique moral teachings of the Bible, for Lecky tells us that the Roman people had a system of ethics, apart from the Bible, that "has never been surpassed." It is to be regretted that so able a writer as Dr. Harnack undoubtedly is should descend from the position of scholarly critic to that of theological pleader in his attempt to supply an antidote to what his orthodox friends thought was the bane in his criticism of the Christian faith.

Let us now consider the value, or otherwise, of the salve he has supplied for the purpose of healing the wounds of his too susceptible friends. The report of his lecture, as given above, reads more like the utterances of a third-rate speaker of the Christian Evidence Society than the sentiments of a calm reasoner of the Doctor's calibre. He commences by favoring the limitation of the scientific method of investigating the histories of the different religions, although he admits that the theologian would do well "to understand the connection of one religion with another." Then why seek to confine theological studies to the Christian religion? Dr. Harnack's answer is, Because "the nations who are now dividing out the earth among them must stand or fall with the Christian civilisation. The future will tolerate no other civilisation." Now, two questions here arise. By what right and method do Christian nations divide "out the earth among them"? and Where is the "Christian civilisation" referred to? There can be no objection to spreading true civilisation, where it is possible to do so, in a just and humane manner. But care should be taken that the "civilisation" is real, not a sham. To talk of "Christian civilisation" is a misnomer, for no such societarian condition exists, except in the imagination of Christians themselves. It has been shown over and over again in these columns that the progress of a nation is impossible if obedience to the teachings of Christ is strictly observed. Besides, the usual method adopted by *professed* Christian nations in their efforts to divide "out the earth among them" has been, to say the least, exceedingly questionable. The weapons used by Christian nations to obtain the "divisions of the earth" have not been justice, kindness, and consideration for mutual rights, but too often rapacity, cruelty, and criminal selfishness. Military force has done more to subdue the weaker nations of the earth than any "message from Jesus." Personal aggrandisement has always been the object of the Christian in carrying out his "expansion" scheme. It is quite true what the Christian writer, A. J. Gilmour, said of missionaries:—

"They have their work constantly before their eyes; they are not blind, and know well enough how to take very good care of themselves. For many years past they have seen the consequences which their civilisation and Christianity have exercised on the heathen races. The Indians have gradually disappeared from the face of the earth; great stone churches have been built, and their burial-places have been filled with the bodies of the new Christians. Like a pestilence have these new manners and customs raged among them; but the land became valuable; cities and villages arose, the Europeans established plantations, and became rich; the Indians were driven to work, and either became slaves of the white man or were pushed back further and further, until they found a quiet place where they could die" (quoted by Frederick Gerhard in his *Coming Creed of the World*, p. 129).

The fact that efforts (such as they are) to extend civilisation (such as it is) are being made by so-called Christian countries is no proof of the progressive nature of Christianity. As evidence of this, it is beyond dispute that in all endeavors to extend our national commerce

the teachings of the New Testament are entirely ignored. If, therefore, it be asked why nominal Christians are the pioneers of a hybrid civilisation, the answer is, Because of the superior advantages of their natural and national characteristics, and the indefinite and non-practical nature of the faith they profess. It is not that their religion is the cause of these advantages, for, as Buckle has pointed out, "the religion of mankind is the effect of their improvement, not the cause of it." Besides, as the same writer observes, Christianity failed to take hold of a people where the conditions were unfavorable to its reception. He cites the fact that Christianity sought in vain to destroy the superstitions of the Romans:—

"The new religion was corrupted by the old follies. The adoration of idols was succeeded by the adoration of saints; the worship of the Virgin was substituted for the worship of Cybele; Pagan ceremonies were established in Christian Churches; not only the mummeries of idolatry, but likewise its doctrines, were quickly added, and were incorporated and worked into the spirit of the new religion; until, after the elapse of a few generations, Christianity exhibited so grotesque and hideous a form that its best features were lost" (*History of Civilisation*, p. 238).

He also says: "How idle, then, it is to ascribe the civilisation to the creed." This proves that the Christian faith was, and is, impotent to overcome antagonistic elements, and is, therefore, useless as a civilising agency.

It seems incredible that Professor Harnack should claim unique and absolute knowledge for the Christian religion. No orthodox presumption could go further. If it were true, it would be the greatest reflection upon the goodness of his God. If, as the Doctor states, to know the Christian religion is to know all, and to be ignorant of it is to know nothing, what excuse can be made for Deity that he kept it from the world until about two thousand years ago, and for his still keeping a knowledge of it from two-thirds of the human race? But the Professor's statement is the very opposite of fact. We are not concerned in defending any particular supposed supernatural religion, for the reason that all such religions contain so many superstitious features that the good they possess is more than counteracted by the follies they inculcate. Still, a study of the various great religions of the world will show that Christianity is not superior to other faiths in devotion to principle, purity in morals, and potency in influence. In these features the religions of Buddha and Mohammed are not inferior to that of Christ. If space permitted, ample evidence to prove this allegation could be adduced from the writings of avowed Christians. Should any reader, however, doubt the accuracy of the statement here made, let him demand proof for the assertion, and he shall have it.

As to the Professor's averment that Christ is "the Master," and that "his Gospel satisfies the inborn wants of mankind," it is only necessary to say that the servants take little heed of their Master, for we fail to see where his example is followed or his teachings obeyed. We suppose it will be admitted that among the "inborn wants of mankind" are secular education, a knowledge of science, and a code of principles that can be profitably applied to the requirements of every-day life. But these are the very wants that Christ does not supply.

CHARLES WATTS.

## The Church Congress.

THIS annual event takes place very shortly at Brighton. The program has been issued, and all the arrangements are made. As usual, nobody, except the responsible officials, seems to be satisfied with them—at any rate, in their entirety. A former Bishop of Worcester had an invincible dislike to the Church Congress. And no wonder; for, of all the fixtures for four or five days' continuous talk, this is about the most unprofitable and unentertaining.

The selection both of subjects and speakers seems to be made, if not in a haphazard fashion, certainly without much display of judgment. Hence the criticism which appears in some of the Church prints. One Evangelical journal suggested some time ago, as a subject, the Utilisation of the Press. That was submitted to the

Committee, but was not approved. There are this year, as for a number of years past, very few subjects put down which are of really practical interest, or upon which it is at all likely that anything new will be said. And then, in regard to the social topics that seem to promise to be profitable, experience proves that they are dealt with in such a way as to deprive their discussion of any real usefulness.

If there was more common sense and less religious cant, the proceedings might possess some interest. But when will it be possible to induce parsons to talk common sense, even in regard to social questions? Of course, their calling prevents them doing so in reference to theological matters; but when they get on to general subjects it seems odd that they exhibit so little intelligence, or, at any rate, such as would commend itself to people who live and move in the world, and who know what things really are.

Of course, as Churchmen, and the Congress being held in the interests of the Church, those who have the management may resent any criticism from others who, like ourselves, are quite outside the pale of the Church. But, after all, the proceedings have a public aspect, and reports are published in the newspapers—though of late years, it is worth while noticing, they have been much curtailed. The impression begins to prevail that this clerical annual Conference is regarded by the bulk of those who attend it as an outing rather than as of any serious import. And the main interest seems to be centred in any possible squabble that can be got up between High and Low Church representatives.

A complaint is made amongst Churchmen that, under existing arrangements, the Congress has, in the main, ceased to be an open debate, members being called together to listen to the reading of papers. Often, it is said, and said with truth, the result is unsatisfactory even to sympathetic Church audiences. Two writers, we will say, have prepared papers on nominally the same subject. They have not conferred with one another, neither knows to which part of the subject the other will address himself; and it often happens that two treatises are produced on what are, in effect, totally different subjects, though nominally identical. When the time comes for voluntary speakers, they are limited to four or five minutes each, and usually manage to drift, even in that short space of time, into topics quite alien to either the papers or the question put down on the program.

We have been glancing through the Official Guide of the Congress to be held at Brighton. It has been written by an Eastbourne gentleman who certainly has some sense of humor. He gives, *inter alia*, a number of "Quotations for Congress Speakers," which, to anyone who has attended Church Congress meetings, will sound distinctly though deservedly ironical, and in that sense are very amusing. The "leading lights" set down for the meetings are likely to be seized with a suspicion that the compiler of the Official Guide is poking fun at them. The selections have a wider interest than their present application to the Church Congress. A few of them may, therefore, be reproduced. "To be a speaker needs something more than simply to speak." There are many long-suffering audiences to whom this will appeal. "Keep thy tongue" (Psalm xxxiv. 13) is good advice, which may be taken in conjunction with a quotation from Quintilian: "The greatest virtue of speech is perspicuity"; and one from Luther: "It is better to be brief than tedious." Other aphorisms include the following:—

- "The man of thought strikes deepest and strikes safely."—*Anon.*
- "Let him be sure to leave other men their turns to speak."—*Bacon.*
- "Stand up cheerily—speak up manfully—leave off speedily."—*Anon.*
- "Speak not at all in any wise till you have somewhat to speak."—*Carlyle.*
- "It is a good divine that follows his own instructions."—*Merchant of Venice.*
- "An aimless preacher aims at Nothing, and he hits it."—*Archbishop Whateley.*
- "Speak little and well; they will take you for somebody."—*Portuguese Proverb.*
- "It is one thing to speak much, and another to speak pertinently."—*Old Proverb.*

"Long speeches, though they may please the speaker, torture the hearer."—*Feltham*.  
 "In general those who have nothing to say contrive to spend the longest time in doing it."—*Lowell*.  
 "The word which has once escaped can never be recalled. I must, then, be careful what I say."—*Anon*.  
 "We rarely repent of having spoken too little; very often of having spoken too much."—*La Bruyère*.  
 "Shallow brooks babble; deep rivers run silently. It is a great point of wisdom not to speak too much."—*Anon*.  
 "If it requires great tact to know how to speak to the purpose, it requires no less to know when to be silent."—*La Roche*.  
 "A wise man reflects before he speaks; a fool speaks and then reflects on what he has uttered; and then—regrets it."—*Anon*.  
 "Superficial writers and speakers, like the mole, often fancy themselves deep when they are exceedingly near the surface."—*Anon*.  
 "He who is only half instructed speaks much, and is always wrong; he who knows it wholly is content with acting, and speaks seldom or late."—*Goethe*.

I prefer not talking; only this—  
 Let each man do his best.—*Henry IV.*, pt. i.

Have more than thou showest;  
 Speak less than thou knowest.—*King Lear*.

'Tis a kind of good deed to say well;  
 And yet, words are no deeds.—*Henry VIII*.

Words are like leaves; and where they most abound  
 Much fruit of grace beneath is rarely found.—*Pope*.

All this is very good advice, and should have the effect of cooling the ardor of many clerical and lay bores. But there is always the chairman's bell, after all; at Congress meetings, though, it may be rightly supposed that most of the clerics will consider the advice in the Official Guide as being intended for anybody other than themselves.

After an experience of some eleven or twelve Church Congresses, the present writer is inclined to think that the well-meant effort of the Eastbourne gentleman will fail to be attended either by the reduction of the number of speakers or the curtailment of their usual rapid verbosity. As to the broader and more important point of the principles and doctrinal views to be advanced at the Congress, or new lights thrown on old dogmas, it will be necessary to wait. "Blessed is he who expecteth little." There is one thing we may rely upon: whenever the speakers at the Church Congress touch upon modern unbelief they either exhibit an amazing want of knowledge, or they make some very damaging admissions, which may be turned, and rightly turned, against the Christian creed.

FRANCIS NEALE

## Echoes from Everywhere.

FROM THE RADICAL PRESS.

THE "pro-Boer" papers, from *Reynolds's Newspaper* to the *Daily News*, unite in uttering a wail of astonishment at the attitude of Christian parsons concerning the war. This journalistic note is irritating and uncalled for. One would almost imagine that there was something in the record of the Churches to warrant such preposterous expectations. As if, indeed, alliance with the popular party were not their invariable and necessary policy.

But now there are signs of movement. John Bull has consigned his flags to the dustbin, and has thrown his patriotic buttons to the Devil..... And there is the Nonconformist Peace Manifesto, to say nothing of Mr. Tom Spurgeon. The Christian conscience reasserting itself? Bah! The foxes are smelling the wind.

FROM THE UNITED STATES.

There is no escape for the ungodly in the present sphere, whatever may happen in the life to come. A Pittsburg pastor, "viewing with alarm" (as the petitions say) the increasing multitude of Sunday visitors to the park, constructed a platform there "equipped with a perfect sounding-board, placed seats for 20,000, and had the whole lighted by electric light, thus turning the park into a huge place of worship, as many as 40,000 being able to hear the Gospel."

"Being able" is good. Did they avail themselves of that glorious opportunity? or did they "vamoose the ranche"? The chronicler is reticent on the point.

Neither does he say how much the pastor paid for the park before fitting it up as a gospel-shop.

FROM OVER THE CHANNEL.

English Freethinkers who desire to have a good acquaintance with the Rationalist movement on the Continent cannot do better than study the pages of *La Raison*, obtainable, I believe, at the offices of this journal.

Clericalism in France and Belgium is, indeed, "the enemy." The rôle of the priest is there shown in its most sinister aspect. A much stronger force than in England, Christianity is correspondingly sincere in its operations. The "blacklegs," for example, do not work individually against the unions; they are organised by the Church into a massed body—the *Syndicat Jaune*. When a strike occurs contingents are at once despatched to the scene of operations, to defeat the strikers. Little wonder that the Socialist and Freethinker work hand in hand with an energy born of active hate, and a courage that no penalty can terrorise.

But there is a worse and more insidious evil. The "celibates" in soutanes are an element of danger to conjugal life. One writer remarked with concentrated bitterness: "The priest has no need to marry while the workers have wives!"

FROM THE APOLOGISTS.

Dr. Mackintosh, D.D., has just written a volume entitled *A First Primer of Apologetics*. It is very apologetic. It is so prodigal of excuses and explanations, and the poor old Christian dogmas are so "damned with faint praise," that one might well wonder where the Doctor's faith finds standing-room.

Hear him, ye fabricators of Christian "evidence." "We cannot prove the Christian faith; we can only bear witness; we can only say, with Tennyson, 'I have felt.'"

The Doctor has felt—and apologised. Let us yield him our profound sympathy and our complete forgiveness. So many good men have gone wrong that way. That is the trouble with all the superstitionists, from the Dancing Dervish to the Doctor of Divinity. They have felt.

FROM THE BISHOPS.

The Primate of all England is actually aware of the existence of such people as Wesleyan Methodists! Someone must have told him. Speaking of himself in the third person, he episcopises thusly: "The Archbishop of Canterbury desires to express his hearty goodwill to the great Methodist Conference now meeting in London, and prays earnestly that God's blessing may rest upon their [*sic*] deliberations."

The Bishop of London will not permit himself to be outdone in grammar and gracefulness.

"I cannot," he declares, "allow such a gathering as the Œcumenical Conference to assemble [*sic*] in the metropolis without sending them [*sic*] a line of greeting."

Episcopal English has its peculiarities, like Episcopal honesty. Perhaps the strange inability to discriminate between the singular and plural is one of the qualifications for understanding the Trinity. And these sanctified solecisms object to continuation schools!

Cato learned Greek at eighty. It is not too late even now for the bishops to tackle their mother tongue.

E. R. WOODWARD.

## Obituary.

I REGRET to record the death of Annie Elizabeth Chapman, wife of Mr. R. Chapman, who has for many years been secretary of the South Shields N. S. S. Branch. The deceased expired in childbirth, which is one of the saddest misfortunes. She had been a regular attendant at Branch meetings, and her presence will long be missed at future gatherings. She was a firm adherent to Secularism to the last. She leaves two children, aged four and eleven, to face life without a mother's love and guidance. The funeral was a Secular one, Austin Holyoake's service being read by Mr. D. R. Bow. There was a large attendance of mourners, including members of various neighboring N. S. S. Branches; and the difficulties were lessened by the kindness of the vicar of St. Simeon's, Mr. Wolstencroft, who treated the Secularists more like members of his own church than as opponents of his religion.—J. FOTHERGILL.

## Acid Drops.

THE late G. W. Steevens, in describing President McKinley, said that "His strong, clean-shaven face has a suggestion of Charles Bradlaugh. There is the same lofty and massive forehead, the same power of chin and jaw, clear eyes, wide nose, full lips. All his features suggest dominant will and energy." Some will take this as a compliment to Bradlaugh. We take it as a compliment to McKinley.

"Teddy" Roosevelt is not a philosopher, although he is now President of the United States. Some time ago he talked some very impertinent nonsense about Thomas Paine, which he had not the grace to retract when his mistake was pointed out to him. We were not surprised, therefore, to hear him talking nonsense on another topic. It is reported that, on reading a favorable bulletin about Mr. McKinley, he clapped his hands joyfully, and, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed: "Didn't I tell you that God would not let such a noble man die by the assassin's bullet?" "Teddy" Roosevelt doesn't see what a comic figure he is as an oracle. It is enough to make the most melancholy man, who possesses the least sense of humor, burst his sides with laughter. Nothing could be more odd than to find *him*, of all men, receiving what we believe Mr. Stead once called "tips from God."

While this pious politician is airing his divinity, he should try to explain why the God, who would not allow President McKinley to die by the assassin's bullet, allowed him to be shot by the assassin's bullet. When a miracle is wrought, it should be done more neatly, and with a greater regard to the happiness of all concerned. Besides, the Lord did allow the assassin's bullet to take full effect, and poor President McKinley is dead, in spite of Roosevelt's assurance.

Even the *Lancet* joined in the cant of the hour on this occasion. "President McKinley's life," it said, "has, under Providence, been saved by the excellent surgery of our American *confrères*." We daresay the writer of this precious sentence was perfectly well aware that, if a man's life or death is "under Providence," bad surgery is as useful as good. If Providence has decided that he shall die, he will have a funeral in spite of all that science can do for him; and if Providence has decided that he shall live, he will not shuffle off his mortal coil even if his wounds are dressed with a hatchet.

The trust in God expressed by all the crowned heads, as well as others, while President McKinley was fighting his battle with death, was quite touching. "God grant that his life may be preserved," said King Edward. "I hope that, by the grace of God, you will recover," said the King of Greece. "We trust in God," said Emperor William. "If prayers can save him," said an American Bishop, "he will recover." But prayer did not save him, any more than it saved Garfield. The truth is that all this trust in God was based upon the doctors' hopeful reports. There would have been very little of it if the doctors had known and reported that the internal wound made by the assassin's bullet was gangrening all the time.

One of the oddest eulogies of President McKinley was written by "Merlin" in the *Referee*. The last sentence was worthy of all that went before. "He met his death," this writer says, "like a Christian gentleman; and the pride and affection of the people over whose destinies he presided will survive all sorrow, and will keep his memory in honor through a thousand generations." We should like "Merlin" to tell us what is the precise difference between a gentleman and a Christian gentleman. It would be possible then to determine whether the adjective lent any force to the substantive. We should also like him to tell us, in all seriousness, if he really believes that President McKinley will be remembered in three or four thousand years' time. Why, it is quite conceivable that "Merlin" himself will be forgotten by then.

A writer in the *St. James's* tells a remarkable story *apropos* of the American Revised Version of the Bible. When our own Revised Version was about to be published, American journalists attempted bribery in their eagerness to get an early copy. One of them, who cared more for the Bible as "copy" than for the eighth commandment, became acquainted with the foreman at the Oxford Press. He tried to coax a copy of the new Bible out of him with a four-figure bribe, and the foreman dismissed him from his friendship with the remark that the honor of the Oxford Press was worth many bribes of £2,000. The smart American agent tried again, the object of his scheming this time being one of the revisers, who lived in Scotland.

Calling on the reviser, he asked the minister to let him see the volume, and the good man pointed to it on his writing table, but not for the world would he let the man touch the book. A glance at the closed volume was something, however, and the wily American called again—when the minister

was out. He had with him a dummy volume exactly similar in appearance to the Bible on the minister's table, and a second in the room alone would have enabled him to accomplish his purpose. But the minister's daughter suspected her visitor, and not for one second was he left alone. The man went back to America as he had come—without the Version he so much needed.

Of course, American journalistic enterprise is great. But was the object, in this instance, worth it? That Revised Version has always been a flat thing on the book market. The American Version is likely to be the same after the first spurt. But what are we to think of an Almighty God who could not convey his will or revelation in such an intelligible way as to have rendered all these different revisions unnecessary? And how can "the man in the street" be sure that any one of them is right?

It is not unlikely that if Paul were to return to this life and visit Paris, and if he had been present recently at a ceremony which occurred in that city, he would have made a remark similar to one he is said to have uttered when he visited Athens: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." The incident referred to was the "christening" of a new automobile, the owners of which invited their friends to be present at the function. The motor-car was decorated with flowers and wheeled out into the yard, where it was sprinkled with "holy water" by the parish priest, who delivered an address. The automobile had sponsors, and was christened "Janette," after the daughter of the owner.

"I am intoxicated," said an old gentleman in clerical attire to another gentleman in blue outside Bow-street Police Station; and, as there was no doubt about it, the intoxicated gentleman was run in and charged with being drunk and disorderly. He turned out to be the Rev. Walter Reginald H. Pughe, of the Vicarage, Newlyn, Penzance. The magistrate fined him ten shillings or seven days. Fortunately, the court missionary helped him to pay the "half quid." Such is the force of professional sympathy.

If one take from thee thy coat, said Jesus Christ, give him thy cloak also. Yes, says the Bishop of Stepney, but that doesn't apply to other articles. He had a man called Charles Hazell prosecuted for stealing his pencil-case, which we suppose was of considerable value, as the culprit was sentenced to six months' hard labor.

"It is God's will," said poor Mrs. Caroline Louisa Moseley, before drowning herself in Finsbury Park. And it evidently was so, if we are to believe the theologians; for they say it was "God's will" that poor President McKinley died instead of recovering.

St. Kilda, an islet in the Outer Hebrides, has been the scene of a grim religious quarrel lately. The inhabitants, desiring to show their opposition to their minister's religious views, have prevented him obtaining his winter provisions.

The late Sir Walter Besant was an omnivorous reader of books. Among all those he read in his boyhood he puts the *Pilgrim's Progress* first. He said of it some time before he died: "While it survives, and is read by our boys and girls, two or three great truths will remain deeply burned into the English soul. The first is the personal responsibility of each man; the next is that Christianity does not want, and cannot have, a priest. I confess that the discovery, by later reading, that the so-called Christian priest is a personage borrowed from surrounding superstition, and that the great ecclesiastical structure is entirely built by human hands, filled me with only a deeper gratitude to John Bunyan."

The *Christian Herald* sails in with one of its usual amusing stories under the heading, "Former Infidel Healed through Prayer." "Some years ago," says Mrs. McAlonan, an officer in the Salvation Army, "with my lieutenant, at Heywood, Lancaster, I went one day to visit a woman who was stated to be dying—given up by the doctors. She had been a follower of Bradlaugh for many years. We found her suffering extreme agony—in the last stages of a terrible disease. She lay apparently in the throes of death, with the death-sweat upon her brow. With great difficulty she managed to whisper that she wanted us to pray for her soul. We did so, and with a deep, agonised groan she cried out: 'Lord, I do believe!'"

Why unbelievers should be represented as desiring to believe in the Lord when they are ill is "a thing which no fellow can understand"—to quote a phrase of Lord Dundreary's. One would think that that was just the time when they would treat the Theistic delusion with the greatest disbelief, not to say scorn and resentment.

The Yezidis, or Devil Worshipers, of Mesopotamia, are a sect of about 140,000, who keep themselves very much to themselves. A correspondent of the *Standard* succeeded recently in interviewing their Kak, or pope, who is revered as an incarnation of the Angel Reziel, and the oracle through whom alone the Mashafe Rashe, or "Black Book," the Devil Worshipers' Bible, is interpreted. Judging from the correspondent's interesting account of the Kak and his followers, the Yezidis are a survival of one of those Gnostic sects who regarded the God of the Old Testament as an inferior Demiurge, and looked on the Satan who urged man to eat the forbidden fruit as man's best friend, who desired to free him from the dominion of a jealous inferior Deity. The peacock is the symbol of Reziel; it was in the form of a peacock—not that of a serpent—that he entered the Garden of Eden, and in this guise induced Eve to taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge. He would have helped the man and woman to eat of the tree of life too, and they and their posterity would never have known death.

Old Dowie, who ten years ago was worth nothing financially and remains at the same point intellectually, has just been assessed by the taxing authorities of Chicago on personal property worth 500,000 dollars. The assessors know this to be a very low estimate of Dowie's actual wealth. He is the owner of seven tabernacles, five houses of "divine healing," a printing and publishing plant, and several flourishing business concerns known as the Zion City Land Association, Zion City Lumber Company, and others.

This shows what a man of no special qualifications, except a little shrewdness and bounce, can do by starting the silliest religious craze. Elijah II. is obviously an old humbug, but he has amassed a fortune, as Mrs. Eddy has done.

A minister in Kansas town is said to have recently adopted a novel scheme for bolstering up the church collection, which had been diminishing. He informed his congregation just before the plates were passed around that the members who were in debt were not expected to contribute. The collection that day was double the usual sum.

A religious contemporary discourses on what it rightly describes as the "growing indifference to public worship," which it considers "a disquieting symptom of our times." The writer says truly enough: "The idea of worship seems to be fast disappearing amongst us. Many of those who go to church and chapel appear to leave the idea of worship entirely out of their reckoning. They go to be entertained. They want their ears tickled with pleasant sounds. They demand good music and eloquent preaching, or they will not go at all."

"When I was in Scotland," continues the writer, "a few weeks ago, I heard a gentleman ask the hall porter, one Sunday morning, if there was any 'crack preacher' in the town. The porter was not aware that there was. 'O, then,' said the gentleman, 'I shall go for a drive,' and he went. This, I fear, is typical of a very general tendency in the present day. Preachers are looked upon in the light of public entertainers. If they are 'up-to-date men,' smart, clever, eloquent, and able to tickle the ear of the crowd, the crowd will go; if not, the crowd will stay away."

A certain clergyman, who had been offered a suffragan bishopric, went to consult Dr. Temple, and, like a modest man, decried his own virtues. "I am not a good preacher," he remarked somewhat plaintively. "I know you're not; I've heard you," said Dr. Temple.

The *Sunday Companion*—the silliest of all the religious weeklies—says "local preachers and Church members, if they wish to be consistent, will avoid theatres." Still, we suppose that theatres will survive, and that people will flock into them, though on the "Lord's Day" they will carefully avoid "places of worship."

Here are some admissions by Silas K. Hocking in the *Christian Budget*: "One sometimes wonders what has been the total effect of European influence upon the black races of Africa. Have those children of Ham been better for the contract? We have Christianised a few, it is true; but when we think of the tribes that have been decimated by war, and by diseases unknown to them before the white man's advent; when one thinks of the mischief and demoralisation wrought by the European speculators and drink-sellers, and when one considers the object lesson that has been before their eyes during the last two years, he begins to wonder whether any little good wrought by the white man has not been a hundred times out-weighed by the evils which have followed in their steps."

The late Bishop of London once told a quaint story illustrating how the children of the poor reason from experience—early begun and too often sad. A poor little London girl was being examined upon the parable of the prodigal son. The teacher had got as far as the repentance of the prodigal,

and his eating of the swine-husks, when she inquired: "What else could he have done?" The child replied: "He could have pawned his little girl's boots!"

The so-called Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association—how many working men belong to it?—is very much concerned about the opening of the Alexandra Palace on Sundays. It provides, we are told, at a given charge a concert for those who attend, "thus enticing people away from public worship." There we have it—"enticing people away from public worship." That's where the clerical and ministerial jealousy comes in. We should hope that even religious people who are aware of the statements of Christ in regard to the Sabbath will resent the interference of this bigoted and purposely misnamed society.

A writer in a religious contemporary admits what must be obvious to everyone, that a considerable proportion of holiday folks spend their Sundays much as they spend the other days of the week. They may attend church or chapel when they are at home, but they appear to disregard all the claims of public worship when they are away. The churches and chapels will not accommodate one half of the people who flock into the town during July, August, and September; and yet very few of these places are anything like full. Theatres and concert-halls are crowded night after night, but the services of God's house are left to a few devout souls.

The *Canterbury Diocesan Gazette* draws attention to the steady decline in Sunday-school teachers and scholars which has been going on in this diocese, as elsewhere. From 1897 to 1900 inclusive, the numbers show a steady decline, in scholars of 1,812, of Bible-class members 605, and of Sunday-school teachers 348.

A Roman Catholic—probably a priest—writes to the *Rock* on Sunday desecration. He begins with a reference to a rather unkind review which appeared in that paper of Miss Mary Spencer Warren's *Sunday in London*. He goes on to say: "I have always believed that the Decalogue speaks of the seventh day in connection with sanctification, not the so-called Christian Sabbath or Sunday. Sunday is undoubtedly the first day of the week, and I cannot find throughout the entire Bible one solitary place wherein God blesses the Lord's Day. A day becomes a Sabbath or holy rest-day by the direct agency of God, not by the legalism of man-made laws and such-like dubious means.

"The only difference I can see between Protestants and Romanists consists in the fact that, whereas the first try to keep as a Sabbath a day that is not God's Sabbath at all, the latter believe in keeping none at all. In the book entitled *The Day of the Sun* the *raison d'être* of Sunday-keeping is defined as the necessity of one day in seven being set apart for mankind. Herein we find the views of St. Paul, in Colossians, concerning the freedom of judgment in Sabbath-days, used in unison with what the author calls Christ's chief offence in the eyes of many who persecuted Him."

The Rev. T. B. Gregory, an American, discoursing upon boys' "penny dreadfuls," says that the dime novel may do the boy some harm, just as, occasionally, his dinner may distress him when he takes too much of it; but the harm he will get from it, as compared with the food, will be trifling. The "penny dreadful" is much less harmful than the "penny pious" that is dealt out to the children at the Sunday-school. The "penny dreadful" is at least human, and is to that extent true; while the "penny pious" is a bloodless, marrowless, dehumanised affair, that simply serves to disgust the boy who reads it.

It is at least curious to find a minister speaking thus, says the *Rock*. But the minister simply expresses the general opinion.

A review of Professor Henry Churchill King's book, *The Reconstruction of Theology*, appears in a religious contemporary. Mr. King is a Professor of Theology in Oberlin Theological Seminary, New York, and his book is published by Macmillan's. The reviewer admits that Mr. King's book "may be said to reflect, for the most part, the views of a good many people, at home as well as in America, who propose to remake the Christian religion. The fundamental doctrines of Christianity, not the points of controversy which divide the disunited branches of the Church, are the theology which he assumes to stand in need of restatement. He quotes the opinions of a number of more or less prominent writers.

"The 'reconstruction of Christian doctrine' is, we are told, 'the great intellectual task upon which the Church of our day is just entering.' Certain 'presuppositions' upon which the preaching of the Church was based 'have utterly vanished.' The characteristic of our own age is 'enlightenment, destroying in order to reconstruct.' The old systems are 'not simply going, but gone.' It would be idle to deny

that sentiments of this kind do unquestionably prevail to a very considerable extent."

"Christianity and Unbelief" was the subject of one morning's discussion at the Methodist Ecumenical Conference. There were no unbelievers present, so the Christians had it all their own way, and fairly romped up to the winning-post. The one-sided debate was opened by the Rev. Professor A. Beet, of the Wesleyan College, Richmond. This gentleman remarked that unbelief was as old as Christianity. Well, of course it is, and a great deal older. Sceptics smiled at ancient superstitions long before Christianity was born. They existed even amongst the stern and bigoted Jews. Indeed, two books that are perhaps the finest in the Old Testament—Job and Ecclesiastes—were written by two wicked sceptics, who thus introduced their detestable heresy into the very Word of God.

Bishop J. W. Hamilton, of the Methodist Episcopalian Church, California, got Secularism by the throat and dragged it all round Wesley's Chapel. He threw it down, jumped on it, and sang his pious cock-a-doodle-doo! It was easy work, for poor Secularism hadn't a single friend in the place. Had it had one, Bishop Hamilton might have been reminded that he was treading on dangerous ground when he said of Secularists that "their knowledge was a job-lot, picked up from all sources, including Christianity." Christianity itself is a job-lot, collected from all the religions of antiquity. And this is fatal to a faith which pretends to be divine, and therefore original. But being a job-lot is no disgrace to any body of human (natural) knowledge. Truth has to be gathered from all countries and all ages. It is not the monopoly of England, nor even (if Bishop Hamilton will pardon us) of California. The Secularist recognises this, and in so doing he is wiser than the Christian.

"How to Combat Unbelief" seems to have aroused increased interest at the Conference. But it does not appear that any practical methods were suggested. The best way to "combat unbelief" is, of course, to establish a sound basis of belief. But this was not done, simply because it cannot be done. It was said that "the accuracy of modern methods of research, and the success gained by them in natural science, compared with the loose dogmatism of some Christian advocates, have greatly aided unbelief." That may be so, but there is nothing better advanced by these later, and presumably superior, Christian advocates.

"Loose Christian argument," we are told, "is a parent of unbelief." Yes, we have heard some at one time or other which has certainly been rather loose, and a great deal which has been absolutely imbecile. "Modern science," it is further said, "has revealed the universal reign of law." That blots out Providence and the utility of prayer. The reader of the paper recognises this, for he says: "Modern science has thus limited the domain of the supernatural." In the view of many it has not only limited that fanciful domain, but swept it out of existence in the minds of rational persons.

In the course of the discussion Dr. A. B. Leonard, of New York, said modern apologists of Christianity were too largely on the defensive, and lacking in aggressive power. Well, let them come forward with arguments. We are glad of aggressiveness—except that form which has been customary with Christians—namely, vindictive persecution, calumny, and social ostracism.

Mr. Hall Caine has been asked by an interviewer if he himself, like David Rossi in his *Eternal City*, accepted the Lord's Prayer as a guide for the individual. He replied: "Indeed, yes. I think that part of it which deals with temporal affairs turns a flood of light on the world of men, and is good as politics as well as good as religion." The interviewer asked him: "You really believe that nations could be ruled by it?" Mr. Caine's reply was characteristically sloppy. "Is it so very brave," he said, "to say I do? Have you read Professor Harnack's great book—his lectures in Berlin? He deals at length with the Lord's Prayer, and says: 'Some of us who are not to be dismissed as dreamers regard the fulfilment of its predictions as something more than a mere Utopia.'" Now it can hardly be Mr. Caine's modesty that leads him to seek shelter behind Professor Harnack. It was so much easier, of course, to refer to an "authority" than to give an independent answer. For our part, we shall appreciate Mr. Caine's admiration of the part of the Lord's Prayer which deals with temporal affairs when we behold him praying for his "daily bread" without relying on a big balance at his banker's. We might add that Mr. Caine has gained the said big balance by exploiting the religion of "poverty and renunciation."

The International Peace Congress has our best wishes. Its object, at least, is one of the noblest. But we are unable to admire the parrot-like talk about Christianity in which so many of the delegates have been indulging. Dr. Spence

Watson led the way in his opening address. Yet he was obliged to spoil his panegyric on the Christian religion, as a promoter of universal brotherhood, by admitting that "the swooping down of Christian nations upon China" was "the most detestable bit of greed history records."

Dr. Watson spoke of the "brotherhood of man" as following "the fatherhood of God." If he will read history more carefully, he will find that the reverse is the truth. The conception of God is governed by the conception of humanity. Gods have always been local and partial when their worshippers were insular and limited in influence. It is only when their worshippers sweep to empire, and then become cosmopolitan, or when they are somehow brought into regular contact with different nations, that the Gods assume a more universal character. The distinct idea of a Supreme Being, lord and father of all mankind, really arose, as an evolutionist would expect, in the Roman Empire. National barriers were broken down by that great imperialism, and the national Gods began to disappear and make way for a broader Deity.

Readers of the *Social Gazette*, one of the organs of the Salvation Army, are instructed in the godly mystery of cheap shopping. "When at the counter," the writer says, "I lift my heart to God for his guidance, so that I may choose the most durable and suitable material, however small it may be, and I do not remember ever regretting my choice." By this means, apparently, a family of six may be clothed on two shillings a week. The only way to do it cheaper would be to "lift" the material.

The Rev. E. Bruce Cornford, of St. Matthew's, Southsea, is down upon the Jews for rejecting Jesus Christ. He appeals to the romance of the Crucifixion for proof. They called out "His blood be on us and on our children," and Parson Cornford declares that the sanguine fluid still drips down from their Oriental locks and Semitic noses.

"I am a priest of the Church of God on earth," says this pompous soul-saver, "with the tremendous and awe-inspiring responsibility of trying to teach myself and my people how to live and how to die." Well, if he would get through the second half of this lesson quickly, and then reduce it to practice, the world would suffer no irreparable loss.

Parson Cornford is also down upon the *Freethinker*. He thinks its contributors ought to be shut up in a lunatic asylum. We don't reciprocate the compliment. He is harmless. It is only a common case of "swelled head."

The Bishop of Hereford has had £2,000 left him by the late Sir Joseph Pulley, to be spent at his absolute discretion on Church of England objects in his diocese. How far we are off the days when the "Master" said, "Blessed be ye poor."

The Rev. Richard Wilson, of St. Augustine's, Stepney, has been down amongst the Kentish hop-pickers. His object, of course, was to doctor their souls. But while he was there he seems to have thought that he might as well see to the doctoring of their bodies. So he persuaded a lot of them to get vaccinated. A hospital tent was provided, and a doctor was set to work upon them every evening till half-past ten. We suppose it is natural that one form of quackery should sympathise and co-operate with another. Christianity and vaccination are both systems of inoculation; one inoculates against original sin, and the other against small-pox; and we believe they are equally efficacious.

The absurdity and uselessness of the oath-taking formality found further exemplification last week. At a Camberwell inquest Mr. Wyatt, the coroner, asked a witness if he understood the nature of an oath. Witness—"I've never tried it before." Coroner—"But you know what you are about to do?" Witness—"Yes; kiss the Book." Coroner—"But what does that mean?" Witness—"I don't know. I've never done it before." Coroner—"It means you are to tell the truth, and nothing else. Can you do that?" Witness—"Oh, yes; easily."

### A Christening.

Yesterday my niece was baptised. The child, the bystanders, myself, the priest himself, who had just dined and was all red faced, did not understand, any of us, what we were doing. Contemplating all these symbols, meaningless for us, I had the feeling of being present at some ceremony of an old-world religion dug up out of its dust. It was very simple, and very familiar, yet I could not get over my amazement. The priest muttered at a gallop Latin, which he did not understand; we others did not listen; the child held its little bare head under the water which was poured on it, the taper burned, and the verger responded: Amen! For certain the most intelligent thing there was the stones, which had formerly understood all that, and which perhaps had retained something.—*Gustave Flaubert*.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, September 22, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester; 11, "Anarchism and Assassination"; 3, "Mr. Hall Caine, the Pope, and Christian Democracy"; 6.30, "Death and the Devil."  
 September 29, Glasgow.  
 October 6, Birmingham.  
 October 13, Hull.  
 October 20 and 27, Athenæum Hall.  
 November 10, Camberwell.  
 November 24, Leicester.

**To Correspondents.**

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—September 22, Sheffield Secular Society; 24 and 25, Chesterfield, debate on "Spiritualism." October 6, Athenæum Hall, London; 13, Camberwell; 17 (Thursday), Wood Green. November 10, Athenæum Hall, London; 24, Birmingham. December 8, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 15, Glasgow. All communications for Mr. Charles Watts in reference to lecturing engagements, etc., should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

NEW ZEALAND.—We omit your name, as desired. We can quite understand that you don't want to be "spotted" by bigots out there. Thanks for copy of Father Power's sermon, which we shall notice as soon as possible. The following extract from your letter will probably interest some of our readers: "For the past twelve months I have been regularly getting the *Freethinker*, and never have I enjoyed reading any paper so much; in fact, I am only too pleased to let others read it. You will be pleased to hear that Freethought is progressing favorably in New Zealand, and when the census returns are complete we expect to see a large increase in the number of avowed Freethinkers." We are obliged to you for your personal good wishes.

J. H. CLARKE hopes we shall triumph over our enemies and "come out of the ordeal with the greater confidence of the party, if such a thing is possible."

E. O. JONES.—Pleased to receive your letter. Mr. Anderson has not been a Director of the Freethought Publishing Company since the last General Meeting—practically not for the present year.

T. H. GALE.—It was too late for last week's issue. The *Freethinker* is now made ready for the press on Tuesday evening.

W. M. R.—We have no intention of noticing the libellous brother-in-the-Lord of the filthy wretch who, after accusing Secularists of unspeakable crimes, without a shadow of evidence—as was proved in the Court of Queen's Bench—was himself sentenced to imprisonment for debauching girls, and then imprisoned again for bigamy. Such carrion, whether in prison or out of it, are unworthy of attention, and still more so of reply. It is only in the cause of Christianity that the one or the other could ever obtain recognition or earn a subsistence.

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

W. G. GILES, sending subscriptions to the Fund for Mrs. Foote on behalf of the West Ham Branch, says: "The Branch wishes to thank you again for your efforts in the Freethought cause."

S. B.—What you say about "Life" is no doubt sound enough, but much fuller treatment would be necessary to make it of any value in our columns.

T. H. SEYMOUR.—Many thanks for the enclosure and your good wishes. Our pursuer has not done us all the injury he probably intended. Happily there are others who recognise our services to Freethought, if he has forgotten them.

W. LEAT.—We are pleased to receive your Branch's vote of confidence.

ABERDONIAN.—Thanks for cutting. The case is rather an awkward one for criticism in our columns.

R. LEWIS.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. Pleased to hear you intend to cycle over to hear Mr. Foote at Manchester. You are fortunate in your wife's being a Freethinker. We send her our compliments. It is the conversion of the women to Freethought that will settle the fate of priestcraft and superstition.

RUFUS (Liverpool).—Acknowledged as desired. Thanks also for your sympathetic letter. A man who has any real friends finds them out in a time of adversity.

C. D. STEPHENS.—Thanks for cuttings. Mr. Foote's final statement will probably appear in next week's *Freethinker*, and no doubt you and others will find it fairly satisfactory.

J. FOTHERGILL.—We have acted as you requested. Mr. Chapman has our deepest sympathy in his sad bereavement.

READER.—President McKinley's opinion on any subject outside American politics was not of much importance. It is admitted that he was nothing of a student, nor a man of wide intellectual interests. When he wrote, "My belief embraces the Divinity of Christ and a recognition of Christianity as the mightiest factor in the world's civilisation," he was just letting out what had been poured into him in his childhood. He may, or he may not, have uttered all those pious expressions on his deathbed which were reported by the newspapers. It is of very little consequence either way. But it does seem rather odd that he should lie unconscious for hours before he drew his last breath, and yet be talking texts half the time; which texts were carefully taken down by newspaper representatives who were not present.

H. PERCY WARD.—(1) We are very glad to hear of your success thus far at Bradford. It gives us great pleasure to see young men coming forward and taking their full share of the work or the movement. The more there are of them, the better they comport themselves, and the greater the success they achieve, the more we are delighted. The older men must pay "the debt of nature" in time, and it is a consolation to know that the cause will be in good and competent hands when they have got their "discharge." (2) Thanks for the reference to what you heard at Northampton. Something to the same effect reached our ears before. It throws rather a strange light on a certain paragraph.

J. ELLIS.—We should like to hear how you are progressing with the Hall scheme at Liverpool. See "Sugar Plums" for the other matter.

R. P. EDWARDS reports that fair progress is being made at the Secular Hall, New Brompton. Mr. Watts had a good audience on Sunday, and Miss Hobhouse has been secured for September 29 for a lecture on the Concentration Camps in South Africa.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Blue Grass Blade—Sydney Bulletin—Public Opinion—Daily Chronicle—Bolton Daily Chronicle—Crescent—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—La Raison—Truthseeker (New York)—Morning Leader—Boston Investigator—Secular Thought—Western Morning News—Portsmouth Evening News—Southern Daily Echo—Bradford Daily Telegraph—Neosho Times—Searchlight.

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.

**Personal.**

**The Press on My Bankruptcy.**

THE press references to my bankruptcy, on the heels of my public examination, have for the most part been distinctly amusing. Papers that never give a line to anything I say or do, and ignore me as though I were absolutely non-existent, now describe me as "the well-known Freethinker." When I am overtaken by misfortune they suddenly discover that I am still alive; or perhaps I should say that they only choose to publish what they think will tend to my discredit. But this is one of the penalties of my position and my policy. A leader of militant Freethought must expect injustice and calumny. He pays the price of the luxury of calling his soul his own, and those who dare not pay the price hate him, and even affect to despise him, although it is evident that they play this part of their poor game very badly.

It is fortunate that I do not care a rush for outside opinion, for none of the papers make any reference to the *real* cause of my bankruptcy, and so it is represented that I have failed because I could not pay ordinary trade debts, and have exhausted the patience of my creditors. But the Freethought party know all the facts of the case, and, while I enjoy their confidence, I can afford to let the heathen rage with perfect equanimity.

Some of my readers, however, may wish to see what the papers are saying; and it may be well to show what is the attitude of such "organs of public opinion" to a man like myself, and the party I represent; so I will take a few press "criticisms," and extract a little merriment from them; a thing which is always permissible in a world so full of sadness.

The London *Evening News* delivered itself as follows:—

"We have no wish to exult over Mr. G. W. Foote in the hour of his misfortune, but it is impossible to help feeling pleased that the *Freethinker* has never paid a dividend. Had it been conducted with some regard to the decencies of controversy and the feelings of other people, it might have been less of a failure, though the opinions it advocates have even less hold on the English public than they had some years ago."

Anybody would think from this that the *Freethinker* had been owned by a Company for many years, and had never paid a dividend all the time. But it has only been published by the Freethought Publishing Company at its present office for a little more than a year. Dividend or no dividend, however, the *Freethinker* has lived for nearly twenty years, and still shows no signs of decrepitude. During that interval a good many journals have gone to the dogs. Not long ago a Christian paper—and a very able one too—the *Church Gazette*, went into the Bankruptcy Court with its editor, and neither has been heard of since. Some day or other, perhaps, it will be recognised that I knew what I was about when I placed the *Freethinker* beyond the reach of my enemies, and safe from the accidents of my own personality. After all, this paper has never been the thing I lived by, but the flag I fought under, and I always thought more of it than I did of myself.

Those "decencies of controversy" have always been paraded when a leading Freethinker was in trouble. Charles Bradlaugh was accused of a want of proper respect for them. I mean while he was alive. After his death it was discovered that he was tolerant and fair-minded and generous. But that was only another case of whitewashing the tombs of the prophets.

And then those "feelings of other people," including the delicate susceptibilities of the *Evening News*. Had we shown them more respect, the *Freethinker* might have been a greater success. Well, there are other rationalist journals conducted on other lines. And do they succeed? Why, the *Freethinker* has a larger circulation than all of them put together. On the whole, we rather doubt the sincerity of our contemporary's advice. We can hardly believe that it wishes this journal to be successful, and the advice of an enemy is always suspicious. Advice of this kind used to be given plentifully to the late Colonel Ingersoll. And what did he do? He laughed at it. Suppose (he said) the enemy's general sent in a messenger under a flag of truce, to inform you that your men were firing too low, and that if you wanted to win you would have to order them to aim higher—would you take the advice and give the order?

The *Daily Telegraph* has made the striking discovery that "Freethought does not appear to be a remunerative profession." Of course it isn't. Who ever thought it was? Neither was Christianity a remunerative profession in its infancy—though God knows (if I may be pardoned the expression) it pays well enough now. At the end of Jesus Christ's mission the cashier of the first Salvation Army looked into an empty exchequer, or he would never have rattled for thirty half-crowns. The ruth is that principles cannot be advocated on a purely commercial basis. No doubt the ordinary newspapers would say that they have principles, but what they mean is that they take sides. And what they live on is not principles, but news and advertisements. For the most part the leading articles are mere padding, and when an editor displays a little individuality the proprietors soon bring him to his senses, or instal an accommodating successor.

"It is suggestive," the *Daily Telegraph* added, "that he [myself] attributed his insolvency largely to the war." No doubt it would have been suggestive if I had said it, but I was guilty of nothing so ridiculous. My bankruptcy is entirely due to the action of Mr. George Anderson. It was not the wish or the interest of my only other considerable creditor that I should enter the Bankruptcy Court. Mr. Anderson drove me there out of pure vindictiveness, for he knew all along that he would get nothing at the finish, as I informed his solicitors, in the only interview I ever had with them, of the precise state of my affairs. It is true that something was said about the war in my public examination. I observed, quite incidentally, that my earnings as a lecturer had suffered a diminution in consequence of the war; and, no less incidentally, I said that the *Freethinker* had suffered from the same cause. But this had nothing to do with my bankruptcy, though it had something to do with the extent of my resources.

The *Westminster Gazette* went one better than the *Daily Telegraph*. When the Official Receiver asked me how the war affected the *Freethinker* and my lecturing, I replied that when people were heavily taxed, and burdened with all sorts of expenses, they had to cut

off their luxuries, and intellectual luxuries were the first to be cut off. This was made the subject of satirical comment in the *Westminster Gazette*. Some of its "criticism" was simply malicious, but one sentence is worth noticing. "While," it said, "we can quite understand that lectures have been at a discount as intellectual luxuries, we are surprised that there should have been a similar disinclination to buy the newspaper." My reply to this "criticism," as well as to the ridiculous statement that my bankruptcy was "largely due to the war," was sent to the *Westminster Gazette*, but was not inserted. Perhaps my poor composition would be out of place in its classic columns. But even an illiterate and uncouth person like myself is entitled to fair play. At least I thought so, but it appears that I was mistaken. I ventured to remind the magnipotent editor I was addressing that my journal was only technically a "newspaper." It did not print war news and other civilised attractions. Had it done so, it might have had its share of *kuulos* while public attention was concentrated on the spectacle of quarrelsome Christians cutting each other's throats in South Africa. But concerning itself only with matters of more permanent interest, it had suffered, like all other "advanced" journals, while the war-fever was raging. Unless I am much mistaken, I have seen this general fact noted in the *Westminster Gazette* itself. Not only "advanced" journals, but publications of all sorts—apart from newspapers—have felt the adverse influence of the war. This is notorious. Even in America, during the trumpery war with Spain, while the newspapers did a roaring trade, the publishers of more serious literature were half ruined.

I expected better things of the *Westminster Gazette*. But where I am concerned it seems to be just on a level with inferior papers. If there is any difference, it is rather worse. All I say or do is studiously ignored, but the conspiracy of silence is broken when I happen to be unfortunate, and then the world hears of the "Failure of a well-known Freethinker," though it never hears of the "Failure of a well-known Christian."

Fortunately, the *Sun* displayed a higher sense of justice. I beg to thank the editor for the generosity of his criticism. It is not for me to say more. What appeared in the *Sun* is reproduced in another part of this week's *Freethinker*. My readers will also find the reproduction of some comments on my case in the *Melbourne Liberator*. This paper is edited by my gallant old friend and colleague, Mr. Joseph Symes, who has had troubles enough of his own to weigh down a dozen ordinary men, so that his sympathy has a deep root in personal experience.

Just as we are going to press a "reply" has arrived from Mr. Anderson's solicitors. I will print it in full next week, with my comments. Meanwhile, I say nothing to raise any sort of prejudice in the minds of my readers, for I wish to be scrupulously just, even to Mr. Anderson.

I must ask my readers not to accept implicitly the figures as to my assets and liabilities which they may see in the newspapers. They will get the true figures in my final statement. For the present I have only to say that, exclusive of the *interest* claimed by Mr. Anderson and another creditor, and which it was monstrous to expect me to pay out of my poor earnings, the sum of £400 would clear off all the actual liabilities disclosed in my Statement of Affairs. Such is the mouse that has been born of the huge mountain in labor of my supposed indebtedness.

The Fund for Mrs. Foote, which has been generously contributed to by friends in all parts of this country, and in various other parts of the world, will be closed the week after the publication of my final statement; that is to say, in all probability, the week after next. Those who have not contributed, but intend to, should therefore note the limit of their opportunity. But I have already stated, and I repeat it, that the *danger* to my home has passed.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Sugar Plums.

THERE was a capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Anarchism and Assassination." Several questions were asked and answered, and were followed by some discussion. This evening (Sept. 22) the platform will be occupied by Mr. C. Cohen, who takes for his subject "What Civilisation Owes to the Cross."

Mr. Foote will be lecturing in the provinces for some weeks. He starts off with three lectures to-day (Sept. 22) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. His subjects are attractive, and no doubt there will be a strong rally of the South Lancashire "saints" in view of the ordeal through which he has had to pass lately.

We have just received a pleasant and very welcome letter from the veteran Dr. E. B. Foote, senior, of Larchmont and New York. Dr. Foote is one of the best known and most highly respected Liberals (Freethinkers) in America. He is seventy-three years of age, his friends say that he looks well, and he certainly is better than he was a year ago, when he was troubled with vertigo. There are not many well-to-do Liberals in America, which is doubtless due to the fact (as Dr. Foote says) that "the orthodox world boycotts Freethinkers when they are very open in their manifestations of sympathy with the cause they uphold," and the result is that "those who are getting along pretty well are called upon nearly every week in the year." With regard to our own troubles, Dr. Foote writes: "I read regularly the reports of what is being done for you, and of the progress of the cruel legal proceedings instituted by your supposed benefactor. It is unfortunate that Freethinkers cannot set our Christian opponents a good example."

Mr. Charles Watts reports that he had a fine audience at New Brompton last Sunday, and a hearty reception. His lecture on "The Growth of Freethought" was thoroughly appreciated and warmly applauded. To-day, Sept. 22, Mr. Watts lectures afternoon and evening in Sheffield; and next Tuesday and Wednesday he debates Spiritualism in the Memorial Hall, Chesterfield.

The Finsbury Branch has unanimously passed the following resolution: "That this Branch wishes to record its unabated confidence in, and its sincere sympathy with, the President, Mr. G. W. Foote."

The new Bradlaugh Club and Institute at Bradford was opened successfully on Sunday. Every chair in the lecture-room was occupied at Mr. Ward's afternoon lecture, and many persons were turned away from the debate in the evening.

The Glasgow Branch is going to make a "big splash" on the occasion of Mr. Foote's forthcoming visit. Not only will the lectures be well advertised, but there is to be a fresh feature at the evening meeting, consisting of music and a poetical reading by Mr. Foote. The "saints" are expecting "a bumping house."

The Liverpool "saints" are requested to note that the local Branch will meet at 7 p.m. on Sunday, October 6, for a social celebration of the opening of the new session. In the special circumstances there ought to be a strong rally on this occasion.

Now that the winter season is beginning to steal upon us, a fresh appeal may be made to the "saints" to circulate the Twentieth Century Edition of Paine's *Age of Reason*. A dozen copies for free distribution can be purchased at our publishing office for the small sum of 4s. 6d., or half-a-dozen for 2s. 3d. Such a trifling outlay is within the capacity of hundreds. We should like to see all the first issue of 10,000 copies exhausted by Christmas.

Ess Jay Bee's verses, "The Man of God Goes Forth to Jaw," are reproduced from our columns in the *Boston Investigator*—of course with acknowledgment. The same journal, one of our most welcome exchanges, reproduces a portion of Mr. F. Neale's article on "Holy Wedlock." Ess Jay Bee's verses are also reproduced in *Secular Thought* (Toronto).

Dr. Karl Pearson is publishing through Messrs. Black a second (revised) edition of his *Ethic of Freethought*, which first appeared in 1888. "The aim of the book," the new prospectus says, "is to contrast the emotional and rationalistic treatments of philosophical and social problems; to show how the enthusiasm of the study is a real factor of human development, and how the slow and gradual educational work of the thinker is, after all, more permanent than the emotional influence of the market-place."

Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, Kentucky, publishes a curious paragraph, dated "London, August 23," in which it is stated that "the concern," meaning the *Freethinker*, has "gone into the hands of a Receiver." We understand that Editor Moore glances at this journal, in the intervals of his more important occupations, and we are therefore unable to understand why he gave publicity to the nonsense we refer to. The *Freethinker* is not in the hands of a Receiver, neither has it come to grief in any other fashion. Mr. Foote has himself been driven into the Bankruptcy Court by a rich Secularist, under conditions that have excited the indignation of the whole Secular party. But the Freethought Publishing Company remains uninjured, and the *Freethinker* flag still streams out on the wind. We hope Editor Moore is glad to hear it. Anyhow, he needn't call the *Freethinker* an organ of "Agnosticism," for it never was anything of the kind.

### The Fund for Mrs. Foote.

A. J. White, 5s.; J. H. Clarke, 2s. 6d.; E. Bater, 10s.; Stamps, 1s.; T. H. Seymour, £1. West Ham Branch:—E. Pankhurst, 2s.; Mrs. Pankhurst, 1s.; E. Parker, 2s.; J. Parsons, 2s.; W. Manley, 2s.; E. E. Sims, 2s.; A. Wood, 2s. 6d.; C. Keenan, 2s. 6d.; R. High, 2s. 6d.; A Friend, 2s. 6d.; H. Taylor, 2s.; W. G. Giles, 2s.; H. Wood, 1s.; H. Tucker, 1s.; W. Smith, 1s.; E. Leggatt, 1s.; J. J. Curtis, 1s.—W. Munday, 2s.; P. Rowland, 5s.; Glandur, 1s.; John and James McGlashan, £2; R. Lewis, 4s.; Rufus (Liverpool), £1.

### Our Editor's Troubles.

WHAT THE MELBOURNE "LIBERATOR" SAYS.

WE are sorry to see that a malicious friend has driven Mr. Foote into the Bankruptcy Court. The conduct of this man is just of a piece with that of certain parties we have had to deal with in Melbourne. Cunning rogues are not, we are sorry to see, confined to Melbourne. This foe of Mr. Foote's appears to have no better excuse for his conduct than the friends here had for doing their best to ruin me and kill my wife and child. We hope Mr. Foote will get through his trouble in such a way as to secure himself and family, and defeat the rascality of his persecutor.

Is it not a wonder, considering what Bradlaugh, Foote, Symes, and others have had to suffer for and in the cause, that any man should venture to become a Freethought lecturer? Bradlaugh was starved during all the earlier portion of his career, and, worse than all, in the very last part of it, and died heavily in debt. If ever a man deserved good treatment and generous support, it was Bradlaugh. The reverse was his fate. Foote has both worked and suffered for the cause, suffered a year's cruel imprisonment for being honest and enlightened enough to blaspheme; and now he is being ruined by a pretended Freethinker. Is it a fact that the Jesuits have worked their agents into the English Freethought movement as they did into ours in Melbourne? It looks as if they had; and Freethinkers have never yet been half wide enough awake to the doings of those scoundrels. Symes has had his share of persecution from without, of horrid treachery within the Freethought camp, especially of the latter. No treachery can ever excel that of which Fraser, Weedow, and Robinson were the centre. And again we ask, Is it not wonderful that any man should embark in such a cause? Is it to be wondered at that most run away from it? Bradlaugh would have risen to the highest post in the Church; Foote would be a most prominent man therein; and so would Symes be. They needed but to do as others do—play the hypocrite and flourish. Some Freethinkers are not even worth working for, not to mention suffering.

—*Liberator* (Melbourne), August 10.

### "The Pilgrim's Progress" in Eskimo.

The British and Foreign Tract Society have translated Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* into no less than ninety-five different languages and dialects. Some of these, as might have been anticipated, are of a jaw-breaking character. So much so, indeed, have the compositors of the Oxford University Press found the Eskimo language to be that they have demanded a higher rate of payment in regard to it. The following samples of this beautiful tongue show that their action is reasonable: "Kujalidlarpogut ovenetsungnar-laurapta." "Rauvengitisarmaritsainarnngnangigalloaruptalonet. Kujalijutiksaksakatsainaralloarpoguelle."—*Globe*.

In earth's great armory hang each man's arms and the commission that contains his labors. Is it manly to let them hang there, and not take them down and be at work?

## The Doctrine of Hell.

THE orthodox are always telling us that, if it had not been for Christianity, Europe would never have arrived at the beautiful and consoling doctrine of hell-fire. So far from this being the case, however, it was already antiquated at the time when the Gospels were written. Centuries before that period, the Greeks had imported the Orphic mysteries from Thrace, and were acquainted with the ideas of "heaven" and "hell." When Plato wrote his *Republic*, he was well versed in the Orphic teachings (which, it is needless to say, he rejected). He tells us that "Musæus and his son represent the Gods as bestowing on the justified delectable blessings; for they bring them to the abode of Hades, and describe them as reclining on couches at a banquet of the pious, with garlands on their heads. The ungodly, and the unjustified, however, they plunge into a swamp, and compel them to carry marshy water in sieves." The Orphic authorities dwelt with constant emphasis upon the details of the various kinds of torments reserved for the wicked and disobedient in the world of shades. They spoke of the ever-burning fire, the rivers of mud, the snakes and monsters which dwelt there; and the evil demons who tormented the inhabitants, who were hung upon trees, roasted alive, or plunged into morasses of boiling blood and filth. And they gloated upon these horrors with all the fertility of invention that we find in the similar teachings of the monks of the Middle Ages, and the preachers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is obvious that these ideas of sufferings and tortures could only have arisen among people who were naturally cruel and persistently barbarous, and to whom the torture of prisoners and criminals was an ordinary and agreeable subject of meditation; and it is, therefore, not surprising to learn that the Thracians, from whom the Greeks received the Orphic doctrines, were themselves a warlike, bloodthirsty people, delighting in drunkenness and slaughter, and addicted to sacrificing their enemies upon the altars of their gods. Furthermore, such doctrines, when introduced into Greece, would naturally recommend themselves to rude and savage minds alone, so that we find them rejected as a general rule by the poets and philosophers, although we learn from various sources that they were largely adopted by certain classes of the population.

When Grecian ideas began to infiltrate into Judaism, it was the worse ones that received the preference. Already, in the time of the Maccabees, the Book of Daniel looks forward to a period of bliss for the orthodox dead, and of degradation for the rest. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." In the Jewish Apocrypha the idea of hell is further advanced. The Book of Enoch says: "Know ye that the souls of the ungodly shall be made to descend into Hades, and they will become wretched, and great will be their tribulation; and into darkness, and a net, and a burning fire, where there is grievous damnation, will their spirits enter; and there will be grievous condemnation for the generations of the world." Still later 2 Esdras vii.: "The pit of torment shall appear; and the furnace of hell shall be showed. As the spirit leaveth the body to return to him that gave it, if it be one of those that have been scorners, and have not kept the way of the Most High, but have despised his law, it shall wander, and be in torments forthwith, ever grieving and sad..... They shall pine away in confusion, and be consumed with shame, and shall be withered up by fears, seeing the glory of the Most High before whom they have sinned whilst living."

In the New Testament hell is very prominent as a nice, handy place for throwing all those that did not agree with the Jesuine teaching; and especial allusion is made to the last verse of the Deutero-Isaiah: "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched: and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Notwithstanding the fire, however, hell is described as a place of outer *darkness*, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth amongst those with teeth to gnash. The

Evangelists speak of the nether regions as localities perfectly familiar to their readers, and requiring no explanation. When Luke speaks of Dives as being in hell, "He lifted up his eyes, being in torments.....and cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame."

But the Orphic Mysteries were not merely devoted to descriptions of the future state of the departed. They centred chiefly round the visit of Orpheus to Hades. This journey of Orpheus appealed to the Greek poets, who stripped it of its religious associations in order to give it a more human interest; and it is by the paraphrases of the Greek poets that the legend is now best known. They told how Orpheus played so sweetly that all nature paused to hear his music. Not merely did human beings forget their labors and their passions, but the very beasts of the field forgot their wildness, and pressed round to hear the strains. Nay, the most rapid rivers ceased to flow, that they might linger near the musician. The trees bowed their heads, and the hardest rocks were softened. Everyone and everything honored Orpheus; but in the height of his fame he was overwhelmed with the direst sorrow. His beloved wife, Eurydice, running through long grass, stepped upon a snake, which turned and bit the tender foot that hurt it. The poison killed her, and her spirit was carried to the land of Shades—that is, the Hades of the poets; the dark, dismal, shadowy land, where the ghosts of the dead floated aimlessly in the air, ruled over by Pluto and Persephone. Her grief-stricken husband followed after her, playing as he went. The guards of Hades listened spell-bound, and forgot to close the gates. Orpheus penetrated even to the palace of Pluto, and charmed the lord of the Underworld with his enchanting music. The Fates, who spin the thread of human life, unbent their stern features. The rulers of Hades listened to the musician's petition, and allowed him to lead Eurydice back to Earth—but upon one condition. For even the thrilling strains of Orpheus could not bring Hades to surrender unconditionally. The husband must at once leave the forbidden land, and must not look back in his hasty flight until he arrived at the gate. Orpheus went back with a lighter heart; but, just before he arrived at the entrance of Hades, he could not forbear looking behind him. Eurydice was there, but his Parthian glance violated the conditions. She vanished into thin air, the gates closed behind him, and Orpheus stood in the outer world—alone. Such was the version of the Greek poets; but the Orphic doctrines put a sterner construction forward, and, as Orpheus had prevailed over Death and Hades, the believer trusted that the same power would ensure his happiness in the next world and protect him from ill. Eschatology was the chief concern of superstition at the commencement of our era. At Alexandria it had evolved Serapis (who was really a form of the Greek Pluto) out of the ancient Egyptian religious ideas. "Serapis" is a name formed from the conjunction of *Osiris* and *Apis*; in fact, if there were any doubts upon this etymology, they would be dispelled by the Aramaic form of the name—"Osir-hapi." The cult of Orphism was very widespread. A frequent picture in the Roman catacombs represents Orpheus seated, playing his harp, and surrounded by the animals who had forgotten their savage natures in listening to his music. Catholic antiquaries attempt to explain this away, as they attempt to explain away the Mithraic and other pagan representations in the catacombs, by the blatant assertion that the figure is not Orpheus, but Christ. Those who have no theory to maintain are content to take the representations as they stand—namely, as the symbols of Orphic and Mithraic mysteries, which existed side by side with nascent Christianity.

If the heathen declared that their founder descended into Hades, it was, of course, essential that the founder of Christianity should do so too. The necessity for the descent was not a primitive one, and only came into the faith by degrees. Some assert that St. Paul credited the descent of Christ into hell upon the strength of Ephesians iv. 9. "Now this, he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill

all things." But it is not at all clear that this is Paul's meaning; he may only be speaking of the descent to the earth. Peter iii. 18, however, is undeniable: "He went and preached to the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient." The early Fathers insisted upon this doctrine; and it was considered so important that it was eventually inserted as part of the so-called "Apostles' Creed." Furthermore, the Third Article of the Church of England says: "As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed that he went down into hell."

The Christian doctrine of hell in all its phases, therefore, is merely a re-hash of earlier superstitions. In this case, as in all others, there is no revelation of the divine will or the divine methods, but merely the aberrations of diseased human fancy. CHILPERIC.

### Mr. Foote's Failure.

#### A RECORD OF SELF-SACRIFICE AND WORK.

"PROPAGANDA funds" are usually very unreliable when you have to meet the weekly bill of your printer, fight expensive actions, and keep a wife and family in reasonable comfort. This Mr. G. W. Foote has found out. For years he has spent all he could get in keeping alive the *Freethinker*, in order that it might carry what he believed to be the truth to the multitude. He has defended himself against allegations of blasphemy, and suffered imprisonment for his principles. With money and pen and speech he has over and over again fought the battle of free speech when attacked by injudicious police officers. He has spoken from thousands of platforms in every part of the country. And at the end he has had to submit to public examination in the Bankruptcy Court.

#### NO WEAPONS FOR ADVERSARIES.

Mr. Foote is one of the most forcible and persuasive speakers that the open-air platform has produced. Had he devoted his mental ability, eloquence, and business tact to making money, he might now have been in affluent circumstances. He preferred to fight for what he held to be sound principles, and is now a poor man.

His examination to-day elicited nothing beyond the story of continuous efforts to raise money to keep the paper going; even the funds loaned on his household furniture going in the same way, and he used the last £200 to pay off some of the indebtedness for which he was personally responsible, although the money had been spent in the "cause."

One point came out with great clearness—that this brilliant debater and speaker was rewarded with a pittance beside which his possible earnings as a political electioneering agent would be affluence.

—Sun (London).

### A Secular Funeral.

ON Tuesday, September 10, at Scatho Cemetery, Grimsby, was put to rest Mr. Samuel W. Alward.

A long procession of carriages left the residence of the deceased on the Welholme-road at three o'clock, including the representatives of various companies in which the deceased was interested, and private carriages of various gentlemen in the town.

Mr. Charles Watts, of London, kindly came down at a few hours' notice to give an address over the grave of an old friend.

It was most gratifying to the relatives and to the members of the Freethought party to find over three hundred people were present, including clergymen and individuals of all shades of opinion and religious belief, to listen to the eloquent address so impressively given by Mr. Watts, and to pay a last tribute of respect to Samuel W. Alward, a man who nobly did his duty, held fast to integrity, maintained a conscience void of offence, and, at every hazard and every sacrifice, nobly stood up against the world, and preached the religion of good deed, sincerity, and truth.

Mr. Alward was a great admirer of the late Colonel R. Ingersoll. He believed in the religion of the family, where "the one man loves the one woman, and the loving arms of children were around the necks of both." A truly loving husband, a good father, a generous neighbor, and an honest man. What else can be added? The longest life contains no more.

He felt that, being a man, he had the right to examine the creeds and Scriptures for himself; and that, being an honest man, it was his duty and privilege to tell his fellow-men the conclusions at which he had arrived. He believed in the religion of Freethought; Humanity was his God; the human race his Supreme Being—and in these he put his trust. He was a supporter of all charitable institutions in the town, and worked hard and long for the Cinderella Club of Grimsby;

and was never so happy as when either addressing or otherwise assisting to entertain, every Tuesday night during the winter months, to hot supper, 250 of Grimsby's poorest children.

Thomas Paine says that "to the dead we owe nothing but truth." We certainly do not owe flattery to the dead; and these words are penned by one who had known the deceased twenty-five years. T. H. GALE.

## Correspondence.

### ATHEISM AND MORALITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In spite of the resolution I had formed to the contrary, I feel tempted to add a few remarks which may possibly throw some light on the main question at issue between Mr. Kingham and myself—namely, the alleged incompatibility of Atheism and morality. It appears to me that the only explanation of Mr. Kingham's otherwise incoherent and unintelligible position must be that he attaches a private meaning of his own to the word "morality," and that it is in this special and superstitious sense, and in this sense only, that he maintains that morality cannot exist without the supernatural sanction. Mr. Kingham is fully supported by the article of the Church of England, which teaches that good works done without belief in Christ are of the nature of sin, and therefore (I suppose) that what would be morality in a Christian is not morality in an Atheist. But this is not the meaning which the English language gives to the word "morality." The actual meaning of the word is right conduct, or the fulfilment of the moral law—the said "moral law," according to my dictionary, being "the law which prescribes the moral or social duties," and which, as stated in the Decalogue, forbids, by its primary injunctions, such actions as murder, adultery, theft, etc. To maintain, as Mr. Kingham did, that morality cannot exist under Atheism is to maintain that the moral law against murder, etc., is no longer obeyed, or is only obeyed so far as it is enforced by fear of the policeman—a charge which is the common stock-in-trade of assailants of Atheism. If Mr. Kingham was not speaking of "morality" in the proper sense of the word, he should have made clear his meaning from the first. Instead of saying that "morality" stands or falls with the supernatural sanction, he should have said that *his own theory* of morality stood or fell with belief in the supernatural. If a man says that certain people are destitute of virtue, when he only means that they are destitute of some particular *theory* of virtue, he must expect to be misunderstood, and to be held responsible for the meaning which his words convey. If I am right in my interpretation of Mr. Kingham's present position, the dispute is merely of a nominal nature—namely, whether right conduct on the part of Atheists shall be called morality or not. Possibly, however, I still fail to understand an opponent who says I have never once understood him. In this case, I had better cease to puzzle myself any further as to what his meaning may be.

As to the insinuations and charges of insincerity, abuse, fear of truth, system of morality so bad that immorality could hardly be worse, and so forth, I prefer to pass them by as the compliments one may naturally expect from a gentleman who does not like to be told the truth concerning the ridiculous nature of the ideas he puts forward.

As to my "irresistible desire not to acknowledge" my "inability to answer" him, I openly confess (and practically have done so all along) my inability to answer what I cannot understand. If Mr. Kingham feels that success in baffling opponents by being unintelligible is a matter for pride, let him congratulate himself to his heart's content, for he has much to be proud of in this direction. W. P. BALL.

P.S.—If this can be inserted, I should like to say that the above letter was sent off before I had read the notices to correspondents, wherein you point out that the dispute now seems to be reduced to one of nomenclature—a conclusion which thoroughly agrees with my own. As I also see that my letter is to conclude the discussion, I take the opportunity of saying that my opinion of Mr. Kingham is greatly modified for the better by the conclusion that his position is solely one of intellectual confusion, and not of insidious and slanderous bigotry as well. If he had made it plain from the first that his charges against Atheism were purely of a nominal nature, I should have treated him more mildly, or should not have taken the trouble to criticise him at all. Unfortunately, the heaping together of conflicting statements did not enable me to discover which were really intended to be nullified.—W. P. B.

As the heathen smote us we did not forget that we were Christians—that is to say, we turned the other cheek. "Abernit!" said the heathen. "One cheek is all that we can afford to pay indemnity for swatting!" Now this was an exhibition of worldly wisdom which we found quite as disconcerting as it was unexpected. Indeed, it necessitated entirely new plans upon our part.—*Detroit Journal*.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

### LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "What Civilisation Owes to the Cross."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, G. Spiller, "God and the Ethical Movement."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Gospel of Freethought."

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, A lecture.

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

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A lecture.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Why I am a Freethinker."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Fruits of Christianity."

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, A. B. Moss, "The Fruits of Christianity."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY: 7.30, W. Heaford, "Salvation."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and War"; 3.30, W. Heaford, "Christian Ethics."

REGENT'S PARK (near the Fountain): 6, E. White, "Is there a Life beyond the Grave?"

MILE END WASTE: R. P. Edwards—11.30, "Evolution of the Bible"; 7.15, "Triumph of Rationalism."

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Christian Charity."

VICTORIA PARK: 3.15, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and Slavery."

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Life Hereafter."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Brockwell Park, near Herne Hill Station): Lectures every Sunday morning at 11.30.

### COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 17 Little Horton-lane): 3, S. H. Pollard, "Was Adam the First Man?" 7, Debate (continued) between H. Percy Ward and S. H. Pollard, "Can Socialism Benefit Humanity?" September 26, at 8, H. Percy Ward will lecture.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Lecture by Councillor W. Godbold.

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): G. W. Foote—11, "Anarchism and Assassination"; 3, "Mr. Hall Caine, the Pope, and Christian Democracy"; 6.30, "Death and the Devil." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Mr. Charles Watts—3, "A Dethroned Deity"; 7, "The Growth of Freethought." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Important Business Meeting; Correspondence.

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 241 High-road, Leyton.—September 22, Athenæum Hall; 29, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Victoria Park; e., Athenæum Hall. October 6, Glasgow; 13, Leicester; 20, Newcastle-on-Tyne. November 3, Birmingham; 17, Athenæum Hall.

H. PERCY WARD, 1 Victoria-chambers, 17 Little Horton-lane, Bradford.—September 22 and 29, Bradford.

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