

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXII.—No. 2.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 1902.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## Canon Henson on the Bible.

THE special sermon preached last month (Dec. 8) by Canon Henson in Westminster Abbey on "The Bible," and published *verbatim* in the *Christian World Pulpit*, has received considerable attention. The object of the Canon of Westminster was to show that, despite what he considers "the change that is passing over men's attitude towards that sacred volume," the Bible is what Cranmer alleged it to be—"the most precious jewel and most holy relic that remaineth upon the earth." He quotes the testimonies of Knox and Coleridge in favor of the "moral influence the sacred volume has exercised, and does still exercise, upon those who devoutly study it." Now, the objection that is applicable to nearly all theological writings can be consistently urged against this sermon. The Canon never once attempts to *prove* his assumptions, but takes for granted the validity of the very points which require evidential support. For instance, his endorsement of Cranmer's extravagant and erroneous eulogy of the Bible is not accompanied with one fact to substantiate its accuracy. The nature of this "most precious jewel and most holy relic" can be seen in its unscientific teachings, in its impracticable social injunctions, in its political fallacies, in its lack of self-reliant inculcations, and in its method of instructing the rising generation as set forth in Proverbs. It is there stated: "A rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding. Withhold not correction from the child. Thou shalt beat him with the rod.....let not thy soul spare for his crying." Is this theological brutality a specimen of "the most precious jewel" of the Bible? As to the "most holy relic," its nature can be seen in the drunkenness and indecency of Noah, in the immorality of Lot and his daughters, in the cruelty of Abraham towards Hagar, in the deceit of Jacob, in the butcheries of Moses, in the licentiousness of David, and in the filth and obscenity which are to be found in various parts of the book.

In reference to Knox and Coleridge, Canon Henson says:—

"They had passed away before the conflict between the Bible and science, which had seemed to slumber since the seventeenth century, again broke out. In the years 1830 to 1833 Lyell's *Principles of Geology* issued from the press, and destroyed the credibility of the time-honored belief that the Creation was a definite event in history, bearing an ascertainable date. In 1859 Darwin published the *Origin of Species*, a challenge to the Mosaic account of the process of Creation. Three years later Colenso put forth his bold and far-reaching examination of the Pentateuch. He was the herald of a long series of books on Biblical criticism, mostly translations from German scholars, but including also original English work, which have shaken confidence in the Bible and permanently altered our modes of regarding it. At least, with respect to four points of cardinal importance, the Christian of the twentieth century will take a new view of the sacred volume."

It is this "new view," which the Canon endorses, that we wish here to deal with. He admits that Biblical criticism has entirely destroyed the old notions of the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures. In mentioning the Sixth Article of the Church of England, which says "In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church," he remarks: "How futile for all practical purposes this Article is may be sufficiently shown by the

admitted facts that the modern canon of the New Testament was not definitely fixed until the fourth century or later, and that of the books now universally accepted as canonical some were, for the most part of that long period, seriously doubted of in certain parts of the ancient Church." He also condemns the Eighth Article, which affirms that "the Old Testament is not contrary to the New, for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ," and that "they are not to be heard which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises." Still he clings to the belief that the Bible contains the word of God, and that there is "in every part of it, where instruction is intended, a certain Divine influence, which induces serious thought, enkindles holy desires, inspires good resolutions. It places everywhere before us that which our hearts tell us is 'the one thing needful, and, while it instructs us in principles, it draws by example.'"

Canon Henson omits to tell us in what part of the Bible the "word of God" is to be discovered, and how the "Divine influence" is to be recognised. Did it enkindle "holy desires" and "inspire good resolutions" in the minds of those characters of the Old Testament before alluded to? Certainly not, if the records of the book itself can be relied upon. It would be difficult to find in history more objectionable characters than most of the men and women of the Bible. Not one of them can be an "example" to us at the present time. The "one thing needful" in the twentieth century is the knowledge whereby poverty, misery, and bloodshed can be abolished, and justice, happiness, and peace be established. A sound system of secular education, real mental training based upon the wisdom of the world, and the establishment of the true principle of the brotherhood of man are the essentials to modern life. But this is exactly what the Bible has failed to supply. Let anyone read the fifth, sixth, and seventeenth chapters of Matthew, the ninth and sixteenth chapters of Mark, and they will there find the inculcation of the very opposite of the "one thing needful," while the Old Testament abounds with teachings brutal and immoral in the extreme (see 2 Sam. xxi. and xxii.; 1 Chron. xx.; Judges xi.; Deut. vii. and xx.).

The Canon says that the Old Testament is "the record of progressive revelation; it is the story of a process of development which found its climax, and therefore finds its interpretation, in Christ." This is a repetition of the orthodox error of supposing that God's alleged revelation to man was a continuous development; first an illumination to Adam and Eve, then to Abraham, then to Moses, and then by Jesus Christ to the world. A mere glance at the Bible and history will show the folly of such a position. How many of the earth's population were the better for Adam's revelation? We have the decided answer to this in the story of the destruction of the race by the Flood. How many were improved through Abraham's call? But few indeed outside his own family, and even within that circle the revelation failed to inspire the members with either truth, honor, or honesty. How many benefited from Moses's dispensation? Simply the Jewish people—a mere handful of the human race. And how many have received the alleged advantages of the revelation of Jesus? Finally, how does the case stand in the twentieth century? In order to maintain its existence, the Church has to give up its former doctrines and to regulate its policy by secular, not ecclesiastical, methods. Even Canon Henson admits:—



"Nobody any more dreams of finding in the Scriptures the statutes by which a Christian commonwealth ought to be governed, and only a rapidly-diminishing number cling to the patently indefensible view that in the Scriptures may be found either an adequate formal statement of Christian belief, or a detailed and obligatory scheme of ecclesiastical order. We are all agreed now that there is no validity in Christian appeals to the rudimentary and defective morals of the Old Testament."

Notwithstanding the changes which have taken place in reference to the Bible, Canon Henson thinks that "the Bible ceases at length to be a source of disunion, and becomes the basis of unity." We fail, however, to see any justification of this supposed "unity." The Roman Catholic still believes that the Bible sanctions the primacy of St. Peter, the supremacy of the Church, and the power of the priest; while the Protestant contends that he is supported by the Bible in his allegation that Rome is a mystic Babylon, an abomination of desolation, and the mother of harlots. The Bible has been not unfitly compared by an American writer to a great banquet, on whose tables are spread nearly every kind of food, nearly every kind of drink, from boiled missionary and adulterated fire-water for the savage to terrapin and the most exquisite of wine for the epicure, and where each takes his choice. If a man wants justification for lying, cheating, stealing, or fornication, there are parts of the Bible where he may find it; and if he wants the condemnation of these things, he may find it in nearly every part. If he wants universal salvation, it is there; and if he wants nigh universal damnation, it is there too, and in almost unstinted measure. If he wants to believe that death ends all, the Bible gives him proof; and if he wishes to hold that death simply begins all that is most important for him, that is there also. Whether he wishes to believe that man is saved by faith, by works, or that he is not worth the saving, he can turn to the Bible and take his choice.

The only logical position to take in reference to the Bible is to treat it as we should all books: judge of its value by its contents, and not by any external authority. Books should be our servants, not our masters.

CHARLES WATTS.

## Some Notes on Evolution and Morals.

IN view of the circumstance that the philosophy of evolution has been before the world for nearly two generations, and that during half that period it has been accepted by all leading thinkers, while it claims at present the support of all who are competent to express an opinion on the subject, it is astonishing how slight an impression it has made upon the mental habits of many writers and speakers. One may pick up writings on ethics, sociology, psychology, literature, and even on biology, and discover that, while the doctrine may be understood and accepted, it has altogether failed to permeate the mental life of the writer. A great deal of the criticism directed against evolutionary ethics by the late Dr. Martineau, to take an example, was marred by this characteristic. His criticisms were often acute enough, but there was just as frequently an inability to appreciate (to *feel* would perhaps express my meaning better) the nature of the evolutionary process.

A concrete example from the region of sociology will make my meaning clear. The construction of an ideal social state by the advocates of State Socialism, and its demolition by their opponents, is a favorite occupation with both parties. And both the construction and destruction are frequently waste of time, owing to the fact that neither has allowed for the simple principle of growth and mutual action and reaction. The Socialist transports human nature *as it is* into an entirely fresh environment, and, in consequence, has to call into existence improbable forces in order to make it go. And the Individualist argues that a Socialist State could not exist, because *present* human nature is not fitted for it. In each case the essential lesson of evolution is ignored. That an existing organism will not "fit" a different environment goes without saying. But then all organisms are modifiable, and all environments are changeable; and, whatever the society of the future may be like, human nature will develop towards

it as gradually as it has reached its present stage. It is not, therefore, a question of transporting men and women *as they are* into a fresh set of surroundings, but solely a question of whether the *growth* of human nature is in this or that direction, or whether human instincts can be modified, with benefit, in the manner required.

It is even unscientific to separate organism and environment, and criticise them as separate entities. Strictly speaking, organism and environment are one and indivisible. What I am makes my environment what it is, and what my environment is makes me what I am. A sculptor and a bricklayer, living in the same street, may have quite different surroundings formed by the same objects. To the one the double row of houses may suggest questions of perspective, moulding, color, etc.; to the other merely a question of so many bricks laid per hour, with the cost and length of the building operations involved. It is impossible to separate organism and environment. Neither exists apart from the other, and each is moulded and modified by the other.

In many cases this inability to feel the full significance of the philosophy of evolution is due to the individual's mind having been matured amid pre-evolutionary conditions. In such cases all that happens usually is that their minds are *colored* by the new teaching. And in other cases we have simply an illustration of the familiar fact that in the mass it is the slowly-elaborated and deeply-imbedded instincts that sway our judgments rather than recently-acquired knowledge. The mind must become perfectly familiar with a teaching before it can be influenced by it; and this familiarity is, in the majority of cases, not reached in a day or a year—it is the result of generations.

Religion and ethics are the two fields in which the characteristic I have noted expresses itself most strongly. In the sphere of religion it is common to find a semi-rationalistic writer describing quite accurately and carefully the religious practices of the lower races of mankind, sometimes even tracing their evolution within hailing distance of current beliefs, and then suddenly reverting to all the pre-scientific religious conceptions in dealing with the Christian creed. There does not appear to be often the slightest recognition of the fact that he has, in describing such customs, been laying bare the beginnings of religion; that the Christian, in common with other faiths, rests upon these as a foundation; and that, if the beliefs of savages are not trustworthy, then neither are the religious beliefs of moderns. And in ethics we meet with constant appeals to some metaphysical "absolute" law of morals by professed evolutionists, as though the whole story of human evolution did not go to prove that, apart from animal society and the common exigencies of animal life, "absolute" morality is absolute moonshine.

I have been led to these observations by reading an article in a recent issue of the *Daily News*, dealing with Religion and Art. The religion of the *Daily News* has been painfully apparent of late; and, since that hybrid, the Nonconformist conscience, has been allowed to run riot in its columns, the rule seems to be to lug in religion wherever it is possible, and often in cases where its presence is quite superfluous. The subject of the writer I am dealing with—a review of Forsyth's *Religion in Recent Art*—certainly warranted some mention of religion; but the manner in which this is done is a fine example of the danger of a writer on literary subjects dabbling in matters obviously out of the range of his studies. The following passage is the one I refer to:—

"I confess that I think that the elder world was essentially quite correct in conceiving religion as more important than anything; more important than art—more important even than morality. For morality is also a product, though a more spontaneous and healthy product, of a man's fundamental notion of what kind of a world he lives in. All the schools of morality have, as a fact, come out of some agreement about the government of all things, and all art has come out of the exultation and excitement of that agreement."

I do not wish to be hard upon the final clause of this excerpt, because it is just possible that the writer himself means nothing by it. But if he does mean that men had to agree about the government of the universe



before art could manifest itself, and that all artistic productions, including, of course, the rude drawings by pre-historic men of contemporary animal life, have been the outcome of the "exultation and excitement" of an agreement about the "government of all things"; if this is what the writer really means, then I can only—well, again emphasize the unwisdom of people writing on subjects that lie completely beyond their range.

What is worth noting in the passage quoted, however, is the common fallacy—common with many non-religious, as with all religious, writers—that morality is somehow a product of man's conception of the universe as a whole, and of his relation thereto. If such a position involves anything at all, it is that morality is a comparatively late product in human history, that men elaborated rules of morality because they had a prior belief concerning the government of the universe, and that, had not this prior belief existed, then neither would moral rules have existed. Thinly disguised, this is only the familiar, old-fashioned, theological absurdity that the origin of morality is due to the promulgation of some such code as the Mosaic decalogue, the ridiculous character of which is apparent if we reflect that, upon this hypothesis, no one would ever have discovered that stealing and murdering were unpleasant proceedings unless laws condemning these actions had been in existence.

Of course, the truth is that all moral precepts imply the prior existence of moral feelings, instead of *vice versa*. And the deeper truth is—and this is one that writers and teachers need to get well to heart—that morality is not a product (in the sense of it being a conscious deduction from a cosmical theory) at all, but largely and ultimately an expression of those conditions under which social life is possible. Men do not, at any stage of their existence, call a council and settle down to frame codes of morals; their moral rules are all in operation long before they find verbal expression in laws. What really takes place is that, as man gradually awakens to a consciousness of the forces playing around him, he affiliates his moral instincts to his beliefs concerning the world at large, and seeks their justification in an attempt to demonstrate their coherence.

The truth of this is shown in the circumstance that morality is animal before it is human. The researches of the last fifty years have demonstrated that no real line of demarcation can be set up between man and the animal world. Every attempt to set up a distinction of kind has failed disastrously. And this is particularly true when we are dealing with morality. Every one of the moral qualities that are to be found in man is to be found also present in some degree among animals. Necessarily so. If morality is only the expression of such mutual relationships as are found to be beneficial to sentient organisms, it is hard, indeed, to discover any logical reason why morality, in germ at least, should not be present among gregarious animals. And what is there in any morality, no matter how lofty, *more* than this? Can we think of a moral quality that could retain its value apart from the association of human beings one with the other? What could be the meaning of chastity, honesty, truthfulness, or any of the virtues, if only one human being were alive upon the planet? Morality is not some transcendental, mystical thing imposed upon man from without, but as much an expression of the organic relationships subsisting between himself and his fellows as the apparently purposeless movements and shouts of a child are the expression of a superabundance of energy seeking some outlet.

The major part of our mortality, and the most stable part, is unconscious or instinctive. And this fact alone gives the death blow to theological theories, and at the same time proves the baselessness of the fears expressed that it will deteriorate if certain speculative views gain ground. The sanely-moral man is not the one who decides not to pick a pocket because he believes it impossible to elude the vigilance of god or a policeman, but the one in whom the desire to steal seldom or never arises. And this unconscious morality is naturally developed, not as the result of some fancied agreement about the "government of all things"—a question upon which there never *has* been any agreement, as a matter of fact—but as a consequence of the operation of the

principle of natural selection. Morality having fundamentally a social significance, the chances of survival have always been, other things equal, in favour of those societies in which certain qualities were best developed. There is, therefore, in every stage of moral evolution a constant reference, implicit or explicit, to the conditions under which life is possible and enjoyable. Fundamentally our moral codes are only a generalised and conscious recognition of the conditions under which the perpetuation of life is possible with the best promise of security and the smallest expenditure of energy. No matter how elaborate our moral rules may become, they can never lose this fundamental characteristic. They are based upon the laws of animal life, and so long as animal life persists must persist also.

Naturally, it is the fixed object of religionists to persuade us otherwise. It is to their profit that all the important matters of life should be referred to some extra-human sphere, and that men should be brought to believe that the practical value of life depends ultimately upon certain notions as to God, a future life, or the existence of various supernatural powers. And when the theologian is beaten down, the metaphysician—who is only a theologian of another sort, eternally juggling with words and worshipping phrases as facts—crops up. Instead of the appeal to Deity we have the appeal to some mystical "moral law," springing from nowhere and resting upon nothing. Metaphysician and theologian are equally useless as guides to mankind. The business of life is not mystical, but practical. The task of life is not to prepare people for a mystic "communion of souls" in some super-mundane region, but to fit them for mutual help and co-operation here. And this is surely best done by accustoming ourselves to face facts as they are; and, although this may mean the shattering of many cherished illusions at present, it certainly secures us against needless heartburnings and lamentations in the future.

C. COHEN.

## George Anderson's Apology.

*Apology*: Something spoken to ward off an attack; a defence or justification; an excuse.—Findlater's *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*.

### Introductory.

HAVING given Mr. George Anderson's pamphlet a better advertisement than he had any right to expect, and having thereby shown how little I fear anything he can say against me, as long as what he says is confined to the proper court of appeal—namely, the Freethought party, I now proceed to deal with the substance of his reply to what he chooses to call my "weekly attacks" upon him in the *Freethinker*.

Let me say at once that this word "attacks" seems to me very foolish. Mr. Anderson began the "attacks" by pursuing me into the bankruptcy court. It was not until he had succeeded in that pursuit that I was able to open my mouth, and then I was *bound* to do so, as the great danger I had to dread—apart from the pecuniary one—was that of a partial and one-sided publicity. Moreover, it was obviously to the interest of the Freethought movement that *all* the facts should be made known. My position was such that a public disgrace put upon me, and allowed to remain there, would necessarily tend to discredit the cause itself. And as far as the National Secular Society is concerned, I believe this was a large part of Mr. Anderson's intention.

I drew attention last week to Mr. Anderson's half statement and half-insinuation that the N.S.S. had never published a balance-sheet during my presidency—that is, since February 1890. This I felt it my duty to challenge immediately. It is false, absurd, and malicious: false, because it is contrary to the plainest facts; absurd, because Mr. Anderson ought to have known it to be so; and malicious, because his pamphlet would naturally fall into the hands of persons who had not seen my "attacks," and would never see my rejoinder.

The N.S.S. Executive met in the usual way on Thursday evening, January 2. Miss Vance, the secretary, produced Mr. Anderson's pamphlet, having



bought of him a number of copies to distribute amongst the members. The passages relating to the N. S. S. were considered, and the following resolution was carried unanimously :—

"That this Executive calls upon Mr. George Anderson to apologise for his false and foolish statement (in his reply to Mr. Foote) that the N. S. S. issues no balance-sheet, which he ought to know has been audited, printed, and circulated every year, both during Mr. Foote's presidency and before."

This resolution the secretary was instructed to forward to Mr. Anderson immediately; together with another resolution which will be mentioned hereafter.

Just another word in closing this introduction. There are irrelevant things in Mr. Anderson's pamphlet. Some persons are mentioned, and others alluded to, who may or may not have a legitimate quarrel with me. All this is beside the present issue. Mr. Anderson finds it difficult to defend himself, and is anxious to have the help of auxiliaries. But I shall disregard them for the present, and devote my attention entirely to him. And if his own case against me breaks down ignominiously, few will attach any importance to his collateral references.

#### Why He Made Me Bankrupt.

Several of my correspondents have said that they could not understand why Mr. Anderson made me bankrupt, and that they looked forward to some explanation from him. As far as I can make out, he was "decided" to bring his action by an "impertinent letter" I wrote him. Now what was the *impertinence*? I stated myself, months ago, that Mr. Anderson had requested me to distribute some Christmas-boxes for him in December, 1900. He did not send me the money, £20 in all, but desired me to find it myself and deduct it from what I owed him. This was the most extraordinary way of giving Christmas presents that I ever heard of. I replied that I could not act as his almoner in that fashion, and that his asking me to do so—especially as he had told the recipients what to expect—was unfair to all concerned. Mr. Anderson, I daresay, felt aggrieved; he is built to feel that way if he is not obeyed. But he should not try to justify himself by an easily-refuted falsehood. He says that I was in his office early in December, 1900, and informed him that I would begin paying him money after Christmas. As a matter of fact, I had not seen him since the previous August. And there is some corroboration of this in Mr. Anderson's pamphlet. He gives (p. 7) November 7, 1900, as the date on which he put the matter in the hands of his solicitors. He admits (p. 1) what I have previously stated, that I asked him to see me, not so much in my interest or his, but in the interest of the movement. He also admits that he declined to see me and referred me to his solicitors. My reply was that I was sorry, but as he had declared war I should defend myself as I could. A copy of that letter is on the record in the case of Anderson v. Foote. Mr. Anderson's solicitors then wrote to me, and I replied "without prejudice." My pursuer thus declared war on November 7, positively refused to see me himself, and practically told me I should have to fight it out with his lawyers. Yet he now says that I was "in his office" in the month of December. And why? Because that statement lends a plausible color to his complaint about the non-distribution of those Christmas-boxes. Had I been at his office, had I promised to "begin repaying just after Christmas," what he asked of me would only have involved a defect of taste. But as I had *not* been at his office, and had *not* made such a promise, or any promise at all, I have no hesitation in saying that the "impertinence" was not on *my* side.

Mr. Anderson says I have not been "happy in managing Scotchmen." If I had not so many good friends in Scotland, I might be tempted to imitate his offensive nationalism, and tell him that there was something quite too Scotch in asking a man to distribute Christmas-boxes in such circumstances. Personally, I think it was only Mr. Anderson's muddle-headedness; but, to a less charitable view, it would look remarkably like a trap.

It is a pity, by the way, that Mr. Anderson, in dealing with this matter, can hardly be accurate even by accident. He misstates (pp. 1, 2) the amount he sued me for, and

fathers upon me a misstatement of his old advances. I never said that £200 was the *amount* of those advances, but that £200 was the *balance* after deducting repayments. Then as to the "five per cent." interest, on "three notes" of mine "amounting to £200." The three notes amounted to £300, and there was not a word about interest on either of them. Interest was only mentioned on a long previous note for £94. These corrections will show the jumble into which Mr. Anderson has fallen.

So far, at any rate, we have not discovered Mr. Anderson's reason for making me bankrupt, except that he felt angry and vindictive. We shall have, therefore, to glean whatever indications are scattered over his pamphlet. And in following him it is necessary to be wary, for there is sometimes a curious method in his confusion. As a minor instance, I may mention that he says (p. 1) that I have held him up to contempt as "one of the vilest of men," but later on (p. 4) he puts the "vile George Anderson" between quotation marks, as though I had used that expression in the *Freethinker*. When a man does this sort of thing, whether by deliberation or accident, it is advisable to check him very carefully.

#### What He Remembers—and Forgets.

Mr. Anderson once more places on record (p. 2) his opinion that I have been "an ill-used man as to remuneration from the Party" I have "served so long as President." Why, then, did he select this "ill-used man" for further ill-usage? Anyhow, he need not have said that he held back his reply to me lest it "might limit the subscriptions" to save my home for my wife and "dear children." I find something nauseous in this language. I prefer hatred to hypocrisy. As far as my "dear children" are concerned, it is no fault of Mr. Anderson's that they have not suffered. Fortunately, I had *true* friends; yes, and some of the best of them were *Scotch*.

Mr. Anderson says (p. 2) he "never was intimate" with me till I "thrust" myself upon him. What a gentlemanly attitude after all those years! Fancy the President of the National Secular Society *thrusting* himself upon a Vice-President! Money is really not everything, Mr. Anderson; and, since you invite plain speaking, if you had the millions of a Carnegie, many people would be unable to regard you as my superior. But let us look a little more closely into this "thrusting." Mr. Anderson advanced me the first £100 "during the last ten years"—to use his own language—on March 22, 1893. How did I "thrust" myself upon him on that occasion? On Thursday evening, March 16, 1893, I delivered one of my many free lectures at the Hammersmith Club, No. 1 Broadway. The subject was "The Doom of the Gods," and it drew a crowded audience. There was no discussion, but a gentleman rose to move a vote of thanks to the lecturer. That gentleman was Mr. George Anderson. What he said was reported in the *Freethinker* of March 26 :—

"Mr. George Anderson, in moving a vote of thanks, said it was the first time he had ever heard Mr. Foote lecture, and he was more than pleased, he was electrified. He had known the Freethought party and its leaders for half a century, and he thought that Charles Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote were the two best leaders the party had ever had. Such men ought to be better supported. Men who were themselves freed from superstition were mean and contemptible in refusing to support the movement for liberating those who were still enslaved. Mr. Anderson's remarks were heartily applauded, and the vote of thanks was carried with acclamation."

That is how I "thrust" myself on Mr. George Anderson. I recollect the occasion very well. After the meeting we walked together to the station. Having a good while to wait for trains, it was natural that the "support" he had talked about should crop up in our conversation. He learnt something of my difficulties and obligations, and how I had been sinking both work and money in the *Freethinker*. Six days afterwards he posted me a cheque for £100, and several months elapsed before he asked me for a formal acknowledgment. That is how I "thrust" myself upon him.

Mr. Anderson quotes (p. 11) something I said at the Glasgow Conference in 1896. According to the report, the President said that he had "been struggling for three years against bankruptcy, and only by the kind-



ness of Mr. George Anderson he had been able to keep afloat." Yes, and I think I was honest, open, and grateful in making the admission. My only regret is that the "kindness" turned out to be something very different in the end.

#### The Statute of Limitation.

I cannot help thinking that Mr. Anderson talks very great nonsense on this point. Let us hear him :—

"In my recent action against Mr. Foote his Counsel said a lot of my account of money paid to Mr. Foote was barred by the statute of limitation. Fancy an honest man raising such a defence! Fancy the President of a Propagandist Society putting forward such a plea!"

Those who read, and recollect, my long and careful statements in the *Freethinker* will recognise the absurdity of this. The point as to the Statute of Limitation was only one point of several in my defence, and it was not primary, but subsidiary. Even if it stood alone it would not necessarily be dishonest. The honesty or dishonesty of it depends on circumstances. I was ready to fulfil my obligation to Mr. Anderson if he fulfilled his pledge to me and the shareholders of the Freethought Publishing Company. I offered him £200 on honorable conditions. When he refused it, and repudiated his pledge, I proposed to have the whole matter submitted to a Committee of Honor. Mr. Anderson would listen to nothing, and he denied everything. He took the attitude of Shylock—"I stand here for law." Yet he cries out because law was used against law. All that the law permits him to do in attacking me is just; what the law permits me to do in defending myself is unjust! The fact is that Mr. Anderson's claim was statute-barréd at the end of 1899. Had I not been so foolishly honest, or so honestly foolish, as to pay him £100 without taking security for the fulfilment of his obligation, his claim would have been absolutely irrecoverable. I committed that act of indiscretion because I did not know my man. I had him at *my* mercy, and it never occurred to me to use my advantage. When he had me at *his* mercy, he used his advantage to the uttermost.

#### The Promised Shares.

Mr. Anderson's statements on this head are amazing. I extract the following (pp. 2, 10) :—

"Mr. Foote has repeatedly stated in his tirades against me that I promised to take 500 shares in his new company, to which he was to sell his business. I did nothing of the kind.....Mr. Foote has made a good deal out of something that he had in my handwriting, and mixed it up with his statement that I had promised to take 500 shares. I demanded to see this, and when I did it was only something I wrote as a help in the wording of his prospectus, which he, and not I, was to sign."

Desiring to keep cool, I will not *characterise* these statements. I will do something better. I will *expose* them. Mr. Anderson has *never* demanded to see the documents he refers to so loosely. His solicitors were furnished with copies of them—at my expense, but Mr. Anderson did not trouble to look at the originals. He refers now to *one* document; if he has read what he is replying to, he knows that there were *three*. Two of the documents were promises over his own signature to take, in the first case 500 and in the second case 300, Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company. These two documents were shown to Mr. Anderson's solicitor. I saw them in his hands in court. They are now in the hands of *my* solicitor. Had I not placed them there they would have been removed from my custody. They are producible against Mr. Anderson if necessary. He half threatens to "bring an action for libel"—that is, I suppose, to try once more what money will do if his "Reply" is unsuccessful; like one who engages in a fight and cries "Police!" when he is getting the worst of it. But it is probably easier to repudiate written promises in a pamphlet than before a jury in a court of justice.

Another amazing statement of Mr. Anderson's is this :—"I never authorised Mr. Foote to put my name on his prospectus." What does he mean by *my* prospectus? The Freethought Publishing Company's prospectus was issued by the Board, after approval at a regular meeting which Mr. Anderson was summoned to attend like the other Directors. Who was to blame if

he was not present? The prospectus was sent to him, and it was published in the *Freethinker*. If he did not approve it, why did he not say so? He had signed the Memorandum and Articles of Association, in which the list of first Directors was printed. The Company's solicitor waited on him at his office and took his signature there; he must therefore have known what he was doing; and to protest his ignorance and irresponsibility two years afterwards is a proceeding which I leave every reader to judge in the light of his own common sense.

#### Mr. Anderson's "Deputation."

Mr. Anderson is guilty of another amazing statement in reference to the offer of £200 I made him (as I say) on honorable conditions. That offer was made through my solicitor; it was conditional on Mr. Anderson's taking his promised Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company. He refused it through his solicitor, and added that he had never promised to take such Shares. This was plainly set forth in the *Freethinker*, and Mr. Anderson has read it. Yet he now says that he accepted my offer of £200, which I refused to pay him! But the offer he says he accepted is not the one I made. It is one of his own invention. He says that a deputation from the Freethought Publishing Company—which, a little later, becomes "Mr. Foote's Company"—waited on him on March 9, 1901, and offered him in effect the sum of £200 on my behalf; that he accepted this offer in full satisfaction of his claim, and that "They fixed the payment to be made on the 11th." But the payment was never made, and the action went on. "The foregoing," Mr. Anderson says, "is what Mr. Foote has been time after time flouting as an offer which I had refused." But it was *not* the offer that Mr. Anderson had refused; as a matter of fact, it was an offer that was never made.

When the transfer of my Deferred Shares had to be registered by the Board of Directors, it was easy to "smell mischief." I was bound in honor to tell the Board why I had to sell the Shares. When the meeting was over an informal conversation took place. It was suggested that somebody should see Mr. Anderson, and try to bring him to a more placable frame of mind. I said decisively that I would have nothing to do with it, that I had tried all I knew to bring him to a better temper, that he had brutally refused me an interview, and that I would not humiliate myself any further for twenty Mr. Andersons. Mr. Thomas Shore, Mr. Charles Watts, and Miss Vance, however, arranged among themselves—and not even in my presence—to call on Mr. Anderson the next morning. They were not a deputation from the Freethought Publishing Company. There is no allusion to their visit in the minute-book. Nor did they go in my interest. They went in the interest of the Freethought movement. It is not simply my word against Mr. Anderson's. Mr. Watts, Mr. Shore, and Miss Vance have signed the following testimony, which they authorise me to print :—

"January 2, 1902.

"With reference to our interview with Mr. George Anderson on March 9, 1901, we, the undersigned, declare that we were not a deputation from the Freethought Publishing Company, that we did not go in any way whatever on Mr. Foote's behalf, that we had no sort of authorisation to make Mr. Anderson any offer of payment by Mr. Foote, and that we assured Mr. Anderson that we could neither make an offer nor accept one. We interviewed Mr. Anderson, knowing that he was proceeding against Mr. Foote, with a view to allaying ill-feeling, and preventing, if possible, a public rupture between two well-known Freethinkers.

"(Signed)

"CHARLES WATTS.

"THOMAS SHORE.

"EDITH M. VANCE."

Mr. Anderson prints letters which he wrote to his solicitors on this subject, but it is himself speaking all the time, and repetition is not fresh evidence. I conceive it possible that he had a mixed recollection of what occurred. This is more charitable than supposing he handled the truth carelessly. Mr. Watts, Mr. Shore, and Miss Vance told me that they found Mr. Anderson very angry. He called me a "liar" for saying he had promised to take those Shares. According to Mr. Shore and Miss Vance, he called me a "thief" for not paying all he demanded. Anyhow, they made no offer to him;



he made an offer to them ; and when I was told of it I laughed at it as the veriest absurdity. Mr. Anderson was to get the last halfpenny of his principal claim against me, and I was to lose my only opportunity of bringing him to book with regard to the Shares ! And this in face of the fact that my solicitor held I had a good defence if Mr. Anderson's action were tried in open court !

I know now why it was *not* tried in open court. The Master in Chambers gave judgment against me for £200, with leave to defend the rest of the action. This sum corresponded to nothing, and I asked my solicitor how it had been arrived at. He told me that the other side had alleged that an offer of £200 had been made to the plaintiff on my behalf. All he could say was that it was not on the record. I was indignant, but I could do nothing. The order had been made. It did not occur to me that Mr. Anderson was at the bottom of this misrepresentation. I took it to be a bit of artfulness on the part of his solicitors. But I see now that I misjudged them. It was their client's doing. He had turned an offer of his into an offer of mine. And it was that little transformation which led the Master to give judgment against me. How simple when one looks back upon it ! To say all that one thinks of it may be indiscreet ; besides, it is not necessary. The facts may be left to tell their own story and produce their own impression.

#### Mr. Anderson's Cheques.

Mr. Anderson goes on with his amazing statements. Here is another sample :—

"In his paper he has recently stated that he never had any money from me but the £200 I have just sued him for. He knew, and I knew, that this was false."

What is the matter with this man ? Why is he not accurate occasionally ? I never made the statement he ascribes to me. I admitted that he had advanced me in all £375. The £200 represented—but inaccurately, as I have said—the balance left after deducting payments and a contra account. What I alleged was that I had no other "money transactions" with Mr. Anderson. Hearing that some persons—no friends of mine, by the way—misunderstood, or affected to misunderstand, this allegation, I explained that during the past ten or twelve years Mr. Anderson had given many subscriptions to the Freethought movement, and some of them through me, but such subscriptions could not be regarded as "money transactions" between us. I was only the medium of conveyance. The use and object were in every case defined. But this will be shown more clearly as we proceed.

What I said was candid, sincere, and truthful. I printed the only letter of explanation that Mr. Anderson wrote ; and, when he said that, if I did not print it, he might have to circularise the N. S. S. Branches on the subject of his "money transactions" with me, I replied that he need not take that trouble, for if he sent his account of those "money transactions" to me I would print it for him in the *Freethinker*. But my offer was not accepted. Mr. Anderson preferred to wait five months, and mystify people with a pamphlet.

He now prints a list of cheques he says he has drawn in my favor since 1885. There is an obvious muddle at the start. A "balance of old account, as agreed" is not a cheque ; besides, there was no such old account. The £75 I admit having had ; that and £100, £50, and £150, made up the £375 before mentioned. Let us start, therefore, with the period of my presidency of the N. S. S. During those twelve years Mr. Anderson says he has given me eighteen cheques (in addition to those he sued me on) for various sums amounting to £151 5s. altogether. It is not a gigantic amount spread over so many years. But let us hear what Mr. Anderson says :—

"I do not say that these cheques were all given for Mr. Foote's personal use, although the larger ones were [that is, the cheques sued on] ; but he seldom left my office without a cheque for some of his objects, such as an outing for members and children, a *fête* at Christmas, or the benevolent fund. On one occasion I remember he was writing a pamphlet against Hugh Price Hughes about some shoemaker story, for which I gave him a cheque."

Without stooping to criticise the amiable suggestion

that I spent all these cheques on myself, I may observe that it is at least odd to refer to children's parties and excursions as *my* objects. They were the *party's* objects. To me they involved expenditure of both time and money. That was the profit (beyond the pleasure) which I derived from them. Then as to that Hugh Price Hughes cheque. Everybody knows that I exposed the "Atheist Shoemaker" story. The exposure made a thirty-two page pamphlet. A subscription was opened to circulate over 100,000 copies gratuitously. Mr. Anderson gave something to that object. I had all the work and trouble ; he gave a cheque towards circulating the result of my labors ; and this is one of his "money transactions" with me !

It would be doing Mr. Anderson too much honor to try to trace all his eighteen cheques at this time of day, and it might not be possible after such a lapse of time. I deny altogether that they were cheques for the N. S. S. Mr. Anderson's way was to subscribe for special objects that happened to be going. Let me illustrate my meaning. I have taken the trouble to look into the matter of the last five cheques in his list. They are the nearest in time, and therefore the most likely to be remembered ; and as they go back nearly six years, I think that is far enough for any reasonable purpose.

*Cheque 1.* August 25, 1899, £3 3s.—This was given me to distribute tickets in connection with the annual excursion to Littlehampton. From the nature of the case, it was not for publication. The tickets were to be distributed privately. Miss Vance did most of the distribution. Members of the N. S. S. Executive, at the last meeting, recollected those "Anderson" tickets quite well. Many were used, as intended, to swell the number of children.

*Cheque 2.* July 9, 1897, £10.—This was announced in the *Freethinker* as having been advanced by Mr. Anderson to enable me to go on with the formation of the Secular Society, Limited, as I had come to the end of my resources. I returned him this £10 after the Society paid me my out-of-pocket expenses. Fortunately I did so by cheque, and took a receipt ; for Mr. Anderson's solicitors applied for it again in January, 1901. Which shows that he is not so infallibly exact as he pretends in the matter of accounts.

*Cheque 3.* September 15, 1896, £5 5s.—This was a subscription, acknowledged in the *Freethinker* of September 20, towards the Foote and Watts Delegation Fund to America.

*Cheque 4.* June 4, 1896, £10.—I have no recollection of this cheque. It was probably for the Conference luncheon at Glasgow.

*Cheque 5.* February 29, 1896, £10.—This was a subscription towards "Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme." It was acknowledged in the *Freethinker*.

I have taken the first five cheques as they come, and dealt with each of them in rotation. Few sensible people will wish me to spend further time on the matter.

#### Mr. Anderson's Other Cheques.

Mr. Anderson prints a long list of cheques he has given to other persons than myself since 1892, amounting in all (as he says) to £1,288 4s. 11d. He does not give "personal names," as "most of the parties are alive to-day." But he tries to attach some sort of responsibility to me. He drags in the N. S. S. (p. 5), and alleges (p. 10) that these cheques were given to "causes in which he [Mr. Foote] is interested and individuals associated with him." Who are the individuals that have received all that money ? Mr. Anderson says they are associated with me. Frankly, I don't believe it. He may fancy so, but I think he is mistaken. On this point I will introduce the resolution of the N. S. S. Executive :—

"This Executive begs Mr. Anderson to state for its information who are the persons referred to in his pamphlet (pp. 4, 5) as having received cheques from him for Freethought purposes connected with the N. S. S."

Twenty-two of those cheques are located in 1900. They amount to more than £100. Who had *them* ? They certainly never came to assist any purposes of the N. S. S. Mr. Anderson is invited to be more definite.

Mr. Forder's name is the only one mentioned. Mr. Forder is dead, and cannot answer for himself. He was



"an honest and unfortunate man" in Mr. Anderson's opinion. Very good. Then why rake up the "assistance" given him now he is in his grave? There is another side even to this instance of Mr. Anderson's generosity. Mr. Forder came to see me once in great distress. It was soon after he had to give up business, when he was a broken man. I took the precaution of having the N. S. S. secretary present at the interview. He said that a certain Freethinker had called upon him with a letter from Mr. Anderson, ordering him to pay £50 at least to the said Freethinker, who wanted the money for an object which need not be specified at present. Mr. Forder cried in my office. I pitied him, and told him, if he heard any more of it, to come to me, and I would stand between him and his pursuers, at any cost to myself. Some time afterwards, I understand, he called upon Mr. Anderson, who, seeing the wreck he was, ordered the said Freethinker not to press his application, and abandoned what was clearly a hopeless claim.

The largest of Mr. Anderson's "other" cheques is for £220. That he lent to the Board of the old Hall of Science Company, he himself being one of the Directors. He lent it to complete the purchase by a certain date. He says he never had any of it back; further, that he wrote to me for an explanation, but I did not condescend to reply. He does not say that he wrote to me *eight years afterwards*. I did not reply by letter, but I called at his office and told him that he had received back either £150 or £170. When the Company was wound up it owed him either £50 or £70, and he ought to have kept the notice sent him as a creditor. I told him where to apply if he was still unsatisfied, and that he would have to apply himself, as I had no status in the matter. But all this he has forgotten.

Mr. Anderson is not fortunate in regard to his correspondence. He prints a few of his letters to me. My solicitor served him with a notice to produce my letters to him. He produced none. He said he could not find any—though one dropped out of his solicitor's papers as he said it. Now I can understand the keeping of correspondence in a business way; copies of your own letters, and the originals of other people's. But keeping a few of your own that may serve your turn, and none of your correspondent's, is not quite a satisfactory proceeding.

Finis.

Having given perhaps more attention to Mr. Anderson's pamphlet than it deserves, I have to say in conclusion that he has not told the whole truth as to his action against me. There is something behind, which I twitted him with at his office and in my letters, and which I have hinted at more than once in the *Freethinker*. I have not spoken out, because I did not wish the Freethought party to be distracted by unnecessary quarrels. Whether I shall preserve that reticence is more than I can say. Note the animosity which Mr. Anderson displays towards the National Secular Society. Ever since the death of Mr. Bradlaugh an effort has been going on to pull down this Society, and everything connected with it. To pull me down has been reckoned the easiest way of achieving that object. The latest effort of the conspiracy has failed. But I am under no illusion. Another attempt will be made as soon as possible. Meanwhile, I may refer to what I said five or six years ago. I said that if I were to let myself go, and hit out all round at my enemies, detractors, and false friends, it would no doubt be very lively reading, but it might not conduce to the peace and prosperity of the Freethought movement. There is a limit, however, to every man's patience, and I have nearly reached the limit of mine.

G. W. FOOTE.

The new judges of the Brooklyn police-courts found some difficulty in getting the old judges to make room for them. Judge Dooley sat on his bench and defied anybody to shift him. Judge Durack, who wanted the seat, ordered the police to remove the gentleman. "I am the regular magistrate here," said Judge Dooley, "and I propose to sit here. This man has no more right to interfere here than the Devil has to interfere with the Almighty." It was an awkward simile, for the Devil is always interfering with the Almighty. In a few minutes Judge Dooley was outside, and Judge Durack was on the bench.

## Acid Drops.

THE Pope himself cannot say to the tide of the Higher Criticism, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." The late Professor St. George Mivart was excommunicated for telling the plain truth about the Bible, but that was as silly an action as the flourish of Mrs. Partington's broom against the Atlantic Ocean. It is now announced by the *Tablet* that the Pope has appointed a special Pontifical Commission for the consideration of all questions connected with Biblical studies. Catholic scholars all over the world will be allowed to state their doubts and difficulties, and thus bring them to the direct notice of the Holy See. The Commission, we suppose, will gather how the wind is blowing, and trim the sails of the Roman Catholic Church accordingly. But what a let-down is this! What a confession of weakness! What an admission that the game is getting played out! Were the Pope really God's vicegerent on earth, and an infallible authority on matters of faith, he would not need to appoint a Commission, and collect information, and consider doubts and difficulties; it would be in his power, as well as his duty, to pronounce authoritatively the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, with regard to the Bible. What is really going on is something very different. The Pope is just feeling about for a safe way out of a most infernal mess. This he does with a good deal of histrionic cunning, but it is easily seen through by persons of common sagacity.

Dr. Parker is nothing if not sensational. He preaches in the City Temple every Thursday noon, and on the first Thursday in the new year he thought it policy to send special messages to various important persons all over the world. The first was a message to King Edward. This was applauded immensely; there were cries of "God save the King!" and a lady in the choir obliged with the national anthem. It was as good as a music-hall—though Dr. Parker is not quite equal to Dan Leno. Next came a message to President Roosevelt, who was funnily called "the King-President." Messages followed to Australia and Canada, bidding them "keep up the Christian flag"—which, we suppose, is an allusion to their recent military efforts in imitation of the Prince of Peace. Dr. Parker reminded both that "the Commonwealth would be but as sounding brass if it held loosely to the Bible and the Sabbath." This is sensible enough from his own professional point of view. Dr. Parker really made two bulls' eyes. The Bible for belief, and the Sabbath for worship, are the capital and machinery of the great Christian Trust.

Dr. Parker thought that "a united and loving Church would be a surprise and deterrent to the Devil." Very likely. But his Satanic Majesty's nerves are in no immediate danger. The Churches cannot afford to unite, and that is the best guarantee of their continued separation. It is the rivalry of the Churches that keeps them all up to the scratch. Moreover, it multiplies the number of preachers. One preacher would suffice for a multitude of places, but a Wesleyan must go in to compete with the Churchman, and a Baptist to compete with the Wesleyan, and a Congregationalist to compete with the Baptist, and a Salvation Army captain to compete with the "blooming lot." This affords godly employment to half-a-dozen soul-savers instead of one. It is evident, therefore, that the union of the Churches would cause a terrible glut in the clerical labor-market, and a frightful slump in stipends as the result of a vastly-quickenened competition for "calls."

Mr. Frederick Coleman, in the *Daily News*, gave a very interesting account of the Marquis Ito, the Grand Old Man of Japan. One thing, however, he forgot to say—namely, that this great statesman is a Freethinker. This would rather have fluttered the *Daily News'* readers. But in a leaderette, the same day, our contemporary had to observe that the Japanese "seem more enamored of our guns than of our religions." That is because our guns are solid facts, and our religions are hollow shams.

What puerile anecdotes pass muster as profound arguments in Christian papers! Here is the *Sunday Companion* telling a story of an anxious Atheist who was converted by an anonymous local preacher. "I don't believe Jesus lived at all," said the Atheist. Thereupon the local preacher asked him what date it was that day. The answer was "The 5th of October, 1901." "What is the 1901 from?" asked the local preacher. Why, from the birth of Christ, of course; and the Atheist was cornered. Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Whit Sunday, and Christmas Day were also pointed to as holidays which the Atheist enjoyed through Christ. Staggered by all this, he went home and read the Bible—which, as an Atheist, he had naturally never done before; and the result was his conversion to Christianity. But now comes the most piquant part of this bit of anecdote. "Eighteen months later," we are told, "this erstwhile sceptical young man was the best preacher on the plan of his circuit." Eighteen months after the 5th of October, 1901! How the deuce did all those months get packed in the sixth part of a year?



This is worse than the three days that Jesus Christ spent in the grave between Friday evening and Sunday morning. But arithmetic was never the Bibliolator's strong point.

The Rev. Pierrepont Edwards used to be known as the fighting parson of Southwark. Having been translated to a better living in Essex, he is still resolved to maintain his old reputation, and has, therefore, joined the Essex Battalion of Imperial Yeomanry as a trooper. There would probably be "ructions" if Jesus Christ caught him in the uniform.

The curate of Holy Trinity, Sloane-square, on Sunday, the 29th ult., discoursing upon the text Luke ii. 15, 16, uttered a diatribe against riches. Possibly he was "a poorly-paid curate." He was candid enough to admit that the doctrine of the incarnation was "at the root of all our hopes"; further, that "many legends have grown up around the infancy of Christ. In these apocryphal Gospels the infant Christ is totally unlike any other child. He was endowed with miraculous powers even in infancy, which he uses for his own benefit." It would have added interest to the sermon if he had given a few instances of these miraculous powers—how Christ made clay sparrows, and astounded his playmates by the Heigh Presto "Fly sparrow!" trick, or how he stretched his Father's carpentry when paternal worries had muddled the old man's brain. The curate said there was "one especially disturbing thought always suggested by the Christmas festival. The message of the angels proclaimed 'Peace on earth,' and yet, though 1900 years have passed, war still plays a very important part in our history. Why, then, has Christianity not stamped it out? Is Christianity, after all, a failure? we are tempted to ask. But surely Christmas itself supplies the answer when it points us to the Babe of Bethlehem. God works slowly from small beginnings." Proceeding, he said that "the Son of God was content to be born in a stable. He did not come in pomp and splendor. What a contrast to our aims and ideals. We profess to worship Christ. One would think he was a God of money-making, not the poor babe in the stable. Christ was weak in what we really admire as strength.....The Christmas festival rebukes our ostentation and outward show." In justice to the curate's shrewdness, it should be stated that this denunciation of riches took place after the collection, or possibly a poor collection was the cause of it. God only knows, and he won't tell!

Noah's Ark holds its own as a menagerie, but as a ship it is simply knocked out of time, although the Lord was its designer. The White Star Line is building the *Cedric*, which is to beat even the *Celtic*, and to be the biggest vessel afloat, with a 21,000 tonnage. Fancy poor old Noah in command of a craft like that! The Lord might trust him, but the White Star Line wouldn't—not even if he held the Lord's certificate in his ancient and fishlike fist.

First a lot of frost and snow, then a sudden thaw and a week's rain, in the North and Midlands. Result: thousands of acres of land deluged, and the perishing of great numbers of sheep and cattle. Good old "Providence."

The Congo Free State Government—perhaps we should say its agents—is showing what Christians are capable of in their dealings with the black "heathen" of Africa. Captain Guy Burrows, who has lately completed six years' service on the Upper Congo, has been interviewed by a Reuter representative. He says he has "sworn testimonies to cruelties of the most horrible kind" and "photographic evidence of atrocities" that cannot be denied. "I have in my dispatch-box," he says, "sworn evidence of a Belgian handing over natives to the cannibal tribe for the express purpose of being eaten, and of paying their workpeople with corpses of murdered natives." It would be hard to beat that.

With reference to the "Horos" and "Swami" case, the *Nottingham Guardian* says "it is a well-established fact that scepticism and superstition go hand in hand." Not exactly hand in hand, we should say, but rather like a policeman handcuffed to a prisoner. Our contemporary recommends heavier doses of "strong, simple faith in the old creeds and commandments." Considering the profuse piety of everybody mixed up in the "Horos" and "Swami" case—including the two filthy impostors—it cannot be denied that our contemporary's faith is indeed of the "simple" order.

Early on Tuesday morning, December 31, a man poisoned himself with prussic acid in the outer circle at Regent's Park, London. His identity has not been ascertained. But his head was shaved, and in his pockets were the photograph of a boy in a surplice and a crucifix attached to a watch-chain. We suppose this is another instance of the evil effects of scepticism. What does the *Nottingham Guardian* say?

Here is a "strong and simple faith" story. We take it from the *Daily Telegraph*, and commend it to the attention of the *Nottingham Guardian*: "A noble lord attended morning service at the English Church at Monte Carlo, and

slipped out quietly during the last verse of the hymn before the sermon. He strolled into the gaming-rooms, intending only to watch the play, as his luck had been very bad during the week. As he entered, he heard 'Trente deux, Rouge, Pair and Passe' from the table on his right, and immediately afterwards it was re-echoed from that on his left. He suddenly remembered that the hymn, the tune of which was running in his head, was also number thirty-two. He hurried to the third table and backed thirty-two with all the money in his pocket, forty-five francs, and won. Moving from table to table, and continuing to back thirty-two with increasing stakes, he won by lunch-time over £500. During the week he told the story to a number of friends, with the result that next Sunday the church was packed with people desirous of backing the number of the last hymn; and, as soon as it was announced, there was a rush to the door. It is said that the system was successful in most cases; but after that the parson made a rule that no hymn under number thirty-seven should be selected for Monte Carlo Church."

High Wycombe must be remarkably free from crime. The police seem to find the time hang heavy on their hands. They have been using a little of it to prosecute Mr. Joseph Popp for selling tobacco and newspapers on Sunday. The wicked Popp was fined five shillings, with five shillings costs. High Wycombe has redeemed its character, and is now at peace. It is to be hoped the dreadful Popp will not pop up again.

"A. F. London" (Bishop Ingram) writes from Fulham Palace to the *Daily Telegraph* about "Clerical Poverty." Many thousands of clergymen, he says, are embarrassed by extreme poverty. No less than 1,491 have incomes that do not exceed the average of £67 a year; 4,704 have incomes that average less than £155 a year; and there are 7,000 curates whose incomes do not average £130 a year. The Bishop calls these "deplorable facts." He invites contributions from laymen. But he says nothing about the clergy with big incomes. Why not try a little levelling down instead of passing round the hat? Squeeze down the bishops and plump up the curates. It will be good for both parties. And best for the bishops, if they want to get through the eye of that needle.

Here is an addendum to our recent paragraphs on "Kissing the Book." According to a correspondent of the *Times*, signing himself "J. K. S.," when the late Lord Iddesleigh, as Mr. Stafford Northcote, left Oxford, he was appointed one of the magistrates for Devon. He attended at the Castle of Exeter to be sworn, and was handed a book which had been of the "underdone pie crust" color. It was tied round with what had been, many years before, red tape. Mr. Northcote did not quite like the look of it, so he took out his knife and cut the tape, and on opening the book discovered that for about thirty years the magistrates had been sworn on a ready-reckoner.

Well, there wasn't much harm done. The ready-reckoner was probably accurate, which is more than can be said of the book it supplanted.

The Victoria Institute is the home of clerical fossils. At a recent meeting there the Rev. Chancellor Lias, M.A., read a paper on "Modifications of the Idea of God by Modern Thought and Scientific Discovery." He contended that the opposition between religion and science was now at an end. The "blank materialism" of Professor Tyndall—who, by the way, repudiated materialism—had disappeared. Evolution in its true sense was found to be compatible with Christianity. But this was not the evolution of Darwin. Oh no. That was false. The true sort could be found at the Victoria Institute. Then uprose the Rev. J. Tugwell. He valiantly denied that evolution was going on. He did not say so, but he was himself an instance to the contrary. Professor Orchard stood up for the divine creation of species. So they went on cheering each other up, these reverend gentlemen; and all the while the shilling edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species* was circulating like wildfire amongst the people.

George Mickleburgh, aged fifty-one, was brought before Mr. Fordham at the North London police-court, and charged with being guilty of conduct calculated to provoke a breach of the peace. It appears that he had preached at Highbury-corner and put the crowd in a passion. The magistrate said he was not to go there again. This he said he would do if the "infidels" were also warned off the spot. But the magistrate replied that he could only deal with the case before him. George Mickleburgh said he would go to prison rather than pay the fine of forty shillings. His courage abated, however, when the gaoler came to remove him. He paid up.

The man arrested in connection with the Tonbridge horror may or may not be guilty. We have no right, and no wish, to discuss that point. What we want to note is that he has been very regular in his attendance as a Sunday-school teacher. Something of that sort is getting quite common now in cases of arrest for the worst crimes.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 12, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, W.; 7.30, Debate with the Rev. J. J. B. Coles on "What is Christianity?"

January 13, London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner; 19, Liverpool; 26, Manchester.

March 2, Glasgow.

### To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 12 and 13, Bradford; 19, Bolton; 26, Porth, South Wales. February 9, Camberwell; 23, Liverpool. April 20, Glasgow.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 12, Sheffield; 19, Birmingham; 26, Glasgow. February 2, Athenæum Hall, London; 9, Liverpool; 16, Bradford.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

W. HEAFORD sends a subscription to the Francis Neale Fund as "a slight mark of the sympathy and admiration" he feels for "a stricken comrade."

P. B. CROULY has received refreshing "food for the soul" from Mr. Neale's writings, and hopes to receive more in the future.

E. J.—Thanks for your good wishes for the new year.

LIVERPOLITAN.—If all Freethinkers did their share, the fact that so few of them are wealthy would not so much matter.

JAMES WESTON.—Glad to have the best wishes of a veteran like yourself.

H. R. C.—See paragraph.

R. LEWIS.—Always glad to receive newspaper cuttings or other items on which we can find a paragraph.

THE "FRANCIS NEALE" FUND.—W. Milroy, 2s. 6d.; C. Cohen, 5s.; W. Heaford, 5s.; James Neate, £1; Mrs. Neate, £1; A. Simson, 5s.; A. Button, 2s. 6d.; H. Silverstein, 2s. 6d.; T. How, 2s.; Rainbow, 6d.; C. G. Quinton, 5s.; Brooks, 6d.; P. B. Crouly, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. Deakin, 10s.; R. Child, 2s. 6d.; R. Side, 10s.; E. J., 5s.; J. D. D., 5s.; James Weston, 10s.; Liverpoolian, 10s.; Emma Bradlaugh, 2s. 6d.; W. H. Morrish, £1; G. J. Holyoake, 5s.; Alfred Marsh, £1; M. L. B., 1s.; E. L., 1s.; Mrs. Burgon, 5s.; J. Barry, 5s.; C. J. Pottage, 10s.; D. Powell, 5s.; Putney, 5s.; Mrs. Stevens, 5s.; W. H. Stevens, 5s.; S. Edmonds, 5s.; R. Ringham, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Griffiths, 5s.; J. Pinnel, 2s.; Dr. R. T. Nichols, 10s. 6d.; J. R. Webley, 4s.; E. Purchase, 1s.; R. Linton, 2s.; C. Bentley, 2s.; George Brady, 10s.; Two Clifton Admirers, 5s.; A. G. Lye, 1s.; P. Fitzpatrick, 1s.; J. Bevins, 5s.

W. H. MORRISH, our veteran friend at Bristol, writes: "I have always read Mr. Neale's articles with pleasure and interest, and am grieved to know he is *hors de combat*. I trust he will soon recover and once more wield his clever and facile pen."

D. FRANKEL, 25 Osborne-street, Whitechapel, E., has taken the secretaryship of the East London N. S. S. Branch; J. C. Burrows having resigned in consequence of his going to sea.

W. P. BALL.—Cuttings received with many thanks.

C. BENTLEY.—The *Secular Almanack* was never intended to compete with the ordinary Almanacks in regard to common information. We cheerfully admit, however, that there is room for improvement. Perhaps we shall be able to embody some of our ideas in the next issue. Meanwhile we are glad to hear that you much admire the special articles.

EMMA BRADLAUGH.—Many thanks for your new year's good wishes. It is pleasant to hear from you now and then.

R. K. NAGARKAR.—We are glad to have your letter from far-off India. It is encouraging to know that you appreciate our writings, though we shrink from reproducing your eulogy. With regard to "Vedantism," you must have missed some of our references. As to the Parsee method of disposing of dead bodies, it is undoubtedly preferable to burial in the earth, but cremation is preferable to either. This quick and clean method is slowly, but surely, gaining ground in England.

W. H. MORRISH.—Have written you on the other matters. Should be very happy to meet you at the dinner on Monday evening if you are in town.

E. A. C.—The lines are so good that we could wish them better. Cultivate melody a little more. Double words, made so merely by hyphens, are apt to sound harshly. They require very careful handling.

GEORGE BRADY.—Pleased to see your handwriting again.

OWING to the length of Mr. Foote's rejoinder to Mr. Anderson, several items have to stand over till next week, including (we regret to say) a letter from Mr. F. Ryan.

B. A. MILLICHAMP.—Thanks for the reference to another use of the expression, "the shadow of a shade." What you say is doubtless true about writers often using unconsciously words and phrases they heard long ago. But this still leaves room for originality. Undoubtedly the same idea and the same expression will occur to different minds that never had any sort of contact with each other. We see this particularly in the history of religion.

TWO CLIFTON ADMIRERS.—Glad to hear the pleasure you take in reading Mr. Neale's articles. On the other matter, read our long Rejoinder this week, and tell us what you think *then*.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Free Sunday Advocate—Truthseeker (New York)—Freidenker—El Libre Pensamiento—Lucifer—Secular Thought—Two Worlds—Lyttleton Times—St. James's Gazette—Sydney Bulletin—Progressive Thinker—Torch of Reason.

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.

THE Athenæum Hall was crowded on Sunday evening, and many persons were unable to obtain admission. Not only the seating accommodation, but every foot of standing-room was occupied. The attraction was a debate between Mr. Foote and the Rev. J. J. B. Coles on "Christianity and Civilisation." Most of those present were Freethinkers, and naturally the applause went principally to Mr. Foote; but Mr. Coles was listened to with very respectful attention, and those who did not find his arguments convincing were at least impressed by his courtesy and sincerity. Both disputants agreed as to the nature of civilisation, but the longer they spoke the more it was obvious that they differed as to the nature of Christianity. The suggestion was therefore thrown out that it would be profitable to continue the debate by a discussion on "What is Christianity?" This was agreed to, and the debate, thus narrowed down to a definite issue, will be continued this evening (Jan. 12). Mr. Coles will, of course, occupy the first half-hour, and tell the audience what he considers Christianity is, and why he considers it so; and Mr. Foote will follow on this occasion instead of leading.

Everything possible will be done this evening (Jan. 12) for the convenience and comfort of those who attend to hear the continuation of the debate between Mr. Foote and the Rev. J. J. B. Coles. More seats will be provided, and the platform behind the speakers will be utilised. Still, as there is pretty sure to be a rush, we repeat that those who wish to secure seats should come early. If they want to read something while they are waiting, they will probably be able to find something to their taste at the bookstall.

Monday evening next (Jan. 13) is the date of the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner (under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive) at the Holborn Restaurant. The chair will be taken by Mr. Foote at 7.30. He will be supported by Messrs. Cohen, Moss, Heaford, and other well-known Secularists. The tickets are, as usual, four shillings each. We hope there will be a goodly company to do justice to the evening's program.

The annual Children's Party organised by the Glasgow Branch was a great success. The Secular Hall was packed to the door. After a liberal feast—and it has to be that for youngsters, and Scotch youngsters too—a first-class varied entertainment took place, to which several of the children contributed. A suitable present was given to each of the juveniles, and the evening wound up with a ringing cheer for the donors.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake sends us the following letter, which speaks for itself, and which we have pleasure in publishing:—"All who have been readers of Freethought publications for many years past are familiar with the name of Francis Neale. His ready pen has been constantly at the service of those who wished to rationalise theological ideas. His salient thoughts contributed to this end, and he has given light and guidance to many readers. We are all sorry to hear of his illness, which I hope will be cheered by the knowledge and appreciation of many co-workers, who, according to their means, will no doubt gladly contribute towards his physical amelioration. I enclose five shillings, and my friend, Mr. Alfred Marsh, asks me to send one pound for the same purpose. With regards to Mr. Neale, G. J. HOLYOAKE."

Mr. Charles Watts lectured twice on Sunday in the Secular Hall, Leicester. He had a hearty welcome. The morning audience, including a good proportion of young men, listened attentively to his exposition of the Materialist philosophy;



and the large audience in the evening were no doubt stimulated by his retrospect of the history and growth of Free-thought.

Mr. Watts lectures at Bradford to-day (Jan. 12), also on Monday evening. He will be away from London all next week upon important private business, as he informs us, and will therefore be unable to attend the London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner.

Mr. Foote has arranged to pay his deferred visit to Liverpool on Sunday next (January 19), when he will deliver in the Alexandra Hall the three lectures he was to have delivered some weeks ago. The Branch has also invited him to pay a special visit to Liverpool on the first Sunday in May.

Mr. E. B. Rose lectured for the East London Branch on Sunday evening on "The Experiences of a Transvaal Uitlander." The room was full, and the lecture was warmly applauded. A spirited discussion kept the meeting going till after ten o'clock.

### The Great Absent-Minded Beggar.

(With Apologies to Rudyard Kipling.)

WHEN you've shouted to King Jesus, and you've said the last "Amen,"

When you've finished slaying Satan with your mouth,  
Kindly ask your loving "Father," who resides up "in the heaven,"

To stop the war that's raging in the South.  
He's an absent-minded beggar, tho' some say he's not "at home,"

So perhaps you'll have a ticklish job to find him;  
Wherever he has gone he might have left his "only son"  
To remedy the wrongs he left behind him.

Good sons, bad sons, sons of the Heavenly Sire,  
Thousands are out in the thick of the fight—it's no use running away;

Some will be riddled with shot and shell, to blaze in eternal fire;  
Oh ain't it too bad that our poor old Dad must pay, pay, pay?

Since he's rested from his labors—made his fortune in a week—  
He never seems to trouble 'bout his "kids";  
He's retired from the business—gone to glory, so to speak—  
And left the world to Shrapnel Co. and Lyds.  
He's an absent-minded beggar, and a curious sort of "cove,"  
But he knows the way to wander through the sky:  
He's great on dodging comets in the regions "up above";  
If you think you can locate him, have a try.

Weak sons, poor sons, sons of the great "I AM,"  
Millions are toiling and starving through life on less than  
"two bob a day";  
Nobody knows what they suffer in vain, and nobody cares  
a —;  
So it's really too bad that their dear old Dad is away, 'way,  
'way.

He's such a tender Father—quite as gentle as a dove;  
He sends along diseases for our good;  
It's a funny little way he's got of showing us his love,  
In the form of fierce famine, fire, and flood.  
He's an absent-minded beggar who requires a deal of prayer  
To remind him of the way the world is "run";  
In the place he's mostly wanted you can never find him there  
Until *after* all the damage has been done.

White sons—black sons—innocent sons of "Jah,"  
Thousands are hurried to heaven or hell in a most precipitous way:  
Earthquakes and cyclones and prairie fires are gifts of our  
Heavenly "Pa"—  
"For his mercy" so tender "endureth for ever" and aye,  
aye, aye.

Of course, we must not doubt that his intentions are sincere;  
But his "ways" are so mysteriously blind  
That we really can't help thinking, if "Old Nick" were "in  
the chair,"

He'd be equally as gentle to mankind.  
He's an absent-minded beggar whom we well can do without,  
And the day is surely coming—'twon't be long—  
When the sanctified (?) fanatics who in raptures rave and  
shout  
Will be taught to sing a different kind of song.

Pure sons—true sons—sons of Humanity's prime,  
Millions are marching the Secular road with a sure and  
steady sway;  
Belief in a wise and beneficent "God" has failed to come up  
to time,  
While Science shall cause superstition and frauds to decay,  
'cay, 'cay.

T. P.

### Clare's Poems.

"Men trample grass and prize the flowers in May,  
But grass is green when flowers do fade away."

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE seems strangely sterile ground for the cultivation of poetry—even antagonistic to the poetic elements. Poetry seems to gather about mountains; the "Lakes" and "the Highlands" recall many associations; whilst "wild Wales" attracted the shy genius of Shelley and inspired Thomas Gray. Northamptonshire has produced a Dryden and a Clare. The "level pastures" and the "rushy flats" of Clare's native county strongly appealed to his imagination. His attachment to his birthplace was sincere and undisguised. Again and again he refers to it in his verse with almost a feminine tenderness of feeling. This is the more surprising when we reflect that he had to mingle in some of the most uninviting scenes of life. He says, in his *Rural Muse* :—

The very crow  
Croaks music in my native field.

The sheer force of Clare's genius overcame these difficulties, and even enabled him to mould, as it were, the rude Doric of his native county into musical expression, of which it was scarcely thought capable. He had great power of accurate observation, and nearly a century later, when railways and schools have transformed rural life, his works possess, apart altogether from their literary aspects, distinct historical and antiquarian value.

The prime factor in the explanation of Clare's genius is love, insight, and fidelity to nature. The poet described what he actually saw. He tells us :—

I found the poems in the fields,  
And only wrote them down.

Hence his originality, which impressed Charles Lamb so that he wrote to the peasant poet :—

"I am an inveterate old Londoner; but while I am among your choice collections I seem to be native to them, and free of the country."

Lamb was a true critic, and such praise from him is praise indeed.

Clare was a born poet. At the age of sixteen he breaks naturally into a note like this :—

Welcome pale primrose, starting up between  
Dead matted leaves of oak and ash, that strew  
The every lawn, the wood, and spinney through,  
'Mid creeping moss and ivy's darker green!  
How much thy presence beautifies the ground!  
How sweet thy modest, unaffected pride  
Glow on the sunny bank and wood's warm side!  
And where thy fairy flowers in groups are found  
The schoolboy roams enchantingly along,  
Plucking the fairest with a rude delight,  
While the meek shepherd stops his simple song  
To gaze a moment on the pleasing sight,  
O'erjoyed to see the flowers that truly bring  
The welcome news of sweet returning spring.

More delightful impressions of Arcadia have hardly been given by any poet since Herrick. Clare's nymphs are gladsome, fresh girls, without the foibles of modern fashion. His bright creations should be a most welcome relief to a generation jaded with the prosings and affectations of some latter-day poets. The following is an ideal picture, and felicitous in its drawing :—

Now comes the bonnie May, dancing and skipping  
Across the stepping-stones of meadow streams,  
Bearing no kin to April showers a-weeping,  
But constant sunshine as her servant seems.  
Her heart is up, her sweetness all a-Maying;  
Streams in her face like gems on beauty's breast;  
The swains are sighing all, and well a-daying  
Love-sick and gazing on their lovely guest.  
The Sunday paths, to pleasant places leading,  
Are graced by couples linking arm-in-arm,  
Sweet smiles enjoying, or some book a-reading,  
Where love and beauty are the constant charm;  
For, while the bonnie May is dancing by,  
Beauty delights the ear and beauty fills the eye.

Clare may be included among the poet painters. An example is this little sketch :—

This is the time when in the vale, grass-grown,  
The maiden hears at eve her lover's vows,  
What time the blue mist round the patient cows  
Dim rises from the grass, and half-conceals  
Their dappled hides—while the fields  
Lose all their paths in dusk.



He describes the flight of the butterfly :—

Among the bean-fields—  
How thy starry gems and gold  
To admiration would unfold,  
Lo! the arching heavenly bow  
Doth all his dyes on thee bestow—  
Crimson, blue, and watery green,  
Mixed with azure shade between ;  
These are thine—thou first in place,  
Queen of all the insect race.

Imagination infused into familiar things received happy expression in his line about the nightingale :—

Lost in a wilderness of listening leaves.

Here is a charming instance of a young girl :—

Stealing to woman's witching form,  
Sweet as the bud to blossom.

Again and again the prettiness of his fancy strikes one. What a quaint conceit this, for instance, of insects :—

One almost fancies that such happy things,  
With colored hoods and richly-burnished wings,  
Are fairy-folk in splendid masquerade.

Or this on the graves of some infants :—

Each death was tolled on flowers as summer gales went by.

Clare's poetry does not consist of

Soft songs to Julia's cockatoo,  
Fierce odes to battle and to slaughter,

but, created out of the simplest materials, it is not less full of interest and quiet touches of feeling. The nature of his poems led him to treat of rustic manners, of which he has left us some lively pictures. His delightful humor and his love of detail cause his descriptions to bear a strong resemblance to the pictures of the Dutch artists. These Dutchmen were remarkable for their delineation of minute objects in nature, animate and inanimate. They bestowed great labour on the reproduction of the plumage of a bird, of the veins of a cabbage, of the texture of a carpet. They preferred to paint a housewife at her homely duties, to all the gods and goddesses, saints and martyrs, in the Christian mythology. Now, Clare imitates with the pen what these artists did with the brush. He brought to the description of his surroundings that loving attention to detail which makes every Dutch picture profoundly interesting, even if not of supreme excellence.

Sentimentalism about nature is common enough in literature, but in truth it is a sickly thing. In Rousseau and Chateaubriand it became a form of disease. Wordsworth and Thoreau escaped from this evil, but the view of their contemporaries, as a whole, is about as true to life as the garlanded shepherds and shepherdesses seen in old curiosity shops.

In Clare's case poetry and natural history each gives to the other an added value. Take the following :—

Within a thick and spreading hawthorn bush  
That overhung a molehill large and round,  
I heard, from morn to morn, a merry thrush  
Sing hymns to sunrise, while I drank the sound  
With joy ; and often an intruding guest,  
I watched her secret toils from day to day,  
How true she warped the moss to form her nest,  
And modelled it within with wood and clay.  
And by-and-by, like heath bells gilt with dew,  
There lay her shining eggs, as bright as flowers,  
Ink-spotted over shells of green and blue ;  
And there I witnessed, in the summer hours,  
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,  
Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.

Or this sonnet on "March" :—

The insect world, now sunbeams higher climb,  
Oft dreams of Spring, and wake before their time ;  
Bees stroke their little legs across their wings,  
And venture short flights where the snowdrop rings  
Its silver bell, and Winter aconite  
Its buttercup-like flowers that shut at night,  
With green leaf furling round its cup of gold ;  
Like tender maiden muffled from the cold ;  
They sip and find their honey dreams are vain,  
Then feebly hasten to their hives again.  
The butterflies, by eager hopes undone,  
Glad as a child come out to greet the sun,  
Beneath the shadows of a sunny shower  
Are lost, nor see to-morrow's April flower.

Clare has not inaptly been called the "English Burns." He was possessed of many of the personal and poetical attributes of Scotland's greatest poet, but it would be manifestly unfair to attempt too close a

comparison between them. The places of the two poets in literature are so widely apart.

Clare, born of peasant parents, and with a most meagre education, was often hampered by a limited vocabulary. His work is here and there marred by insignificant departures from the exact rules of grammar. But the exigencies of his lowly station were powerless to quench the fire of genius burning within him. The very disadvantages were turned to good account, for he introduced into his writings words and phrases which, while being largely local, are still more or less native to the whole of the southern midlands. These give to the expressions, where they occur, a force which a more cultured poet would have missed by virtue of his very culture. With few educational and no social advantages, John Clare did well. What he would have done in the present day it is difficult to affirm. The loss which has accrued to the world through his genius being starved in an uncongenial soil is, in all probability, a great one. For he was no mere poetaster, no mere stringer together of facile rhymes.

As an agricultural laborer, he saw poverty in its most afflicting shapes. But he never attempted to set classes at enmity. He was indignant at the callousness of the sordid rich ; but he never taught the poor that the rich were their social enemies. Remembering Clare's own words,

Oh, sad sons of poverty !  
Victims doomed to misery.  
Who can paint what pain prevails  
O'er the heart which want assails ?  
Modest shame the pain conceals,  
No one knows but he who feels,

it is difficult to understand Lord Radstock's attempt to put a padlock on Clare's lips. Clare has beautifully expressed a deep sense of the nobility of the poor in his writings, but he was not a revolutionary. It was unnecessary for Lord Radstock to express his abhorrence of Clare's "radical slang," and cause the poet's poems to reach the world in a mutilated form.

Clare's outbursts about "accursed wealth" are harmless, for the peasant-poet never went beyond petulance. What a contrast between his faltering accents and Shelley's verse, which roused men like a clarion ; or the passionate invective of Ebenezer Elliot, which burned into men's minds like acid. Clare merely dallied with Radicalism ; Shelley and Elliot meant mischief.

Clare was not without shrewdness. Writing to George Darley (the author of *Sylva*), he makes some sarcastic remarks on political matters :—

"There is scarcely a clown in the village but what has the assumption to act the politician, and I hope this general stir may produce general good. But the farce of the thing is that our Tory folks should be grown into Radicals, and be brawling after the reform, which they alone have so long and so obstinately prevented. What is the reason? It is a known fact in natural history that foxes will do all they can to drive badgers out of their holes that they may get in themselves, and I think there is a parallel in this matter."

Happily, political references are few in number in his writings. He is even more happy in his literary criticisms. Writing when Byron's fame was at the meridian of its splendor, Clare says :—

"Shakespeare was hardly noticed in his lifetime by popularity ; but he is known now, and *Byron is hardly the tenth part of a Shakespeare.*"

And again :—

"Wordsworth has had little share of popularity, though he bids fair to be as great in one species of poetry as Byron was in another ; but to acknowledge such an opinion in the world's ear would only pucker the lips of fashion into a sneer against it."

He remarks caustically enough that "the vulgar, tasteless jargon of *Dr. Syntax*" met with an unprecedented sale, whilst "the poems of Wordsworth scarcely found admirers enough to ensure a second edition." Alluding to the ephemeral poetasters of the day, he said :—

"There are things as old as England that have out-lived centuries of popularity—nay, left half its history in darkness, and they still live on, as common in every memory as the seasons, and as familiar to children as the rain and spring flowers. I allude to the old superstitious fragments of legends and stories in rhyme that are said to be Norman, or Saxon, or Danish."



Would it be believed that the man who wrote these lines was a day laborer?

He shared the indignation of the majority of his countrymen at the refusal of the ecclesiastics to bury Byron in the Abbey. As a poet, he felt the insult to his craft, and his abhorrence is expressed with poetic fervor:—

"It is said that Byron is 'not to have a monument in Westminster Abbey. To him it is no injury. Time is his monument, on whose scroll the name of Byron shall be legible when the walls and tombs of Westminster Abbey shall have mingled with the refuse of ruins, and the sun, as in scorn, be left free again to smile upon the earth so long darkened with the pompous shadows of bigotry and intolerance."

Had not the last twenty-five years of Clare's life been a melancholy drama acted upon the unseen stage of his mind, he might have taken a very high place among those who have filled the world with what the world will not willingly let die. As it is, we have just reason to be proud of this uneducated laborer. His lines to the memory of Robert Bloomfield, the Suffolk Farmer's Boy, may be applied to Clare himself:—

Sweet, unassuming minstrel; not to thee  
The dazzling fashions of the day belong;  
Nature's wild pictures, field and cloud and tree  
And quiet brooks, far distant from the throng,  
In murmurs tender as the toiling bee,  
Make the sweet music of thy gentle song.

MIMNERMUS.

### Christ and Common-sense.

THE essential definition of a Christian is "one who follows Christ."

"If any man will be my disciple," says Christ, "let him take up his cross and follow me.....and whosoever doth not bear his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Why is it, then, that so very few Christians really follow Christ? Is it not because Christ's teaching is flatly opposed to the dictates of common-sense?

Common-sense says that if a man lives a pure, honest, useful life, he has done his duty and has earned his reward. Christ says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *except a man be born again* he cannot see the kingdom of God." "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

While common-sense requires "good works," Christ demands "faith."

Common-sense says that a man has a right to such wealth and comfort as he can honestly earn. Christ says: "Woe unto you that are rich." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Commonsense says that if a man does you a deliberate injury, it is only justice to you both that he should be punished. Christ says: "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Common-sense commends high-spiritedness and righteous anger at injustice and at fraud. Christ says: "Blessed are the *poor* in spirit; blessed are the meek." "If any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also, and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

Common-sense says that we may rightly enjoy the good things of this life—the beauties of nature and of art; the delights of social life; the pleasures of science or of business. Christ says: "Ye are not of the world; I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"; "In the world ye shall have tribulation"; "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children and brethren, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Again, common-sense says that a man who works hard, and by thrift and industry accumulates savings for the future, is a wise man, and a worthy citizen. Christ says: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."

Common-sense says that if God is our father, and loves all of us as his children, then he will guide us in a straight path, and lead us home at last. But Christ says: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, *and shall not be able*"; "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat, because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Surely, on all these points is Christ opposed to common-sense, and it is because the people do unconsciously follow their common-sense that they do *not* follow Christ. They but confess him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him.

It is a serious charge against Christianity that it is opposed to the common-sense of the people.

E. JENKINSON.

## Darwin and Religion.—X.

(Conclusion.)

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

DARWIN was, of course, a naturalist in ethics, holding that morality is founded on sympathy and the social instincts. There is no more solid and satisfactory account of the genesis and development of conscience than is to be found in the chapter on "The Moral Sense" in the *Descent of Man*. I do not think, however, that he had given much attention to the relations between morality and religion, but what he says is, of course, entitled to respect.

"With the more civilised races," he declares, "the conviction of the existence of an all-seeing Deity has had a potent influence on the advance of morality."\* He speaks of "the ennobling belief in the existence of an Omnipotent God,"† and again of "the grand idea of a God hating sin and loving righteousness."‡ These are casual opinions, never in any case elaborated, so that we cannot tell on what grounds Darwin held them. One would have liked to hear his opinion as to how many people were habitually swayed by this "grand idea" of God.

AGNOSTICISM AND ATHEISM.

"My views are not at all necessarily atheistical," wrote Darwin in 1860 to Dr. Asa Gray.§ In the same strain he wrote to Mr. Fordyce in 1879:—

"What my own views may be is a question of no consequence to anyone but myself. But, as you ask, I may state that my judgment often fluctuates.....In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an Atheist in the sense of denying the existence of God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older), but not always, that an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind."||

Similarly, he closes a lengthy passage of his *Autobiography*: "The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic."¶

Let us here recur to the conversation between Darwin and Dr. Büchner, reported by Dr. Aveling. Darwin "held the opinion that the Atheist was a denier of God," and this is borne out by the extract just given from his letter to Mr. Fordyce. His two guests explained to him that the Greek prefix *a* was privative, not negative, and that an Atheist was simply a person without God. Darwin agreed with them on every point, and said finally: "I am with you in thought, but I should prefer the word Agnostic to the word Atheist." They suggested that Agnostic was Atheist "writ respectable," and Atheist was Agnostic "writ aggressive." At which he smiled, and asked: "Why should you be so aggressive? Is anything gained by trying to force these new ideas upon the mass of mankind? It is all very well for educated, cultured, thoughtful people, but are the masses yet ripe for it?""\*

Mr. Francis Darwin does not dispute this report:—

"My father's replies implied his preference for the un-aggressive attitude of an Agnostic. Dr. Aveling seems to regard the absence of aggressiveness in my father's views as distinguishing them in an unessential manner from his own. But, in my judgment, it is precisely differences of this kind which distinguish him so completely from the class of thinkers to which Dr. Aveling belongs."††

This is amusing, but not convincing; indeed, it gives up the whole point at issue. Mr. Francis Darwin simply confirms all that Dr. Aveling said. The great naturalist was not aggressive, so he preferred *Agnostic* to *Atheist*; but as both mean exactly the same, essentially, the difference is not one of principle, but one of policy and temperament. Darwin prided himself on having "done some service in aiding to overthrow the dogma of separate creations."‡‡ Had he gone more into the world, and seen the evil effects of other dogmas, he might have sympathised more

\* *Descent of Man*, p. 612.

† *Ibid.*, p. 93.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

§ Vol. ii., p. 312.

|| Vol. i., p. 305.

¶ Vol. i., p. 313.

\*\* Dr. Aveling's pamphlet, p. 5.

†† *Life and Letters*, vol. i, p. 317.

‡‡ *Descent of Man*, p. 61.



with the aggressive attitude of those who challenge theology *in toto* as the historic enemy of liberty and progress. This at least is certain: that Charles Darwin, the supreme biologist of his age, and the greatest scientific intellect since Newton, was an Atheist in the only proper sense of the word—the sense supported by etymology, the sense accepted by those who bear the name.

G. W. F.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices on Thursday January 2, 1902. There were present (Mr. G. W. Foote, President, in the chair): Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, J. Cooper, W. Heaford, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, C. Quinton, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, C. Watts, T. Wilmot, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement presented and adopted. New members' application forms were presented and admitted. The Secretary was instructed to prepare a statement of all Branches now in arrear with subscriptions for next meeting.

The Sub-Committee elected to consider and report upon the Conference resolution *re* subscription and membership, which, after discussion, was ordered to be printed and sent to each member of the Executive, in order to have it the more fully discussed at next meeting.

The Secretary produced a pamphlet written by Mr. George Anderson, being a reply to Mr. G. W. Foote, and called attention to certain unfounded and injurious charges made by Mr. Anderson against the N. S. S. After reading the passages the following resolution was moved and unanimously carried:—

"That this Executive calls upon Mr. George Anderson to apologise for his false and foolish statement (in his reply to Mr. Foote) that the N. S. S. issues no balance-sheet, which he ought to know has been audited, printed, and circulated every year, both during Mr. Foote's presidency and before."

The following resolution was also moved and carried unanimously, and ordered to be sent to Mr. Anderson:—

"This Executive begs Mr. Anderson to state for its information who are the persons referred to in his pamphlet (pp. 4 and 5) as having received cheques from him for Freethought purposes connected with the N. S. S."

It was resolved to arrange for a lecture at West Ham, and, other business having been arranged, the meeting adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

### "He Kicked."

"You wan' to jine the ban,' do you?" said an old negro preacher to a young convert. "Yes, sah, I wan' to jine." "Well, sah, do you believe Gerliah, a pickaninny little shaver, slew a great big man called David, that was longer dan de Centre Market, wid a pebble dat was no bigger dan a huckleberry? Eh?" "No! I don't believe nothin' like dat," was the reply. "Den you can't jine." "Well, den I b'leves it. On wid de katekise." "Do you b'leve," continued the deacon, "dat dar war a man called Joner who swollered a whale an' kept it down a awful long time before he spitted it out?" "No, sah, can't make me b'leve dat," was the response. "Den you can't jine." "Well, now, I b'leve dat too. Go on wid the katekise." "Do you b'leve dat dar was a man named Delilia, and dat a woman called Samson got down in de cellar of a big house what weighed more'n de Centennial, and lifted it kerslap clean out ob de world?" "Don't b'leve nothin' ob de kind," was the indignant reply. "Den you can't jine." "Don't wan't to join. I don't believe dat fish story you just told me neider." There was no further "katekise."

Poking fun at the Bible is blasphemy when it is done in the *Freethinker*. It is something very different when it is done by Mr. Chamberlain. Speaking at Birmingham the other day, that gentleman said he had always sympathised with the elder brother in a certain parable. Good reasons were given for welcoming the prodigal son, but what was the sequel? Was his conversion permanent, or did he go back to the pigs? Whereat the assembled Conservatives laughed.

The "odium theologicum" is a very ancient thing. It means, substantially, throw what you can at everybody who differs from the majority in matters of religion. Nevertheless the expression appears to be quite modern. Dr. Murray says it has not been traced beyond 1758, when it appears in a note to an edition of Hume's *Essays*. We believe it might be traced farther back.

## Correspondence.

### ACHILLES AND THE TORTOISE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As "Gorgias" does not know of the solution of this puzzle, I may say that the point at which Achilles will catch the tortoise can easily be found by multiplying the separating distance at the start by the ratio of speed divided by the ratio of speed *minus* one. In the case given, Achilles is supposed to run 20 times as fast as the tortoise, and the separating distance at the start is 20 paces or yards. Achilles will, therefore, catch the tortoise after he has run  $20 \text{ paces} \times \frac{20}{19} = 21\frac{1}{19}$  paces.

The problem can be stated thus as a simple "rule-of-three" sum: If by running 20 yards the pursuer catches up 19 yards of the separating distance, how many yards will he have to run to catch up 20 yards? Answer—20 yards  $\times \frac{20}{19} = 21\frac{1}{19}$  yards.

As "Gorgias" feels so positive that Achilles can *never* catch the tortoise, I may point out that after a very short time the tortoise will certainly have moved  $1\frac{1}{19}$  paces or yards, and at the same moment Achilles, having run twenty times this distance, will have reached exactly the same point, and therefore will have caught the tortoise.

"Gorgias," however, thinks that the "terms of the race" and the "original conditions" of the problem are such that if the heats were "run to Doomsday the tortoise could never be caught by Achilles." But the problem is a practical one, and one of a kind which is continually being set and continually being solved by nature and fact. Pursuers are incessantly catching pursued objects *on precisely such terms* of superior speed and *graduated* diminution of the separating distance. The endlessly-diminishing fractions are concentrated into as rapidly-diminishing time-periods, and are actually and really brought to an end and to a finite result. This is self-evident matter of fact. That the human mind cannot put together an *infinite* series of diminishing quantities by the direct method is no reason for supposing that nature cannot do so—and no reason for dismissing the problem as merely a "plausible verbal trap." It is a true problem presented in its most puzzling or bewildering aspect.

There are other mathematical truths which often appear similarly incredible to the uninitiated—as, for instance, that  $\sqrt{9} =$  exactly *one*, and that there is absolutely no angle whatever at the point where a straight line touches a circle. Such demonstrable truths are, of course, not affected in the least by incredulity or denial.

The difficulty which "Gorgias" experiences over a problem which can be solved by simple arithmetic shows how mankind can confuse and deceive itself with mathematical puzzles, just as it does with the free-will puzzle. The positiveness of his personal conviction and assured assertion that catching the tortoise on the terms given is impossible furnishes an instructive parallel to the similar positiveness with which people maintain their equally fallacious belief in uncaused volition.

W. P. BALL.

### MR. BEADLE'S CASE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My attention has been called to a letter in your issue of January 5, in which my name is mentioned, signed by a writer who assumes the pseudonym of "Truth."

Will you allow me to say in reply that I should like to presume, in my own mind, that what his two letters contain the writer believes to be truth? But I would assure him that, so far as I am concerned, every word of them is false.

So far from religiously influencing Mr. Beadle during his serious illness, when he was face to face with death, I did not even know that he was ill, and only found it out when I accidentally met him in the street during the time of his convalescence. Your correspondent writes: "If it be worth while to investigate, it can be proved to be true." Then I should like to make it worth his while to investigate and prove his case; and, as he is a "poor man having a wife and family to support," I will give him a £5 note if he will prove that I entered Mr. Beadle's house, or that I saw him at all during the time he was confined to bed and face to face with death. I do not wish anything else but "truth."

Your correspondent further says "I feel convinced" Mr. Moulson wrote the letter which is signed by Mr. Beadle; but his "feelings" do not alter the fact that I did not write it, or have anything to do with the writing of it; neither ought they to be accepted as a substitute for fact. When a man arrives at "truth" concerning other people through his own "feelings," he is almost certain to be wrong, and it is both unfair and unjust to send his feelings abroad as though they were truth. "Truth" challenged contradiction, and he has been contradicted; still, he "adheres to every word of his former letter." Now it is my turn, and I challenge him to investigation and proof.

(REV.) HENRY MOULSON.



## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

## LONDON.

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, Debate between Mr. G. W. Foote and the Rev. J. J. B. Coles on "What is Christianity?"

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney, E.): 7, J. Fagan, "The Confessional."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow Road): 7, F. J. Gould, "Tolstoy, the Anarchist."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Stanton Coit, "John Wesley."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Gustav Spiller, "The Influence of Economic Conditions upon Character."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (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, J. H. Gilliland, "England and India."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, A lecture,

BRADFORD (Bradlaugh Club, Victoria Buildings, 17 Little Horton-lane): C. Watts—3, "The Gospel of Freethought"; 7, "Is there a Future Life?" January 13, at 7, New Year's Tea and Social Party.

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

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class; 6.30, Mr. Anderson, "The Dominant Factor in Life."

HULL (No. 2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Trumper, "A Chapter from the *Story of My Dictatorship*."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A. W. Short, "Through the Portals of Death."

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, A. Woolerton, "Smashing the Trade Unions."

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

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A Reading.

H. PERCY WARD, 1 Victoria-chambers, 17 Little Horton-lane, Bradford.—January 29 and 30, Debate at Preston. February 2, Sheffield. March 16, Liverpool.

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