

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXI.—No. 48.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1901.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## God and Gold.

THE Bible is a very illuminating book if you read it in the right way—that is, if you read it in the light of evolution. You then find it a splendid treasury of illustrations. Instances exist in its pages of all the leading ideas and practices of superstition. By superstition we mean what is generally called religion; for superstition is only religion *out* of fashion, and religion is only superstition *in* fashion.

In an early book of the Bible there is a story about making a god, which has never received the attention it deserves. Perhaps it is not much as a story, but it is very valuable for its moral.

Jehovah, the God of the Jews, came down from everywhere to the top of Mount Sinai. He invited Moses, the leader of the Jews, to come up and spend a holiday with him. Moses went up and remained there nearly six weeks. During the whole of that period he had nothing to eat, so the Lord did not excel in the matter of hospitality. Both the divine host and the human guest were hidden from sight all the time by clouds of smoke that enveloped the mountain. The Jews concluded, therefore, that Moses had gone up for good. "You see," they said to Aaron, "he has ended in smoke." They even suggested that Jehovah himself had ended in the same mysterious fashion. Accordingly they desired Aaron to step into the shoes of his departed brother Moses. They also begged him to make them a new god in the place of Jehovah. Now that was Aaron's trade, so he took the job on cheerfully. "All right," he said; "bring along your gold, and I'll soon manufacture you a fresh deity." Whereupon they brought all the gold they could find; even the ladies took out their earrings; and no doubt bracelets and anklets, to say nothing of noserings—for they were savages enough for that—went to swell the precious heap. Aaron then made a god for the Jews out of as much of the gold as he thought necessary for the purpose. The rest was never accounted for, and Aaron's books are now beyond audit, so we cannot learn how much he netted on the transaction.

The god that Aaron made was a golden calf. The Jews worshipped it with dance and song. Some people say they have worshipped it (in their hearts) ever since. Anyhow, they found it a more cheerful deity than the one who led them out of Egypt through a river of blood, and kept them wandering about in the desert, taking years to do a month's journey, while he cursed and plagued them for their occasional recreations, which he chose to regard as wanton insults to himself.

This story, we repeat, is valuable for its moral. It shows the connection between religion and money. No gold, no god. The first demand of priests is "Bring your gold." If you have none, you may go and get saved elsewhere. When the priests get the gold they affect to despise it. But they spend it all the same. They say it is not theirs, but the Lord's. When he

wants it he can have it. Meanwhile they are his cashiers. And perhaps it would puzzle them to show a receipt for a single "quid" that ever found its way to headquarters.

Religion is supposed to be the cheapest thing on earth. It is really the dearest. "Without money and without price" is only a catching line on the prospectus. When it comes to practice the "no money" amounts to millions. Throughout the world the priests grasp all the wealth they can. Whether they are Popes of Rome, or Archbishops of Canterbury, or Generals of Salvation Armies, or common medicine-men amongst savages, it is the same thing. All the lot of them are on the make.

"Do the Scotchmen over there keep the Sabbath?" asked a Glasgow man of an American visitor. "I guess they do," said the Yankee—"and anything else they can lay hands on." That is just like the clergy. What they have they keep. Ay, and with a vengeance too. One of the most troublesome processes that history records is making them disgorge. The emetic has always to be extremely powerful. Sometimes, indeed, recourse has to be had to the stomach-pump; as in France at the present moment. The real cause of the trouble there with the Religious Orders is the accumulation of vast wealth by monks and nuns, which is used by the Church against the interests of the State.

Here in England we have an Established Church with revenues amounting to anything from seven to ten millions annually. What the precise amount is the clergy prevent us from ascertaining. Is *this* without money and without price? There are poor curates, it is true, with less than £200 a year; some with less than £100; but they probably earn as much as they would in any other walk of life. At the other extreme are dozens of men who are paid princely salaries for preaching "Blessed be ye poor." And in between are snug rectories, vicarages, canonries, and deaneries, whose lucky holders, possessing incomes ranging from £500 to £3,000 a year, contrive to console themselves for their enforced absence from the beautiful land above.

Leaving the Nonconformist Churches aside, and all the Missionary Societies; taking no account whatever of the millions they expend annually; dealing only with the seven-to-ten millions of the Church of England; let us ask why the service of God—if there be a God—requires such a vast sum of money. Is it necessary to pay thousands of professional praying-men to induce God to be reasonably good-tempered with his own children? Why should he be bribed (through them) to be benevolent to his own family? Is it reasonable to suppose that such a thing is true? What is the use, on the other hand, of maintaining a huge army of clericals to try to make the people "good"? Every man of sense knows that preaching has no practical effect on morality. Here and there a man may have a power of moral appeal to his fellow men, but a whole profession of such men is a monotonous absurdity.

G. W. FOOTE.



## Delusions Concerning Immortality.—I.

THE late Professor Fiske, who was a believer in man's immortality, in his recently-published lecture on "Life Everlasting," attempts to answer the question: "What has science to say about the time-honored belief that the human soul survives the death of the human body?" In doing so he frankly admits that, from the standpoint of reason and experience, we are no more justified in supposing that consciousness will exist after death than we should in believing that water would exist apart from oxygen and hydrogen. He says:—

"Even if we strive to imagine our own physical activity as continuing without the aid of the physical machinery of sensation, we soon get into unmanageable difficulties. The furniture of our mind consists in great part of sensuous images, chiefly visual, and we cannot in thought follow ourselves into a world that does not announce itself through sense impressions. From all this it plainly appears that our notion of the survival of conscious activity apart from material conditions is not only unsupported by any evidence that can be gathered from the world of which we have experience, but is utterly and hopelessly inconceivable."

This, no doubt, is the fact, for, as Büchner states:—

"As there is no bile without a liver.....so is there no thought without a brain: mental activity is a function of the cerebral substance. This truth is simple, clear, easily supported by facts, and indisputable" (*Force and Matter*, p. 139).

Dr. A. D. Waller, F.R.S., also says:—

"That the brain is the organ of intelligent sensation and motion is proved by the facts of comparative anatomy .....and by common experience" (*An Introduction to Human Physiology*, p. 530).

Notwithstanding these admitted facts, the most palpable delusions obtain as to man's alleged immortality. Believers in a life beyond the grave are not content in simply avowing their *belief*, but they dogmatically assert that they *know* such an existence to be a fact; nay, more, they assert that they possess a knowledge of the very conditions that will control our mentality "when we have shuffled off this mortal coil." Hence the Rev. Dr. Biggs, of Oxford, tells us that in the "next world" we shall be conscious of our existence, that we shall recognise each other, and, above all, that we shall have—

"Memory not only of our past selves, but about other people; memory, too, of those living on earth.....Do you think that those who have gone before us, our mothers, our fathers, those dear loved ones who, perhaps, were sponsors for us at the font—do you think they don't remember us, that they don't say prayers for us?" (*The Christian World Pulpit*, November 13, 1891).

Now, upon what grounds the rev. gentleman makes these reckless allegations he does not state. Such dogmatism may pass unrebuked in orthodox circles, but with impartial thinkers it appears to savor too much of reckless speculation. We cannot conceive of memory and recognition apart from the person who recognises and remembers; and it is purely arbitrary to assume that, when man's personality is destroyed, its operations will continue. Besides, with many individuals the recollection of their past lives would not be conducive to their happiness. In fact, in some cases a memory of the past, and a recognition of the wrongs and miseries still being endured on earth by those we love, would not enhance, but rather mar, our peace and comfort in any celestial abode. Evidently the Rev. Dr. Biggs does not believe his Bible where it states, "The dead know not anything. In the grave the wicked cease from troubling and the weary will be at rest. The very day man goeth to the grave his thoughts perish." If "God's word" be true, there is no continuity of consciousness, and, therefore, it appears evident that after death those who lived will have no memory nor power of recognition.

The prominent delusions which exist in reference to man's alleged continuity of consciousness after death are these: (1) The dogmatic assertion that, in addition to his body, man possesses an immortal soul, which is an entity that controls his physical organisation; (2) that in man there is a universal belief in, and a desire for, a

future life, which is evidence of its reality; (3) that from matter the various phenomena of existence could not have emanated; (4) that the belief in immortality furnishes the strongest basis for morality. In the consideration of these fallacies all dogmatic utterances should be avoided. Personally, I have no objection to a life beyond the tomb, provided it is one where real happiness obtains. To associate for ever with those we love would, indeed, be pleasant, if mutual affection, comfort, and tranquillity of mind reigned supreme. But I desire no immortality unless the future abode will be illumined with love, truth, justice, and intellectual supremacy. The company to be preferred there should comprise those who on earth were known to be honest thinkers, earnest workers for the general good, and whose right to the highest state of immortality had been secured by sincere profession, noble actions, and persistent activity in the sacred cause of liberty. Such an immortality as this, however, is not offered by Christianity. Its heaven is a kind of receptacle for all sorts of characters—men who were considered too corrupt to live on earth, but who were regarded as proper candidates for heaven. If the New Testament be true, the brave, the noble, and the patriotic are oftentimes excluded from the portals of the celestial city. The passports required for admission there are faith and submission. Many of the world's heroes who have resisted tyranny, who have struggled for liberty, who have won freedom of thought, are not deemed worthy of this heaven unless they believe in "Christ and him crucified." A permanent sojourn in a place that rejects many of the purest and best of our race cannot be desired by any but moral invalids and imbeciles.

The first delusion to be considered is the alleged existence in man of an entity termed soul. Now, what is this "soul," where is it, and how are we to identify it? The error here is in supposing the ego in man to be an entity, while it is simply a resultant. As Professor Ribot states:—

"The ego is not an entity acting where it chooses or as it pleases; controlling the organs in its own way, and limiting its domain according to its own wish. On the contrary, it is a resultant, even to such a degree that its domain is strictly determined by the anatomical connections with the brain.....His [man's] proper ego is his whole self—his entire organism, with all his faculties" (*The Diseases of Personality*, p. 45).

If it is urged that the soul is the "thinking principle" in man, then it is not immortal, inasmuch as thought depends upon physical organisation, which we know is destroyed at death. Moreover, the lower animals manifest the same principle. Dr. W. B. Carpenter says that, though

"in man we find the highest development of the reasoning faculties, it is quite absurd to limit them to him, as some have done, since no impartial observer can doubt that many of the lower animals can execute reasoning processes as complete in their way as those of man, though much more limited in their range" (*Gen. and Comp. Physiology*, p. 999).

Sir Benjamin Brodie observes:—

"The mental principle in animals is of the same essence as that of human beings.....I am inclined to believe that the minds of the inferior animals are essentially of the same nature with that of the human race" (*Psychological Inquiries*, pp. 164, 166).

Darwin, in his *Descent of Man*, deals with this subject at considerable length, and on page 147 he wrote:—

"Spiritual powers cannot be compared or classed by the naturalist; but he may endeavor to show, as I have done, that the mental faculties of man and the lower animals do not differ in kind, although immensely in degree."

It should be remembered that the term "soul" has never really been defined; moreover, if we possess a soul, it is not known in what part of the body it can be found, or when it leaves the human frame. The only "soul" known is the brain of man, and if that brain does not properly exercise its functions the manifestations of life will be proportionally impaired. In proof of this we may refer to persons in lunatic asylums who have diseased brains, whose judgment is dethroned, and whose reason has deserted them. Has the soul in their case lost its power of control? If so, what is its value? When a drunkard becomes intoxicated, and



loses all control over himself, has his soul lost its power? Again, as regards the "soul" leaving the body: if it does so immediately at death, does it go straight to heaven or hell, without waiting for the judgment day? If it do not leave the body till some time after death, how can a decaying body retain the soul? Further, when does this alleged soul enter the body? In infancy? Then why does the child at that stage of its life exhibit such a low degree of intelligence? If, however, the soul is not allied with the body until it arrives at maturity, both physical and intellectual development go on without its aid. The fact is the human mind is infantile in the child, juvenile in the youth, mature in the adult, feeble in the aged, deranged by disease of its material organ the brain, and at death it disappears. The origin of the so-called soul is just that of the body, and no separation, as far as modern science shows, is possible. Mental life commences with physical life, and both are immature together. We learn to use our intellectual powers in the same way as we acquire the more perfect use of our muscular—by experience and practice. Each must begin and end with the somatic organs on which they depend.

CHARLES WATTS.

### Dr. R. F. Horton on Atheism.

SOME time ago, after I had written two or three articles within a brief period dealing with the Rev. Dr. Horton's misstatements, misrepresentations, and stupidities, I was asked by a friend if I had any personal grudge against that gentleman. I replied that I had never met him, never seen him, did not know him—except by name—and was not conscious of the smallest desire to make his acquaintance. He was simply interesting to me as a type, not as an individual. He illustrates as well as any other prominent clergyman I know the type of preacher who possesses education without culture, a smattering of historical knowledge without the mental ability to understand the nature of historical processes, who, without producing a vestige of evidence in their support, makes wild and random generalisations concerning whole classes of opponents, parades philosophic terms without caring whether his hearers understand them or not—and often, I am afraid, without clearly understanding them himself—and, finally, trusts to that coward's castle, the pulpit, to secure him against an effective exposure of his methods.

The last time I had occasion to call the attention of readers of the *Freethinker* to this gentleman's antics was on the occasion of his serious misrepresentation of John Stuart Mill's opinions concerning a future life—a misrepresentation which was followed by the bigoted declaration that "men who do not believe in immortality.....are a public nuisance. They bestialise life, they lower the tone of everything.....I would mark them all and avoid them, and, if they cannot change their mind, they should be ostracised from human society." When it is remembered that under this condemnation would fall men and women like Shelley, George Eliot, Darwin, Haeckel, Huxley, Spencer, Mill, Macaulay, Morley, and dozens of others of similar calibre, the bigotry and stupidity of the man may be imagined. Of course, it may be that he never thought of what such an utterance meant, and this, while it may be an excuse, really makes the case worse rather than better; for a man who can give voice to such sentiments, and who may be looked up to by young men and women for guidance, becomes a social danger of the gravest kind.

The latest exhibition of Dr. Horton's peculiar talents that has come under my notice is the report of a sermon entitled "Does it Matter what we Believe?" Like all Dr. Horton's sermons, there is the usual pretence of clearness and close reasoning, but at bottom the same hopeless confusion and incoherence. The very title itself is an evidence of this. "Does it Matter what we Believe?" Believe what? Clearly it does matter what we believe concerning some things, and it does not matter what we believe concerning others. It does matter, for example, whether we believe bad drains are dangerous or not, or whether impure food is better than bad food or not; but it does not matter whether we believe the

moon to be inhabited or to be merely a treeless, waterless, lifeless desert. The answer to such a bald question is both Yes and No. In any matter that necessarily affects conduct it is important what we believe, since our beliefs, if they are genuine, will determine our behavior; but in matters that do not affect conduct our beliefs are of little or no importance.

But, of course, Dr. Horton's question refers to belief in matters of religion, although even here he sets out with a statement characteristic of the man. "Every human being," he tells us, "must have some belief about the *origin* and *management* of the universe in which he lives." It is puzzling to discern what was in the speaker's mind when he spoke about the "management" of the universe. Possibly he pictures the universe as a kind of joint-stock concern, bossed by a managing director and board; but evidently, to him, the universe is one thing and its movements another. It is really difficult to say what he means, or whether he means anything at all; the only clear thing about such an expression is its hopelessly unscientific character. Nor is it true that every human being must have some belief about the origin of the universe. This statement is untrue for two reasons. First, because the majority of people never trouble themselves about such a question, and therefore have no real belief concerning it; and, secondly, even if they did trouble, it would be impossible to form any rational belief on the subject. To go on talking about the origin of the universe is just equal to talking about square circles or round triangles. About the *arrangement* of the universe we may talk, and with profit, since our welfare depends upon some knowledge of its structure; but the question of its *origin* is not merely illegitimate, it is useless. Man is only concerned with the existence and effects of natural forces; whether these forces ever began to be, or have always existed, are questions that are positively devoid of any practical value. Their effect upon human life is the sole question of real interest to man; all other questions are beside the mark. But, of course, Dr. Horton is of another opinion, and no wonder. He is a clergyman by profession, and if people settled down to a practical, common-sense view of life, the outlook would be ugly for the clergy. From his point of view, people must be fed upon empty abstractions, must delude themselves with the belief that they are vitally interested in knowing whether the universe ever had an origin or not, because, in some way or another, the question of whether we ought to pay our bills, keep our word, fulfil our obligations, and lead cleanly lives, depends upon whether the universe ever began to be. The connection is not very clear, except to Dr. Horton, and he assures us that man must hold one of four views: everybody must be either "atheist or pantheist, or deist or Christian"—the Christian view being the only one honored with a capital initial. We are only concerned, at present, with his method of dealing with Atheism, and this deserves quoting at some length:—

"Suppose a man's view of this universe is atheist. That implies that he feels that there is in this universe intrinsically no power nobler or greater than man..... and practically he takes himself as his god. As there is a curious and subtle tendency in us all to worship something and to worship the highest we know, it means that the man worships himself. He has nothing higher to worship.....It is impossible to hold the view that you are the greatest or the greatest kind of being in this universe without it having a most subtle and rapid effect upon your character. I will not seek at this point to describe it, but I look back upon the opinion once expressed by John Locke, one of the greatest of our English thinkers, that a rightly-ordered State would not permit to exist within it an atheist; and I say that, though it sounds intolerant, and is certainly impracticable, it is not unreasonable, because every person who is atheistic in his views is essentially and inevitably a worshipper of man; he knows nothing else to worship."

It would have been a pity to have further curtailed this criticism of Atheism, because it presents us with such an admirable picture of the man. A more hopelessly-muddled statement it would be impossible for anyone to make—except Dr. Horton himself; and I live in hopes of seeing him one day eclipse even this performance. But what, in the name of all that is reasonable, does the man mean by there being "in this



universe intrinsically no power nobler or greater than man"? The stupid construction of such a sentence is eclipsed only by its nonsense. Does it mean no power physically greater? If so, it is clearly false. There are physical forces in whose power man is but a plaything. Does it mean that the Atheist believes in nothing that is mentally or morally greater than man? If so, I plead guilty, and beg to offer Dr. Horton a fair challenge. Does he know of anything that is mentally or morally greater than man? The day has gone by when even Dr. Horton could attribute feeling or intelligence to natural forces; he cannot meet the challenge by the parrot-like cry of "God is greater," since our *conception* of God, at any rate, is only that of ourselves, drawn out to as near perfection as we can get. The sober truth is that—physical power aside—we know of nothing that is greater than man; and, as man cannot transcend himself, we can consequently conceive nothing greater.

The funny part of Dr. Horton's diatribe is the statement that, if an Atheist does not worship God, he must worship himself. Well, "worship" is a very elastic word, and may mean anything, from the superstitious beliefs of a savage to the devotion to an ideal shown by men like Garibaldi or Bradlaugh; and it would be difficult to pin the speaker down to any one meaning. But what he obviously means—although, while he has the insolence to insinuate this, he has not the courage to say it openly—is that Atheism necessarily leads to self-worship in the sense of a petty and short-sighted selfishness, with a complete disregard to the welfare or convenience of all around. Clearly this is what is meant by Atheism "having a most subtle and rapid effect upon your character." It is really treating Dr. Horton with more respect than he *intrinsically*—to use his favorite, and usually misplaced, word—merits to discuss such a charge seriously. The last fifty years alone would furnish scores of names of men and women who have been either tacit or avowed Atheists, and who may at least challenge comparison with Dr. Horton for useful social work and strenuous endeavor on behalf of others. The plain truth is that Atheism, when it is held as a reasoned conviction, and not a mere emotional revolt against a stupid and brutalising theology (in which latter case we are very largely dealing with the religious temperament turned against itself)—an Atheism that is adopted as the result of deliberate conviction is bound to develop a type of mind which sees personal welfare, not in the gratification of every fleeting passion or transient impulse, but in the identification of personal with social well-being.

Is it quite without significance that the development of a science of sociology and a science of ethics, the existence of an increased sense of the value of personality and of individual life, with the rise of a spirit of practical humanitarianism, have all been coincident with the growth of scepticism in religion? All this may be without significance to men like Dr. Horton, and to those who see in the accidental result of a professed member of the Christian faith taking part in social work a proof of the social value of Christianity. Others, however, will not be slow to realise that it was the very weakening of theology which formed the condition for the development of sociology, and that the breakdown of the belief in heaven and hell, in a providence, and rewards and punishments after death, drove men into seeking a new synthesis of life which should at least be based upon facts which remain true to all despite the fluctuations of speculative opinions.

But all this is a sealed book to Dr. Horton. Every country's condition is, according to his philosophy, determined solely by its religion—a sociology which has not risen above that of a child's Sunday-school. Thus, "China is gross, stolid, cruel, intellectual, but never progressive"; it "exactly reproduces in effect that Buddhistic view of the universe that is essentially atheistic." (Evidently he imagines Buddhism to be the only creed in China, while calling Buddhism "cruel" is an example of ignorance that a schoolboy might be ashamed of.) But while the Chinese are thus atheistic, "a Chinaman believes that he can cheat his god," and worships "the disembodied spirits of his ancestors." England's greatness is, on the other hand, due entirely to Christ. "The Christian idea of God that exists in

this country is the great difference between England and China. If China had that idea and we had China's idea, we should be Chinese, and they would be English." Such is the philosophy of the Lyndhurst Road Church! Would such hopeless drivel be tolerated anywhere but in a pulpit?

After this we need not be surprised at Dr. Horton's believing that "a rightly-ordered State would not permit to exist within it an atheist." The bigot shows itself plainly at last, and we are able to estimate at its value this Protestant champion's fervent expressions of toleration in his assaults on the persecuting ardor of the Roman Catholic Church. Let Dr. Horton and his kind have their way, and no State would tolerate within its borders people of such a damnable type as Garibaldi, Gambetta, or Bradlaugh. Persecution would be once more in full force—or, rather, I presume it would not be persecution when directed against Catholics and Atheists; it would be zeal for the purity of the Christian faith, lest we should all become Chinese—pig-tails, almond eyes, and all. Well might Milton say that new presbyter was but old priest writ large; and well might Guizot say that there was something in the very nature of religion that led to persecution. The savage is present with all of us, but it is never so dangerously near the surface as when we grow ardent in the cause of religion. After all, Free-thinkers owe Dr. Horton a service for his speech. It will help them to realise with what security we may trust the cause of liberty in the hands of any Church that is strong enough to fully assert itself. To General Sherman is ascribed the saying that "the only Indian is a dead Indian." Substitute the word "religion" for the word "Indian," and we have recorded a sound historical generalisation.

C. COHEN.

### The Passing of Swinburne.

WHENEVER the discussion of militarism arises, one of the commonest pleas put forward in its defence is that at the worst war brings out some noble qualities in the combatants which otherwise would lie dormant—courage, self-sacrifice, chivalry. And there is an idea in the minds of many otherwise estimable people that a bout of national blood-letting, now and then, is a rather wholesome thing. When we descend from the abstract to the concrete, and examine this theory in the light of facts, it is to be feared that it will not stand very long. To my thinking, the present South African war is the clearest and greatest single problem in political morality which has arisen in these countries for a generation. It is a kind of touchstone by which we may try men. But one fact, at least, stands out clear: no one with any regard for truth can hereafter say that war brings out the noble qualities of a people. Every scientific thinker must regard militarism as the antithesis of sanity, politically and ethically; the sword is not, never was, and never will be a symbol of civilisation, which is a growth of peace; but, whilst most of us realise these truths, few can have conceived it likely that under the sway of militarist prejudice, with domestic peace, the English press and populace would descend to such levels of gross vulgarity and baseness as we have had evidence of during the past two years. Talk of fortitude, of chivalry, of respect for the good qualities of the enemy! Why, the prevailing tone has been one of surprise and annoyance that an enemy should defend himself at all. The English people seem to think, as Mr. Dooley says, that their side is to do all the shooting, and that shooting back is criminal. To an outsider, the situation is really laughable. The English generals, without, as is now evident, any real military necessity, burnt the Boer farm-steads, destroyed dams, and rendered desolate the country. That is all right, according to the English press. But when, on the other hand, the Boers derail and fire on a train conveying military, who would be prepared the next minute to fire on these same Boers if they could, even Lord Kitchener talks of "wanton murder." There is never a story of a British reverse but it is accompanied by some whine about "Boer atrocities"; so that one would imagine even the least manly would grow a trifle ashamed.

Amongst men of letters, however, the worst collapse



is that of Mr. Swinburne; and the chagrin and regret in his case is all the greater because of the remembrance of what he once was. Perhaps Mr. Swinburne's verse was always a little too flamboyant, and there was evidence always of a certain want of intellectual steadiness. But, at any rate in his youth, he could sing of freedom and high ideals with great power. He has now fallen to uttering incoherent and almost obscene abuse, not merely of the men who are fighting in the field; he has even disgraced himself by using language about women and children that could scarcely be equalled in the lowest pothouse. Apparently, if he had his way, the "whelps and dams of murderous foes" would have been all butchered in cold blood, and he apparently thinks it noble that England should have "spared or feared to starve and slay" the defenceless women whose homes have been burnt, and who have been congregated in the prison-camps. All the while the fact being that this Swinburnian nobility is conspicuous by its absence, and that, short of absolute deliberate starvation, nothing that a fiendish ingenuity could devise to inflict suffering on these people was left untried. Those women whose husbands were still fighting in the field, and those children whose fathers were fighting, were stinted of the common necessities of life; there has been produced in the camps—if not by deliberate intention, at least by criminal carelessness—a death-rate which threatens to eliminate all the Boer children in a couple of years; and so conscious of their guiltiness even are the authors of this blackguardism that they were afraid the other day to let Miss Hobhouse land in Cape Town, lest she might speak the truth. It is in these circumstances that the comfortable Mr. Swinburne, lolling in his ease at home, pens his abomination.

It is certainly regrettable in this connection to find that Mr. Swinburne, who once figured as a Freethinker and a poet of intellectual emancipation, should have brought upon himself a rebuke for his bloodthirstiness from a clergyman, the Rev. Duncan McVarish, who, it seems, served as a chaplain with the forces in South Africa. The latter gentleman wrote Mr. Swinburne a letter of remonstrance, which Mr. Swinburne actually publishes in the *Saturday Review* with his own reply. In this reply the poet tells us that, "of all imaginable calamities which could have befallen humanity in our time, the greatest would have been the success of the Boers in their alternately avowed and disavowed conspiracy to drive civilisation, liberty, and progress from South Africa by driving the English into the sea"—and much of a like kind. After talking of the Boers' "avowed conspiracy" to drive civilisation from Africa—though some of us have faint recollections of another conspiracy, which has passed into history, as the Jameson Raid—it is not surprising to subsequently find Mr. Swinburne praying God to "forbid that Englishmen" should be like other people.

The case of Mr. Swinburne does not bear argument. Plainly, we are in the presence of a kind of dementia, induced by the fact that England is at war. In this article I do not argue the larger political issue which, rightly or wrongly, is excluded from the columns of the *Freethinker*. But I should be sorry to think that the sufferings of women and the deaths of little children had come to be regarded amongst any body of Freethinkers as matters of party politics. These things are not questions of partisan politics; they are questions of common humanity, and the prevention of them a common human duty.

We are all, however, concerned in checking the spread of militarism, and Mr. Swinburne's outburst shows how far that creed is a help to humanity, or good feeling of any kind; we need say nothing of its literary aspect. And as for Mr. Swinburne individually, of whom writers in these columns have frequently spoken in praise, I personally feel what I would feel for some wife-beater or coward who slandered absent women. Blackguardism is not rendered less offensive because it is written in metre. But it is with sadness one writes these criticisms. It is pathetic to see a poet like Swinburne soiling his own reputation, and scrawling across the tablet of the memory of what he once was, filthy sentences like those he now writes. If the old Swinburne is dead, his memory might have been left in peace. Well, indeed, is it when death comes in the noon-day.

FREDERICK RYAN.

## Free Will and Necessity.

THE Free Will Illusion is the source of the accusation that Secularism undermines the foundations of morality by teaching the scientific belief that men's actions are determined by natural laws of causation. Explanation and correction of the delusion should therefore be of use to Secularists, and should help to solve a problem that still troubles and perplexes many inquirers, both in its intellectual and its moral aspects. In the hope of affording a little assistance in this direction, I propose to set forth the views that I have gathered or formed upon the subject in question.\* I ask the reader to excuse the repetition of an illustration or two which I used in an article in the *National Reformer* some twenty or thirty years ago.

In the first place, I may say that I do not undertake to assert the absolute falsity of the "free will" idea on which mankind commonly supposes it bases its methods of dealing with conduct and morals. The popular conception of "free will" is a confused and self-contradictory medley of truth and error; but, up to a point, it serves its practical purposes sufficiently well to be useful for ordinary occasions. A tolerant, or more than tolerant, attitude towards a popular misconception or partial misconception may be illustrated by observing to how great an extent we all adopt the geocentric idea, although every educated person knows that the sun does not circle round the earth, and that consequently it does not "rise" and "set" except in appearance—the rising, passing overhead, and sinking in the west being merely an *apparent* motion of the sun, resulting from the real motion of the globe upon its axis. But, although astronomers know this old geocentric theory to be totally wrong, they still use common phrases and modes of thinking based on the old conception. Astronomical almanacks still have their columns headed "sun rises" and "sun sets." Nobody troubles to abolish brief and convenient expressions and conceptions based on appearances or subjective interpretations of objective realities.

Similarly, those of us who are convinced Necessitarians or Determinists, or, as I would prefer to say, Causationists, frequently use language implying some sort of freedom of the will.† As employed for everyday purposes, the free-will phraseology usually "comes out all right in practice," even though it may be "all wrong in theory"; just as do our conceptions of the sun, moon, and stars as describing diurnal circles around the heavens, when all the while they stand still, and it is we, and not they, who have moved. The correction of popular errors is not so simple in the case of mental processes as in the case of the purely physical facts of astronomy.

Bain's explanation of the great free-will puzzle with which theologians and metaphysicians have mystified mankind, is that to apply such terms as "free" to volition is as irrelevant, or as utterly inappropriate, as to speak of virtue as being round or square (*The Emotions and the Will*, pp. 477-486). But, rightly or wrongly, mankind at large *will* employ similes, or metaphors, or other scientifically-inaccurate or inappropriate terms, whenever these suit their convenience or their fancies, just as they say "black as thunder," though sound obviously has no color; or a "square meal," though the food is probably not rectangular. In many cases originally metaphorical terms become the recognised symbols of the new meanings, as in the case of "right" (*i.e.*, straight) conduct, an "upright" man, righteousness, integrity (=wholeness), sneak (=snake), etc. It appears to me that there are relevant, and therefore legitimate, senses, as well as illegitimate senses, in which the will can be spoken of as free; and the ideas and feelings of liberty and necessity, and the various terms expressing them, such

\* This article was written before the appearance of "S.'s letter on "Morals and the Will"; but some parts of it may, perhaps, help him to clear away his difficulties.

† We commonly assume, for instance, that an offender could have avoided his fault or offence, and that *therefore* he deserves the blame or punishment incurred. Without this assumption, and the associated feeling embodied in such phrases as "Serve him right," our condemnation of evil-doers might lack the warmth and weight necessary for the effective regulation of conduct.



as *free, must, may, can, etc.*, are so useful for practical purposes that mankind will never consent to their abolition.

Admitting, then, the use of the word "free" in connection with the will, I would point out that we may regard man as a "free agent," or as not a "free agent," just as we please. All will depend on the meaning we attach to the word. A friend of mine used to compare man's freedom (or compulsion) to that of a weathercock. The vane on the steeple is "free" to turn, or it is "compelled" to turn—whichever you please, or both at once, for there is no contradiction between the meanings in which reasonable persons will use the words. Similarly, man's volition may be absolutely caused or compelled or determined, and yet may be free in perfectly legitimate senses.\*

If we may not apply the word "free" to the human will, we have no right to apply the term to anything else whatever. As the weathercock is "free" to turn, as opposed to one that is fixed by rust, and as various objects are "free" in various practical senses, though strictly subject all the while to the laws of causation, so human volition is "free" (*i.e.*, moveable, adaptable, etc.) in a higher and more complex sense than applies to mechanical objects and effects. Such freedom no more overrides or evades the laws of causation than does the freedom of a bird let loose from its cage, or the freedom of gaseous molecules flying to and fro and bombarding surrounding objects and each other.

"Free" is a word of practical life, used for practical application to practical purposes or meanings. It implies the removal or absence of some condition which *we regard* as restraint. Men are "free" when released from slavery or imprisonment. Citizens who enjoy representative government are "free" (from the restraints of despotism). Spendthrifts are "free" with their money. Uncombined atoms are spoken of as "free." A "free wheel" on a bicycle can turn independently of the pedals. The legitimate and realistic meanings of the word "free" do not conflict with natural law. The mistake begins when we attach wider meanings of an irrational or impossible kind to the word, as if we were to suppose that a "free wheel" could be set free from the laws of motion and gravitation, or as if a free will could be released from all laws and all restraints, so that volitions would be uncaused or uninfluenced by conditions. The extension of the use of the word "free" in this metaphysical direction is, in my opinion, an abuse of the power of thought. Such a mistake is natural in pre-scientific stages of thought, but is less excusable in people who have learned the scientific doctrine that the universe is governed by fixed laws—or, in less metaphorical, and therefore preferable, words, that a uniform order prevails throughout nature—so that nothing happens by chance, but only in strict accordance with invariable sequences of causation. Absolute freedom, like "the absolute" or "unconditioned" of which metaphysicians talk, is simply absolute nonsense. It would involve endless contradictions and impossibilities. It would mean the power of being everything and nothing at the same time; of doing all things and nothing simultaneously, and so forth. A word so liable to abuse ought not to be used without a clear understanding of the meaning intended. If we accept absurd meanings, absurd conclusions will follow, as happens with uncausal conceptions of "free will." Those who employ the word "free" to mean exemption from law have yet to show that any such exemption ever takes place, or can take place, before their use or misuse of the word in question can become the basis of any conclusion of a practical or acceptable nature.

The illusion which favors the illegitimate extension of the use of the word "free" rests primarily upon our own *feeling* of what we (properly enough) call freedom of choice or liberty of decision. No reasoning will take away this feeling. No argument can destroy the fact on which it is founded—the fact that we have the power of deciding what we shall do—the power of weighing and willing. So far as I can see, there is no

need to attempt to destroy the useful and agreeable sense of freedom. It is not wholly an illusion.\* We certainly *do* choose, or what we call choose. We continue to feel "free" to choose what book we will buy or read; "free" to move a limb or not move it; "free" to subscribe or not subscribe to a charity; and so forth. The word "free" in such cases is properly used to signify an undoubted fact, and an undoubted feeling, which is also a fact of its kind. What we have to do is to guard against unscientific interpretations, which lead some people to imagine that choice or decision is independent of the laws of causation.

W. P. BALL.

(To be continued.)

### A "Believer's" Song.

[ "Why do I feel so happy? Yes! God! There *is* a God; and I need be neither anxious nor afraid, but can only rejoice."—TOLSTOI.]

COME, O unbelievers all, come and hearken unto me;  
Are you frisky as the hills of old which skipped in jollity?  
See what my belief in Christ as Lord and Savior's done to me—

Robbed me of my happy face, and chased away frivolity.  
I've cast off the mask which smiled; donned the garb of dreariness;

Named the earth so beautiful Satan's Principality.  
If no crown awaited me, life indeed were weariness;  
Earthly pleasures charm no more—heaven's the one reality.

(Sotto voce.)

Raglike is my righteousness; still, my God is dear to me.

I've a strong antipathy to labor which is manual;  
Preaching, unbelievers dear, means bread and cheese and beer to me;  
Hell still brings the shekels in—hell's a "hardy annual."

List, O unbelievers all: Yahveh is the Mighty One;  
He's as quiet as a lamb, if he have but *blood* enough;  
And the Ghost's a splendid bird, though a somewhat "flighty" one.

They're the Gods my father loved, so for *me* they're good enough.

Christ turned water into wine; cursed with volubility;  
Talked to folk about their "past" (there was no deceiving him!);

Chatted to the Evil One with gracious affability.....  
Christ is Yahveh—Yahveh's Christ! Walk up and believe in him!

(Sotto voce.)

As a child, my parents say, *I* evinced precocity;  
Never yearned for saw and plane; loved to laze and walk about.

Who would be a carpenter, blessed with my verbosity?  
No one, unbelievers dear, whilst there's *God* to talk about!

JOHN YOUNG.

### Not Allowed to Swear.

One summer day Bishop Williams, of Connecticut, went out fishing with a friend, and, as the day was warm, they placed a bottle of wine over the side of the rowboat. When luncheon time came the bishop essayed to pull the wine aboard, already tasting in anticipation the cool, delicious beverage. Through some mishap the string slipped from his fingers, and the bottle sank to the bottom of the river. Bishop Williams sat up with a sigh, and said, with his eyes sparkling: "You say it, Jones; you're a layman."

An Indianapolis man perpetrated a joke on Carrie Nation while she was there. A local dentist was standing on a corner when Mrs. Nation got through haranguing the crowd. "Look at that man," said the Indianapolis joker, pointing to the doctor. "He is well off, and he makes his money out of the tears of orphans, the wails of widows, and the groans of strong men." "He keeps a rum-shop, does he?" said the smasher, darting a piercing glance in his direction. "No," said the man; "he is a dentist."

\* If it be an illusion, so too are our sense-impressions. Colors and sounds, for instance, exist only in our own sensations. Objects merely send forth waves of certain sizes. Strictly speaking, the rose is not red, the violet not blue, and so forth. Yet the illusions of consciousness give trustworthy indications of facts of various kinds, and so serve to establish relations between ourselves and the outer universe. They are fictions consistently based on facts, and representative of them in a highly useful and convenient fashion. Of course, it does not follow that science supports the views of Hindoo philosophers, who regard everything as pure illusion ("maya").

\* I may note that Jonathan Edwards, the eminent Calvinistic divine and author of a powerful demonstration of the necessitarian thesis, holds that "necessity is not inconsistent with liberty" (*Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will*, p. 24; edition 1877).



## "The Largest Circulation in the World."

[According to a Christian paper, the Bible has "the largest circulation in the world."]

THE Bible has the largest circulation in the world?

Well, it may be true as far as you and I know.

I muttered when I heard it, and with scorn my lip was curled:

"What a lot of fools there are with lots of rhino!"

The Bible has the largest circulation? What a "sell"!

What about the poor old London *Daily Telly*?

The folks who advertise that print will surely go to—well,

To the gent who crawls, or ought to, on his belly.

The Bible has the largest circulation on this earth?

What of that? say I, a member of the "mockers";

A volume's circulation doesn't always prove its worth:

If it does so, what's the worth of "shilling shockers"?

I have an ancient copy; I obtained it as a prize

At the Christian school in which I was a scholar:

I've read it, and I value it—the precious Book of lies,

At a trifle less than half of half a dollar.

The Bible outlives other books in palaces and cots;

Of the "fittest" it is surely a "survival":

Reposing on a table as a stand for flower-pots,

I would ask you, Where the dickens is its rival?

The largest circulation? Well, I tell you what is what;

I'll admit there's not another that exceeds it;

But, leaving out the "infidels," who read a bally lot,

Why, there's hardly anybody ever "reads" it!

ESS JAY BEE.

## Acid Drops.

"THE Gospel Riots at Athens—Premier Fired At—Seven Killed, Thirty Wounded." Such were the headlines in a London newspaper some days ago. We don't suppose the editor, the staff, or the readers noticed any reflection on Christianity. It is so common a thing for Christians to quarrel and fight. Had it been a Freethought riot instead of a Gospel riot, the newspapers would have devoted a lot of space to the moral of such an occurrence. As it is, they just report the news, without a sign of wonder or perturbation.

It appears that the row at Athens was kicked up by the University students—they are up in arms, literally up in arms, for they carry weapons—against the proposal to translate the New Testament into modern Greek. They called upon the Holy Synod to excommunicate any person attempting such an act of sacrilege. And, as the Holy Synod did not move fast enough, they proceeded to demonstrate outside the offices of papers conducted by persons less silly than themselves. Hence those tears! We beg pardon—that bloodshed!

Good old Gospel! "Peace on earth and goodwill to men" was the overture, but in this case the overture had no relation to the rest of the opera. Ever since the performance began in real earnest it has been "Blood, blood, blood!"

Johnny Kensit, junior, has been taking part in a "Kensit Crusade" at Taunton. During the course of his address the High Church young men began hustling and throwing chairs about. Johnny Kensit, junior, thereupon struck up the hymn, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus." The opposition replied with "Rule Britannia." Perhaps they thought that the more pious song of the two. But be that as it may—how these Christians love one another!

For ways that are dark and tricks that are vain the heathen Chinees is *not* peculiar—in spite of Mr. Bret Harte. Government agents, even in America, are quite up to the highest standard in that line. When the Anarchist scare was hot, after the shooting of President McKinley, the police arrested the whole Isaacs family, who run between them a little Anarchist journal called *Free Society*, with the result that it could not be published. After releasing them, because there was not a shadow of evidence against any one of them, the Government—as represented by the Post Office—refused newspaper rates to *Free Society* because it had not been published regularly! We fancy this takes the cake.

The Rev. Dr. Marshall Randles, ex-Wesleyan President, has accepted the chairmanship of the Central Sunday Closing Association. Dr. Randles may think himself a very good Christian, but if that Association carried its object, and Jesus were to visit England, he would probably use strong language

on finding that he had to work the water-and-wine trick again if he wanted a drink on Sunday.

The "compulsory" people are generally wanting in a sense of justice. The Junior Army and Navy Stores, according to a letter in the *Daily News*, had ninety of their employees vaccinated on the premises; a most high-handed and unwarrantable exercise of capitalist power over wage-earners. Some of the female employees were made ill by this beautiful preservative, and had to stay away from their work in consequence. Of course they got no pay during their absence. Employers who choose to enforce their nostrums at the expense of their workpeople may consider themselves highly moral, but that opinion would not be shared universally.

Dartford magistrates have ordered a lad eight years of age to be birched for throwing stones at a train. We are glad to note, however, that the decision was not unanimous. Two of the magistrates announced from the bench that they were opposed to "such a barbarous and dangerous experiment." It was going back to the ages of darkness. This announcement was received with applause. Which shows that some people, at any rate, don't believe that whalloping a child is the way to train him in wisdom and humanity.

We do not wish to rejoice over the "little misfortune" of John Thompson Hall, accountant, formerly magistrate, and Chairman of Darlington School Board, and also a churchwarden. He is now doing five years' penal servitude for embezzling thousands of pounds entrusted to him for investment; by which conduct he "carried ruin and disaster into many homes." It was his pious reputation that gained him the confidence of his clients. One would think, after so many scoundrels had worn the cloak of piety, that even Christians would be less ready to be imposed upon. But they seem as green as ever.

By the way, this criminal defaulter was not only a Sunday-school teacher, but had actually been licensed by the Bishop of Durham for several years as a lay preacher.

*Good News* prints the following:—"An old man was reading a bill at a tramway station announcing a lecture on the subject, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' The lecturer was said to be Colonel —, the great Agnostic. The old man got on all right in his reading until he came to the word 'Agnostic,' when he turned to a gentleman beside him and asked: 'What is an Agnostic?' 'An Agnostic is one who professes to know nothing,' was the reply. 'Then a "great Agnostic" would be a "great know-nothing"—is that it?' 'I suppose so,' answered the gentleman; 'that is what the word means.' 'And people pay to hear this man lecture on a subject which he professes to know nothing about?' 'It would seem so.' 'Well,' said the old man, as he boarded the car when it stopped, 'I think if I was a "know-nothing" I would keep quiet on the subject of "What Must I Do to be Saved?" until I found out.'

"He will abundantly pardon" is the Scriptural headline of the page on which this yarn appears, and we should fancy it contains a good deal of consolation, especially for those who would otherwise "have their portion in the lake which burneth with brimstone and fire."

Lord Justice Cozens-Hardy, in laying the foundation-stone of the new People's Hall, in Latimer-road, Notting-hill, said that "they were face to face with the problem that their churches and chapels did not appeal to young men and young women." We have said so ourselves, but it *must* be true when it is said by such an authority. No doubt the new People's Palace will be much better appreciated by the young men and women than the churches and chapels wherein "educated" men solemnly talk what the fresh generation are apt to regard as antiquated nonsense.

Viscount Cross—we believe he was the brilliant inventor of the plank-bed in prisons—has just had his say on the "dearth of curates" question. The explanation he found in "the small inducements held out for members of the sacred profession." The remedy rested with the laymen, who should "put their hands in their pockets." This is letting the cat out of the bag with a vengeance. Golden bait is necessary to catch the clerical fish. We always thought so. But we did not expect to hear it from the pious lips of Viscount Cross.

The head of the Mormon Church has once more departed this life. This time it was Lorenzo Snow. He left a large family; six or seven wives and between thirty and forty children. Mr. Snow was a polygamist, and was sent to gaol in 1886 for his imitation of Solomon and other Bible-characters. Outside of his religion Mr. Snow was probably a decent man. He never used liquor, tobacco, coffee, or tea,



and did something for living on earth. Now that polygamy is eliminated from Mormonism this foolish faith is just as good, if not better, than Romanism, or Protestantism, or Mohammedanism.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Mr. George Wise is bound over "to be of good behavior" for denouncing the Jesuits at street meetings in Liverpool. Would it not have been better to bind over the gentlemen who did the rioting? It seems odd to shut up one man because another man cannot bear to hear him speak. The disgusted (and violent) gentleman is not bound to listen. Let him walk on, and leave liberty behind him.

Mr. Balfour's book was curiously referred to recently in a *Daily News* article as *The Foundations of Unbelief*. Its real title is *The Foundations of Belief*. In the preface to the new edition Mr. Balfour repeats his old nonsense—though the nonsense is prettily written—about the incompatibility of morals and naturalism. He argues that morality could not have originated in the social needs of primitive man, but must have been derived from a supernatural source. He might as well argue that a rose did not originate through the dirty roots of the rose-tree, but must have been stuck on by a beauty-loving Providence.

Even the priests were divided over the Galway election. Perhaps this accounts for the drunkenness and free fights that attended it. The ladies themselves, probably in a spirit of devotion, joined in the scimmages, carrying bottles, stones, and other elegant missiles under their shawls. The Sunday evening was particularly exciting; we suppose on the principle, the better the day the better the deed.

Mr. Arthur Lynch, the new member for Galway, is understood to be still a Freethinker. He was so some years ago, at any rate, when he contributed articles to the *National Reformer*. This crime is not mentioned with his other enormities, but we suspect it was known to the priests who worked against his return.

Seven hundred Protestant pastors in Germany signed a statement that the British Army in South Africa consisted of "craven hirelings" who, according to "undoubted intelligence," had placed old men and women in front of their ranks to screen themselves from Boer bullets. Silly, meddling Protestant pastors! Why don't they stick to soul-saving? Tommy Atkins, no doubt, has a sufficient number of failings, but being fond of a screen in battle was never one of them. His courage, we venture to say, need fear no comparison with that of the men of God, in Germany or elsewhere. The Black Army only fight a harmless old bogey called the Devil. Tommy Atkins stands up against a real enemy, faces real rifles, meets real bullets, receives real wounds, and often dies a real death. Yes, he is a braver man, anyhow, than ninety-nine hundredths of the soldiers of the Cross.

Rev. Mr. Crowley, being excommunicated, nevertheless attended the Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago. His presence in the place was discovered while High Mass was being celebrated. Thereupon the candles were blown out, and the performance was terminated. There is no report of any casualties.

Mark Twain lent some humor to the late New York City election. Amongst the stories he told from the platform was the one about the man who considered the rival advantages of the two departments of the next world, and came to the conclusion that it was "heaven for climate and hell for company." One of our American exchanges appears to regard this as a new joke. It is fairly old on this side of the Atlantic.

In view of the "Theocratic Unity" trial now proceeding in London, the accused persons being both Americans, it may be well to note what the *Los Angeles Times* reports as to Mrs. Catherine Tingley, the Theosophist, who visited this country a few years ago. The following extract speaks for itself:—"Mrs. M. Leavitt, of No. 418 West Fourth-street, a believer in what she terms 'the true school of Theosophy,' who has recently removed to this city from San Diego, the capital city of the Theosophists, has some startling things to tell concerning the practices of Catherine Tingley and her associates, who conduct the Universal Brotherhood Home-stead on Point Loma. Mrs. Leavitt seems to be thoroughly informed on two of the latest outrages perpetrated, the cases of Mrs. Neirsheimer and Mrs. Hollbrook, both well-to-do Eastern women. Mrs. Hollbrook, the wife of a railroad man and Freemason of the East, has been rescued from the roost on Point Loma by her husband with the aid of an officer and a gun, and now hovers at the point of death from the abuse she says she received while confined in the 'Home-stead.' During the day time she was worked in the field like a convict, forced to plant trees, hoe corn, and perform all sorts of hard labor, and at night she was shut up in a cell

and guarded as if she were a raving maniac. When her husband found what a trap she had fallen into he hurried here and took her out by force. The other case on which Mrs. Leavitt is posted is that of Mrs. Neirsheimer, who has been forcibly separated from her husband, who is also in the Tingleys' clutches, and is not allowed to speak to him. She is forced to live alone in a little tent in the grounds that surround the institution. Armed men guard this place of horror, and, Mrs. Leavitt says, solitary confinement, hard labor, and starvation are resorted to by the Tingley managers as punishments upon those who disobey their iron rules. The woman who gives out this information is a personal friend of, and has talked with, Mrs. Hollbrook, the victim, whose health has been for ever destroyed by the ordeals she passed through while imprisoned on Point Loma."

Mrs. Leavitt alleges that gross immoralities are practised at Point Loma by some of the disciples, and that some things she is prepared to prove are unspeakably shocking.

Last Sunday the new Mayor of Shrewsbury went to church and listened to a sermon by the Bishop, who informed the congregation that the war in South Africa was prolonged by God as a judgment on England for her sins. It does not appear to have occurred to his lordship that the prolongation of the war entails sufferings on the Boers also, and that is an odd sort of divine justice to punish two parties for the sins of one.

Barnsley Town Council has complained to the Home Office and the Bishop about the conduct of the Rev. Dr. Lawson, who has charge of the funerals in the Burial Ground. On November 16 there were four interments, and only one parson was provided for the lot. The next day the same provision was made for seven interments. The Board hopes to make Dr. Lawson ashamed of himself. Ahem!

Mr. Redmayne, who recently won a seat on the Carlisle Town Council, attributes his success to prayer. The text, "The Lord is on my side, therefore I will not be afraid," kept running in his mind all the day of the election, and he felt that the Lord was deciding matters in his favour. Perhaps this is true. We are not in a position to deny it. What we have to say is that, if it is so, ordinary public meetings should be dispensed with in future, and prayer-meetings held instead.

The Pope told some English pilgrims that he looked forward to the time when England would be Catholic. The *New York Truthseeker* remarks that "he can see such a time easier by looking backward."

We gather that Mr. Charles Rose, who has been prosecuted for profanity at Carlton, Australia, was simply guilty of saying that "If Mary was not married to Joseph at a certain time, Jesus must have been a bastard." The point was put hypothetically. It appears that the pious Christian who laid the information against Mr. Rose had called him "an ape," the "missing link," and a "liar." This sort of language doesn't matter—when a Christian uses it. Respect for other people's feelings must be all on one side.

Speaking at a British and Foreign Bible Society meeting in Huddersfield, the Rev. S. Chadwick appears to have recommended Christian ministers to read the Bible. He said he should be glad if some morning all ministers could get up and find all their books burnt except the Bible. Yes, but would they study it more then? Would they not buy in fresh lots of more entertaining literature? Anyhow, Mr. Chadwick's advice is good in its way. Christians are apt to venerate the Bible too much to read it. Freethinkers are the persons best acquainted with its contents. Probably that is why they are Freethinkers.

Rev. P. Reynolds has been discoursing at Lockwood on "Instinct or Reason: A Plea for Soul-Life in Animals." He argued that if animals had not souls it was difficult, on scientific grounds, to see that men had souls. Animals, however, would not live again, like men; for God could annihilate some souls and keep others alive eternally. Such is the vanity of the human species! especially when it has a turn for religion. For our part, we should say that it would do God more credit to continue the life of a noble dog who risked his own life to save that of a child than to continue the life of selfish, cowardly men who stood by and did nothing.

I do not see how it is possible for an intelligent human being to conclude that the Song of Solomon is the work of God, and that the tragedy of *Lea* was the work of an un-inspired man. We are all liable to be mistaken, but the *Iliad* seems to me a greater work than the book of Esther, and I prefer it to the writings of Haggai Hosea. *Æschylus* is superior to Jeremiah, and Shakespeare rises immeasurably above all the sacred books of the world.—*Ingersoll*.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 1, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.: 7.30, "Tolstoy on Christianity, Sex, and Marriage."

December 8, Athenæum Hall; 15, Liverpool; 22 and 29, Athenæum Hall.

## To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 8, 9, and 10, Newcastle-on-Tyne and District; 15, Glasgow; 22, North Camberwell. All communications for Mr. Charles Watts in reference to lecturing engagements, etc., should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 1, Sheffield; 8, Manchester; 15, Athenæum Hall, London.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

GREEN WRITER.—As requested, we repeat the two anagrams and add your third, which you consider will complete a set, indicative of the variability in anagram, which is calculated to render it a delusion and a snare. (1) *Crede Will Shakespeare*, green, innocent reader; he was author of excellent writing.—F. B. N., fifth idol, Lye. (2) Green Reader: Francis Bacon helped idle, if free, W. S. He—not W. S.—the likely author of excellent writing. (3) How likely friends lie *re* author of excellent—Francis Bacon and W. S. helped—writing! Get the *Referee*.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. J. RUMBLE.—Pleased to have your thanks for our "fairness and courtesy."

C. J. WOOSNAM.—We do not supply a special cover for binding the *Freethinker*. You can get the binding done "at a reasonable cost" through our publishing office. The secretary could not answer your inquiry through the post, as you omitted to give your address.

THORNHILL.—Norman Lockyer's *Elementary Astronomy* is a good book. The same adjective applies to Sir Robert Ball's books on the same subject.

G. W. B.—We cannot discuss the question in this column. All we need say is that we fail to see the "dogmatism" in Büchner's observations on Spiritism.

BUSHIRE.—Herbert Spencer lives at Brighton. We do not know his exact address, but no doubt "Herbert Spencer, Esq., Brighton" would find him. Even the Post Office people must know of such a distinguished resident. We have not read the book you refer to by Dennis Hird, and therefore cannot tell you its drift. If it does advocate polygamy, as you seem to think, that is nothing extravagant on the part of a Bible Christian. There is nothing in the Bible against polygamy.

J. GILHAM (Liverpool).—The verses are hardly up to our standard. Thanks for the pamphlet. It shows what gross superstition is fostered by the Catholic Church. We may find room to notice it shortly.

G. NAEWIGER.—You do not name the time. We conclude you mean evening, but we cannot state the hour.

E. R. WOODWARD.—See "Sugar Plums." We share your hope that the change at Camberwell will augment the Branch's funds. It is a pity that so active a Branch is not able to command larger pecuniary resources.

A. B. MOSS.—Thanks for your letter, which is longer than we have room for, or than the matter deserves. You say that you were challenged to a debate by Mr. Taylor, that the local Secular friends pressed you to accept, and that you found him an able and courteous opponent. You also urge that a man who has been punished for a crime should not be shunned afterwards. But that is not the point at issue. The question asked by our correspondent was, "Is it advisable for Secular Societies to find him a platform?" To that you do not address yourself. For the rest, while we are as much opposed as you to everlasting punishment, we certainly think there are good reasons for the judgment we expressed last week—though we know you are not bound to agree with us.

THE FUND FOR MRS. FOOTE.—A. Tarlton, 10s.; D. Sutherland, 3s. This Fund has been closed; that is to say, further subscriptions are not solicited in the *Freethinker*.

J. FISH.—Thanks for your trouble and consideration.

R. LINTON.—Pleased to have your view that if the poor men we referred to last week should be morally robbed by legal process the Freethought party ought to subscribe the money to recoup them. We fancy, however, there will be no need for that. You say you agree that we did the right thing, and we believe this is the general opinion.

R. CHAPMAN.—We kept your last week's postcard again. Your date was Monday, but the Tyne Dock postmark was Tuesday. The trouble must be at the other end.

A CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE blackguard, named W. Warry, who sends scurrilous postcards to Mr. Foote at places where he is announced to lecture, is hereby warned that if he repeats the offence the matter will be handed over to the Post Office criminal department. His last two postcards, of the vilest character, are preserved, to be used against him if he renders it necessary. We give this warning publicly—*pour encourager les autres*.

A. S. V.—Received: under consideration.

MR. FRANCIS NEALE, who has for some time been acting as our assistant on the *Freethinker*, is, we regret to state, very ill. We hope to give a better report of him next week. Mr. Neale contributed to Freethought journals as long as thirty years ago, and he is still far from being an old man.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Freidenker—La Raison—Newsagent and Bookseller—Haltwhistle Echo—Crescent—Liberator—Sydney Bulletin—Sun—Discontent—Truthseeker (New York)—Book Queries—Huddersfield Examiner—Manchester Daily Dispatch—Yorkshire Evening Post—Edinburgh Evening News—Two Worlds—Heredity, by Dr. Robert Park—Public Opinion—Progressive Thinker.

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.

## Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the Athenæum Hall this evening (Dec. 1). His subject will be a new one—"Tolstoy on Christianity, Sex, and Marriage." It is one that should interest ladies as well as the other half of the species. And they need not fear to come, for nothing will be said to hurt their susceptibilities. Crudities of expression on such a subject should be left to the Bible—and to those who have read it, not wisely, but too well.

Leicester does not seem to have much to learn from London in the matter of fogs. Except in regard to blackness, the one that prevailed there on Sunday evening was up to the finest London standard. All traffic was suspended, those who wanted to move about had to walk, and in doing so they encountered very few fellow-wayfarers, which was lucky, as those who happened to meet were almost upon each other before they were mutually visible. Lamps could scarcely be seen until you were right under them; a bit of dead wall looked like part of a Great Wall of China shutting in half a continent; and crossing a street was like stepping into the perilous unknown. That fog, of course, didn't come on all at once. It was gathering all day. There was enough in the morning to be decidedly unpleasant. Still, a very good morning audience assembled in the Secular Hall, and apparently enjoyed Mr. Foote's lecture on "Anarchism and Assassination." The evening audience was a larger one, though not what it would have been in different weather. Mr. Sydney Gimson, who occupied the chair, humorously claimed credit for bringing Mr. Foote safely to the hall; and that gentleman himself said that he had to consider the presence of so many persons, including a fair sprinkling of ladies, a very flattering compliment in such trying circumstances. The body of the hall was comfortably filled, and there were some people in the gallery, looking shadowy and ghostlike from the platform. Nor was there any lack of enthusiasm. A hymn was sung by the "congregation"—that only means assembly, after all—before the lecture with sufficient verve; and a part song by the choir after the lecture, deserving the applause it received. Neither did Mr. Foote show any sign of depression, though he had occasionally to clear the fog out of his throat. His lecture on "Mr. Hall Caine's Dream of Christian Democracy" was plentifully punctuated with laughter and cheers.

A few friends came over from Nottingham. They were anxious to know when Mr. Foote would visit that city again. One friend at the evening lecture had come in seven miles from a Leicestershire village. He looked a likely man to get home again somehow, but no one envied him his journey.

We understand that the Leicester Secular Society is making fair progress. It doesn't make much noise about its difficulties, but they exist all the same, and have to be overcome by hard and patient work and steady liberal subscribing. Mr. Sydney Gimson, the president, is, of course, a tower of strength, and Mr. F. J. Gould is a most admirable organising secretary. The Christians would call him "pastor." Other members share the labor in their several positions, and the prospect is encouraging; but, oh! if somebody would only come along and plank down (say) £1,000, what fresh impetus it would give to this splendid effort, and what stimulus to as gallant a body of workers as "the grand old cause" can boast!



Mr. Watts had a lamentable experience of the fog at Birmingham on Sunday. Traffic was suspended in the streets, and it was very difficult to find the way on foot. Mr. Watts delivered his lectures as announced, but of course the audiences were seriously affected.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, in Monday's *Sun*, refers again to the appeal he made to his "Christian readers" on behalf of Mr. Foote. That appeal was made entirely without Mr. Foote's knowledge. Being made, however, it cannot easily be interfered with without churlishness. Mr. Bottomley treated it, we suppose, as a public matter, in which other persons than Mr. Foote might be legitimately interested.

"My references last week," Mr. Bottomley says, "to the case of Mr. Foote has brought me many letters and also several subscriptions—the general wish being that the money should be handed to Mr. Foote for his personal benefit, rather than to the usurious and vindictive creditors who are persecuting him, with the aid of the Court. I shall therefore hand whatever I receive to the treasurer of a fund already established for Mrs. Foote's assistance, and I hope my readers will prove themselves good Christians by coming forward with liberal help for a persecuted Freethinker. The idea somehow appeals strongly to me."

Letters received by Mr. Bottomley on the subject are varied in character. One correspondent says that "an Atheist, however admirable his qualities as a man, must in all decent society be branded as a leper, and therefore despised." Upon which Mr. Bottomley remarks that a greater man than Mr. Foote—meaning Jesus Christ—was "despised of men." So perhaps it doesn't matter so much after all. Another correspondent says that "Mr. Foote has ever been on the side of humanity, justice, and liberty," and thinks that "He may not know it, but, unconsciously at least, he is nearer the lowly Nazarene than many who call themselves his followers."

The *Midland Express* prints a letter from Mr. George Trebells, of Lozells-street, Birmingham, pointing out the "misleading" character of that journal's reference to the bankruptcy of Mr. Foote. This correspondent says that what is called the "obscurity" of Freethought propaganda since the death of Mr. Bradlaugh and the defection of Mrs. Besant simply means its loss of a particular advertisement arising from a certain political and Malthusian agitation. But so far from having "declined" it has now "four or five journals which did not exist during Mr. Bradlaugh's prominence," it organises more lectures in London than ever, and in the provinces its activity is continued; a Freethought lecturer being maintained at Leicester, for instance, with a seat upon the School Board, where he holds the casting vote. It is also pointed out by this correspondent that the Ethical and some other associations "are practically Free-thinking, and assist the Freethought movement."

We beg to call our readers' attention again to the *Secular Almanack* for 1902. It is well got up, and its contents—including special articles by leading Freethought writers—are at least well worth its price of threepence. Any profit on this publication accrues to the National Secular Society.

"Rationalist Searchlight" contributes another letter on "Who is Jesus?" to the *Haltwhistle Echo*, and takes the opportunity of correcting another know-all correspondent who called Voltaire a "puny Atheist." Voltaire was not an Atheist. That is a matter of fact. "Puny" is perhaps a matter of opinion. But the man who thinks he has the right to apply that epithet to Voltaire must have an extraordinary opinion of himself.

According to a despatch from St. Petersburg in the *American Press*, "a remarkable change is taking place in religious sentiment in Russia. Millions of peasants now calmly confess Atheism or the most nonchalant Agnosticism. This is true of both factory hands and agricultural laborers."

The week-night dancing arrangements at the North Camberwell Hall will, in future, be under the entire control of the Camberwell Branch. The new régime opens with a free invitation dance on Saturday, the 30th. Those who see this announcement in time are cordially invited to attend with their lady friends. The Branch holds its annual meeting to-day (Sunday), at 11.

Hull Freethinkers are earnestly requested to attend a business meeting this evening (Dec. 1) at No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies Hall, Albion-street, to consider the immediate future of the movement in the town. We hope to hear a good report of this meeting.

The second lecture of the course on "Pioneers of Humanity," under the auspices of the Humanitarian League, will be given next Tuesday evening (Dec. 3) at Essex Hall, Essex-street, Strand, W.C. The chair will be taken at 8 by Mrs. C. Mallet. The lecturer is Aylmer Maude, and the subject "Tolstoy." Admission free.

## Echoes from Everywhere.

### GOD AND ONIONS.

MR. WILLIAM (otherwise "Spring") ONIONS, maker of good resolutions and perishable verse, sometime mopper-up of illimitable "four-'alfs," reappears periodically at the scene of his old vicissitudes to recount, for the benefit of the presiding magistrate and the world in general, the marvellousness of his teetotal reformation.

He has lately informed Mr. Dickinson that "through God's help" he has kept the pledge for three years. This suggests reflections. God has tendered his assistance to Onions; but, on the other hand, it is obvious that God was powerless without the co-operation of Onions himself. God helps Onions, and Onions helps God. God and Onions thus stand in complementary relation to each other. United they stand; divided they fall!

### MORE RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

The Bishop of Coventry informs his flock that "within the last twenty years formidable barriers to faith have been thrown down, and science can no longer be regarded as the enemy of religion." We can only assume that the Bishop is possessed of exclusive knowledge on the subject; but it seems a pity that he did not deem it advisable to communicate that knowledge to his hearers. They might, perhaps, have been more settled in their minds had they known precisely what geologist had arisen to reinstate the Bible chronology, or what heaven-inspired biologist had succeeded in discrediting the unscriptural conclusions of Charles Darwin.

But possibly the Bishop means that Bibliolatry is dead, and that Scripture can no longer be regarded without misgiving. Perhaps he would have us accept his defeats as victories.....It is a refreshing spectacle, that of the Bishops sitting uneasily amid the ruins of their shattered dogmas, protesting their friendship for the victorious enemy, and holding the white flag of surrender in their trembling hands.

### EVERY MAN HIS OWN BIBLE.

A long-suffering book, the Holy Bible! They have chopped it into verses, divided it into books, inserted uninspired punctuation marks, eviscerated much of its matter, altered its sense, printed it in colors, in broad Scotch, in modern English, in up-to-date American!

I would suggest for the next move a Coster Bible, to be produced under the special supervision of gentlemen in the New Cut. God's word would look really fetching in coster vogue. Take Matthew 3, for example:—

"Abaht thet time Jeck ther Bepstist storted spahtin rahnd Judeer wy. 'Billo, pals! sez 'e, 'Look aht wot yer a-doin' ov! Ther lorst dy's on yer treck, I gives yer my word!'"

I do not expect this suggestion to be approved by Gospel ministers, although they talk so much about religion for the masses. They are doubtless aware that the grandiloquent phraseology of the Bible throws a misleading glamor over much crudity of idea.

### NO DRINKS FOR THE DAMNED.

The terrors of hell have been ascribed to many agencies, but it remains for the one-and-only Talmage to discover the most appalling horror of all. "I do not believe," he says (it is interesting to know what the Doctor does *not* believe), "that it will be the absence of light. I do not believe it will be the absence of holiness. I think it will be the absence of drink." The drunkard in hell will suffer untold agonies, because hell is a teetotal institution!

I suppose the assumption is justified. The divine vintner of Cana will be busily engaged in providing "booze" for the blessed. He will have neither time nor inclination to slake the alcoholic yearnings of the damned. Musicians are a thirsty lot, and the heavenly choir will demand all his attention.

E. R. WOODWARD.

There probably never was a woman so religious that she did not prefer it if her servant didn't have the church-going habit.—*Atchison Globe*.



## Coleridge.

"Coleridge was almost unique in his criticism as in his poetry."—LESLIE STEPHEN.

"That which will stand of Coleridge is this: the stimulus of his continual instinctive effort to get at and to lay bare the real truth of the matter in hand, whether that matter were literary or philosophical, or political or religious; and this in a country when at that moment such an effort was almost unknown."—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THE surest road to a right position for judging Coleridge is by a sympathetic reading of his work in poetry, criticism, and philosophy. To come into vital relations with the artist through the medium of his works, to become his friend, to whom he may reveal the secrets of his mind, to become receptive to his ideals, as the waters are to the influence of the sky—this is to gain the central motive of a great life, and is the end of all true literary interpretation. The contributions which Coleridge made to modern thought, rich, ample, and suggestive as they are, have all the characteristics of his varied and eventful life. In whatever he attempted he drove the shaft deep and gave us samples of the wealth of ore lying in its confines. Although he worked these mines only at irregular intervals and passed rapidly from one to the other, yet, by stimulating and quickening activity in others, he caused the entire territory to be explored as it never was before in English history. If it cannot be said of him that he left us a rounded and complete system, yet it can be said, and it is a noble tribute, that he made it possible for us to grasp those principles which underlie all systems. His contribution to the literature of power is almost unsurpassed by that of any modern writer.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born at Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, October 21, 1772; but owing to the death of his father he was sent to Christ's Hospital, London, at the age of nine. As a boy, Coleridge was exceedingly precocious. He had no pleasure in boyish sports, but was an omnivorous reader of imaginative literature. At school Coleridge's life was by no means monotonous. With his study of the classics, and his love adventures; his reading of the Neo-Platonists, and his floggings by Bowyer; this prodigy attracted his fellows, and won the admiration of Charles Lamb. Alluding to the marvellous power which Coleridge exercised at that early age, Lamb, a quarter of a century later, lovingly recalled the "accents of the inspired charity boy."

The event which, strange to say, had the greatest influence upon Coleridge at this time was the chance-reading of Bowles's Sonnets. In this slight volume he met "nature, unsophisticated by classic tradition," and was captivated by their freshness and originality. He copied them again and again, in order that his friends might enjoy them with him.

It is difficult, in these days, to conceive of the time when such influences could be produced by this little, unpretending volume of verse. But Coleridge was not the only great man over whom it cast its spell, for Wordsworth was, not long after, captivated by it.

Coleridge went to Cambridge in 1791, two years after Wordsworth had taken his degree. One of the important events of his university career was his meeting with Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches*, and the consequent revelation of his critical faculty when he immediately asserted that they heralded the advent of a new star in the literary firmament. The other was his visit to Oxford, and the meeting with Robert Southey, when the Pantisocracy was hatched. On leaving Cambridge, he settled at Bristol with Southey, and planned Pantisocracy and marriage; the former failed, the latter succeeded, and trouble began.

The circle was now enlarged by the friendship of Lovell, Cottle, and Thomas Poole. The first edition of *Poems* was published, and *The Watchman* was planned. He now moved to Nether Stowey. Coleridge, on hearing that Wordsworth lived a few miles away, took an early opportunity of visiting him. The poets became fast friends, and planned a joint production in verse. They selected as a subject "The Ancyent Marinere." Coleridge supplied most of the incidents, and almost all the lines. They found that their methods did not harmonise, and the "Marinere" was left to

Coleridge, whilst Wordsworth selected the common incidents of every-day life. Later they published a joint volume, *Lyrical Ballads*. This was a memorable year in the poetic career of Coleridge. His hand, already on the latch, now opened the magic casements on the perilous seas sailed by "The Ancyent Marinere," and the fairylands of "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel."

In 1798 the two poets visited Germany, where they met Klopstock, "the German Milton." At Hamburg Coleridge left the Wordsworths and went to Gottingen, plunged into metaphysics, and the world got no more poetic gems. In the spring of 1799 they returned to England. About this time they made the tour of the Lake Country, and became attracted to the cottage at Grasmere. Coleridge afterwards came to London and began writing for the *Morning Post*: here his wife and son Hartley joined him. In February, 1800, he left the *Post* and went to work on his translation of *Wallenstein*. He visited Charles Lamb at Pentonville. Of this visit Lamb wrote: "I am living in a continual feast. Coleridge has been with me now for nigh on three weeks." Afterwards Coleridge settled at Greta Hall, Keswick, where Southey and his wife, a sister of Mrs. Coleridge, lived. Thus the last year of the century found the two poets within a short distance of each other.

Soon, however, the clouds began to gather, and the storm broke upon him. Before its fierce and pitiless blasts he was driven like his own mariner—

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide, wide sea.

Ill health, domestic discord, and the demon of opium

Did like a tempest strong  
Come to him thus, and drove the weary wight along.

Later he placed himself under the care of Dr. Gilman. He stemmed the tide with what strength he had, and diverted himself with his *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton* and his *Biographia Literaria*.

From his ninth year he had been a wanderer, finding no city to dwell in. Now, when he was at his wits' end, tossed in a sea of troubles, the waves stilled, and he felt that he had reached the desired haven.

The picture which Carlyle gives of Coleridge at Highgate Hill is exceedingly graphic:—

"Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from life's battle; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. He had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. No talk in his century, or in any other, could be more inspiring."

A brief dawn of unsurpassed promise and achievement; a trouble as of clouds and weeping rain; then a long summer evening's work done by the setting sun's pathetic light—such was Coleridge's day, the after-glow of which is still in the sky.

The living Coleridge was ever his own apology. Men and women who neither shared nor ignored his shortcomings not only loved him, but honored him. He must have had a rich and royal nature to have gathered about him such choice friends as Wordsworth, Scott, and Lamb; Southey, Wilson, and De Quincey; Byron, Hazlitt, and Sterling. In fancy we cannot fail to conjure up his placid figure during his later years—the silver hair, the pale face, the great luminous blue eyes, the portly form clothed in black, the slow walk, the benignant manner, the voice that was melody, and the inexhaustible talk that was the flow of a golden sea of eloquence and wisdom. He was a great man. The wings of his imagination wave easily in the ether of the highest heaven. Yet how forlorn the end. For more than thirty years he was the slave of opium. It broke up his home; it alienated his wife; it ruined his health; it made him utterly wretched. Back of all this he was the slave of some helpless and hopeless irresolution of character, some of the enervating dejection of Hamlet, which kept him for ever at war with himself, and at last cast him out upon the homeless ocean of despair, to drift away to ruin and to death.

There are shapes more awful than his in the records of literary history: the ravaged, agonising form of Swift; the wonderful, desolate face of Rousseau; the



piteous madness of Blake and Clare; but there is no figure more forlorn and pathetic.

After the fitful fever of life, after weariness and sickness, fighting and desponding, struggling and failing, attempting and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of life, at length came death—at length the “popped sleep, the end of all.” MIMNERMUS.

## Darwin and Religion.—IV.

### DARWIN ABANDONS CHRISTIANITY.

DR. BÜCHNER, the German materialist, who was in London in September, 1881, went to Down and spent some hours with Darwin. He was accompanied by Dr. E. B. Aveling, who has written an account of their conversation in Darwin's study.\* This pamphlet is referred to in a footnote by Mr. Francis Darwin, who says that “Dr. Aveling gives quite fairly his impression of my father's views.”† He does not contradict any of Dr. Aveling's statements, and they may therefore be regarded as substantially correct.

Darwin said to his guests: “I never gave up Christianity until I was forty years of age.” He had given attention to the matter, and had investigated the claims of Christianity. Being asked *why* he abandoned it, he replied: “It is not supported by evidence.”

This reminds one of a story about George Eliot. A gentleman held forth to her at great length on the beauty of Christianity. Like Mr. Myers, he was great at “æsthetic emotion” and “mystic sentiment.” The great woman listened to him with philosophic patience, and at length she struck in herself. “Well, you know,” she said, “I have only one objection to Christianity.” “And what is that?” her guest inquired. “Why,” she replied, “it isn't true.”

Dr. Aveling's statement is corroborated by a long and interesting passage in Darwin's chapter of Autobiography, which the reader shall have in full:—

“I had gradually come by this time—that is, 1836 to 1839—to see that the Old Testament was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos. The question then continually rose before my mind, and would not be banished: Is it credible that if God were now to make a revelation to the Hindoos, he would permit it to be connected with the belief in Vishnu, Siva, etc., as Christianity is connected with the Old Testament? This appeared to me utterly incredible.

“By further reflecting that the clearest evidence would be requisite to make any sane man believe in the miracles by which Christianity is supported,—and that the more we know of the fixed laws of nature the more incredible do miracles become,—that the men at that time were ignorant and credulous to a degree almost incomprehensible by us,—that the Gospels cannot be proved to have been written simultaneously with the events,—that they differ in many important details, far too important, as it seemed to me, to be admitted as the usual inaccuracies of eye-witnesses;—by such reflections as these, which I give not as having the least novelty or value, but as they influenced me, I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation. The fact that many false religions have spread over large portions of the earth like wildfire had some weight with me.

“But I was very unwilling to give up my belief; I feel sure of this, for I can well remember often and often inventing day-dreams of old letters between distinguished Romans, and manuscripts being discovered at Pompeii or elsewhere, which confirmed in the most striking manner all that was written in the Gospels. But I found it more and more difficult, with free scope given to my imagination, to invent evidence which would suffice to convince me. Thus disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress.”‡

Three features should be noted in this striking passage. First, the order in which the evidences of Christianity were tried and found wanting; second, the complete mastery of every important point; third, the absence of all distress of mind in the process. Darwin's mind was, in fact, going through a new development, and the old creed was got rid of as easily as an old skin when a new one is taking its place.

For nearly forty years Darwin was a disbeliever in

Christianity. He rejected it utterly. It passed out of his mind and heart. The fact was not proclaimed from the house-tops, but it was patent to every intelligent reader of his works. He paid no attention to the clerical dogs that barked at his heels, but wisely kept his mind free from such distractions, and went on his way, as Professor Tyndall says, with the steady and irresistible movement of an avalanche.

Much capital has been made by Christians, who are thankful for small mercies, out of the fact that Darwin subscribed to the South American Missionary Society. The Archbishop of Canterbury, at the annual meeting on April 21, 1885, said the Society “drew the attention of Charles Darwin, and made him, in his pursuit of the wonders of the kingdom of nature, realise that there was another kingdom just as wonderful and more lasting.” Such language is simply fraudulent. The fact is, Darwin thought the Fuegians a set of hopeless savages, and he was so agreeably undeceived by the reports of their improvement that he sent a subscription of £5 through his old shipmate, Admiral Sir James Sullivan. This gentleman gives three or four extracts from Darwin's letters,\* from which it appears that he was solely interested in the secular improvement of the Fuegians, without the smallest concern for their progress in religion.

Darwin subscribed to send missionaries to a people he regarded as “the very lowest of the human race.” Surely this is not an extravagant compliment to Christianity. He never subscribed towards its promotion in any civilised country. Those who parade his “support” invite the sarcasm that he thought their religion fit for savages.

### DEISM.

Having abandoned Christianity, Darwin remained for many years a Deist. The *Naturalist's Voyage* was first published in 1845, and the following passage occurs in the final chapter:—

“Among the scenes which are deeply impressed on my mind, none exceed in sublimity the primeval forests undefaced by the hand of man; whether those of Brazil, where the powers of Life are predominant, or those of Tierra del Fuego, where Death and Decay prevail. Both are temples filled with the varied products of the God of Nature:—no one can stand in these solitudes unmoved, and not feel that there is more in man than the mere breath of his body.”†

This is the language of emotion, and no one will be surprised at Darwin's saying subsequently: “I did not think much about the existence of a personal God until a considerably later period of my life.”‡ How great a change the thinking wrought is seen from a reference to this very incident in the Autobiography, written in 1876, a few years before his death:—

“At the present day the most usual argument for the existence of an intelligent God is drawn from the deep inward conviction and feelings which are experienced by most persons. Formerly I was led by such feelings as those just referred to (although I do not think that the religious sentiment was ever strongly developed in me), to the firm conviction of the existence of God, and of the immortality of the soul. In my Journal I wrote that whilst standing in the midst of the grandeur of a Brazilian forest, ‘it is not possible to give an adequate idea of the higher feelings of wonder, admiration, and devotion, which fill and elevate the mind.’ I well remember my conviction that there is more in man than the mere breath of his body. But now the grandest scenes would not cause any such conviction and feelings to rise in my mind.”§

Darwin's belief in a personal God had not perceptibly weakened in 1859, when he published the *Origin of Species*. He could still speak of “the Creator,” and use the ordinary language of Deism. In a letter to Mr. C. Ridley, dated November 28, 1878, upon a sermon of Dr. Pusey's, he said: “When I was collecting facts for the *Origin*, my belief in what is called a personal God was as firm as that of Dr. Pusey himself.”||

It is therefore obvious that Darwin doubted Christianity at the age of thirty, abandoned it before the age of forty, and remained a Deist until the age of fifty. The publication of the *Origin of Species* may

\* *The Religious Views of Charles Darwin*. By Dr. E. B. Aveling. (Freethought Publishing Co.)

† Vol. i., p. 317.

‡ Vol. i., pp. 308-309.

\* Vol. iii., pp. 127, 128.

‡ *Life and Letters*, vol. i., p. 309.

|| Vol. iii., p. 236.

† P. 503.

§ Vol. i., p. 311.



be taken as marking the commencement of his third and last mental epoch. The philosophy of Evolution took possession of his mind, and gradually expelled both the belief in God and the belief in immortality.

His development was too gradual for any wrench. People upon whom his biological theories came as lightning-swift surprises often fancied that he must be deeply distressed by such painful truths. Sometimes, indeed, this suspicion was carried to a comical extreme. "Lyell once told me," says Professor Judd, "that he had frequently been asked if Darwin was not one of the most unhappy of men, it being suggested that his outrage upon public opinion should have filled him with remorse."\* How it would have astonished these simple creatures to see Darwin in his happy home, reclining on the sofa after a hard day's work, while his devoted wife or daughter read a novel aloud or played some music; or perhaps smoking an occasional cigarette, one of his few concessions to the weakness of the flesh.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Correspondence.

### "MORALS AND THE WILL."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent "S.," after referring to the fact that he seemed free to send what he had written, or not, as he pleased, asks: "Is even this apparent freedom an illusion?" I think it is. "S." does not seem to recognise that in the phrase, "as I please," he is setting a limit to his freedom of action, for I do not think that anyone will contend that a man has power to choose which of two courses of action will please him most. The question is, If two alternative courses of action present themselves to a man, and he, apparently, has the power to choose which he will pursue, is it in reality possible that he may take either course, or must he of necessity take the one he does? Of course, before the action we say it is possible that he may take either course, but that is only because we do not know in which way he will act. The word "possible," in that case, is only the expression of our ignorance. Also, if, after the action, we say it was possible for him to have acted differently, it only expresses our ignorance of the causes which prevented him from acting differently.

If, however, it is said that apart from our ignorance it was really possible for him to have acted differently, the question crops up, Why did he act in the particular way that he did? Now, it seems to me that any conceivable answer to this question, to be adequate, must supply a cause for his particular action, and, if he was caused to act in the particular way he did, it is obviously impossible that he could have acted in any other way. To believe in free-will, therefore, even to the slightest extent, seems to me, to that extent, to disbelieve in the law of cause and effect. To say that a man is not caused to act in the particular way he does, but that he acts in that way of his own free-will, is to make the man himself the ultimate cause of the action; which is absurd, for the man, being himself the effect of previous causes, can be the ultimate cause of nothing. The act of willing is merely a link in the eternal chain of cause and effect.

E. J. HIRST.

### WHAT TO DO NOW.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—After reading your bankruptcy account in this week's *Freethinker*, I have come to the opinion that, now the law has decided against you, the least the Freethought party can do is to clear you from all responsibility, anxiety, and any further persecution that may attach to it, by subscribing sufficient funds (say £500) to wipe off the debt, so that you may apply for and get your discharge from the Bankruptcy Court. As I take it, while you remain a bankrupt your hands are tied in public work for the party. Surely this ought not to be a difficult thing to do, else Freethought is not worth much; and, as I see the *Sun* newspaper asking Christians to come forward, it is about time that Freethinkers were "up and doing." If a Fund is opened, I shall be pleased to subscribe ten shillings as a start, and anything further I am able to afford.

I wish this to appear in the *Freethinker* if you can publish same under the *non-de-plume* of "Justice," as I cannot under present circumstances allow my name to be published.

"JUSTICE."

[We insert this letter without at the moment expressing any opinion of our own. What our *inclination* is in the matter we have already stated. What our *duty* may be is a point on which we should not repel advice.—EDITOR.]

## The Fate of the Reformer.

MUST the Reformer, the man who devotes his entire life to human betterment, be always crucified, burnt, starved, or imprisoned, while the worst of rogues are pampered and flattered—if they have money or position? So it seems. Nothing can exceed the folly and the wickedness of the human animal; and the wonder is that any one should ever undertake his reformation, ever waste a thought or an hour upon him. I suppose there must be in the Reformer a something which others lack—broader views, wider sympathies, hatred of tyranny, love of freedom and of justice, larger hope for humanity than other men have. How else account for the course he pursues?

I know this, that I am often amazed at myself. Nearly twenty-five years ago I flung myself with enthusiasm into the battle with Toryism in politics, and with theology and clerical imposture and tyranny. I anticipated no easy life, no large income. Well, what is there I have not endured in the course of those twenty-five years? Loss of friends, loss of caste, loss of society's goodwill; have gained general and incessant slander and malicious hatred, the vilest misrepresentations, permanent boycott, persecution, denial of justice in every direction. I have seen sneaks and crawlers rise to power, influence, and wealth, while I have not been able to make both ends meet—all because I have devoted myself to the betterment of the race to which I belong. Such has been my lot, my reward.

No! I do not repent now, as old age is approaching, of the course I have pursued. I would do it again. I am persuaded that my example and teaching will make some impression for good—good that will go down through the ages in forms that I may not have thought of. That is my hope. I expect no fortune or wealth in life, no heaven after death. Any reward I ever get lies in the goodwill of the few who now love me, and in the settled hope that the human race, especially Australians, may reap some lasting advantage from the life I have lived. As I do not care to indulge in sentiment, I will stop here.

—Joseph Symes, in the "*Liberator*," Melbourne.

## Li's Comparative Mythology.

BEFORE China was "civilised," Captain Conger, United States minister to China, and Li Hung Chang were having a friendly visit when a clerk brought in a bundle of Des Moines daily papers.

The Chinese diplomat asked the minister if he read all his papers, and was answered in the affirmative. Earl Li commented upon the answer, and said that China's greatest need was an up-to-date press with daily issues. Mr. Conger replied that, although his papers were six weeks old, he found them interesting reading, and that in the latest issues he saw that the people of his State were suffering from the effects of a drought, and were praying for rain.

"What!" said Earl Li. "Do your people pray for rain?"

"Yes, some of them."

"Does it rain?"

"Sometimes it does and sometimes it does not."

"Well," said the crafty Li, with a smile, "your God is a good deal like the Chinaman's Joss: the white man prays for rain, and the Chinaman prays for sun. Meanwhile it seems to shine or shower about as it pleases."

—*San Francisco News Letter*.

## The Better View.

If we talk of the good that the world contains,  
And try our best to add to it,  
The evil will die by neglect by-and-bye—  
'Tis the very best way to undo it.

We preach too much and we dwell too long  
On sin and sorrow and trouble;  
We help them to live by the thoughts we give,  
Their spite and might to redouble.

For the earth is fair and the people are kind,  
If once you look for their kindness;  
When the world seems sad and its denizens bad,  
It is only your own soul's blindness.

And I say if we search for the good and pure,  
And give no thought to the evil,  
Our labors are worth far more to the earth  
Than when we are chasing the Devil.

—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*.

Minister (resignedly)—"The congregation was wretchedly small this morning. But, of course, the Lord was there." His wife (bravely)—"And, if I am not greatly mistaken, two reporters."—*Detroit Free Press*.



## 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, G. W. Foote, "Tolstoy on Christianity, Sex, and Marriage."  
NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney, E.): 7, E. White, "Conflict between Religion and Science."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): G. Spiller, "Religion Pure and Undeified."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Miss Vallance, "Worship"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, H. Snell, "The Ethics of Political Assassination."

WEST LONDON BRANCH ("The Victory," Newnham-street, Edgware-road): December 5, at 8.30, Monthly meeting.

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Hyde Park): Lectures every Thursday at 7.30 p.m.; Sundays at 11.30 a.m.

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

### COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall): 3.45, "The Evidences of Theism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, T. H. Griffin, "Is Christianity True?"

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A lecture.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Open discussion "The Future of the Churches"; 6.30, J. S. Hill, "The Date and Authenticity of the Gospels."

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, Room No. 2, Albion-street): 7, Special meeting.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. McCabe, "Christianity and the Fall of Rome."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A. W. Short, "Primitive Man."

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, Debate on "The War" between W. Sanders and J. Jackson.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): C. Cohen—3, "How to Deal with the Criminal"; 7, "What the World Owes to the Cross." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, J. M. Peacock, "Plain as a Pike."

H. PERCY WARD, 1 Victoria-chambers, 17 Little Horton-lane, Bradford.—December 1, Bradford; 8, Glasgow; 9, Greenock; 15th, Failsworth; 17 and 18, Debate at Bradford with Mr. G. H. Bibbings; 22, Birmingham.

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