

# THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

*Man paints himself in his gods.*—SCHILLER.

## Natural Christianity.

WE often hear of Natural Religion as distinguished from Revealed Religion. But religion is never natural—except in the sense that all men's mistakes are natural. Religion is always supernatural. When it ceases to be that it ceases to be at all. It sinks, or is transformed, into a philosophy or a metaphysic; it is no longer sovereign and imperative; it exercises no sort of influence over the masses of mankind; it becomes one of the multitude of curious objects in the world's intellectual museum.

We now hear of Natural Christianity. How can there be such a thing? Take away the supernaturalism of the Bible, and Christianity disappears with it. All the spiritual and ethical texts of the New Testament are utterances by the way. It is the *story* that is essential. Everything else hangs upon the miraculous narrative. Removing that is like knocking out the pegs in a wardrobe. The result is a chaos. Without the marvellous life of Christ, and the wonders of the first missionary work of the Apostles, we have simply an inorganic mass of ideas and sentiments that could not possibly form the substance of a popular faith. People in general have always wanted something definite. To believe a thing (for instance) because it is probable, is one thing; to believe it because if you do not you will be damned, is quite another; and it is the latter that catches on with the ignorant masses.

"Natural Christianity" was, however, the subject of a recent address by Dean Fremantle, of Ripon, to a meeting of the Churchmen's Union. He appears to see that supernaturalism is doomed; that it must vanish like a ghost of the night of ignorance in the full daylight of science. He is ready to give up all the miracles of the New Testament; including the miraculous birth, the miraculous career, and the miraculous resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Indeed, he seems more than ready to give up all this. He argues that it *must* be abandoned in order that what is left of Christianity may not be involved in the same destruction.

Fifty years ago such an utterance would have astonished and alarmed the whole nation. Now it only forms one of the day's excitements, and to-morrow it will be forgotten. Yet there are people who say—and keep on saying—that the Freethought cause is dead! People who say that will say anything. They are like the prophet Habbakuk in the Voltaire story—*capable de tout*. The Freethought cause *dead* indeed! Why, it has got into the very Church, and is doing a mighty work there. It is converting the clergy. It is slowly but surely making them all Freethinkers.

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At least as far as the Bible is concerned. That part of the battle is practically over. The fight of the future will rage round the two fundamentals of religion—God and a Future Life.

The London *Express* has tried to catch leading Churchmen in its editorial net. Most of them, however, are too "fly" to be captured. Canon Knox Little answers as though he would drum Dean Fremantle out of the Church. But that is easier said than done. What a desperate attempt was made to expel Colenso! Yet it failed, and he died a Bishop after all. Of course it is conceivable that Canon Knox Little only means that Dean Fremantle should resign. But we believe his resignation is about as likely as his expulsion. Few men give up such appointments for conscience' sake. Besides, it is at least arguable that an "advanced" clergyman may do more service to Freethought by stopping in his pulpit. And, for our part, we find it pleasant to feel that, while we are attacking the Church from without, there are a number of its friends pulling it down from within. They do not like us, we know; they would hate to shake hands with us; nevertheless, we are not doing *their* work; they are doing *ours*. It is natural, therefore, that they should have our sympathy, and our best wishes for their success.

The Dean of Ely—or is it the Bishop?—gives the following answer:—

"Revelation is always adapted to the particular age. A twentieth century incarnation would doubtless not be by virgin birth, and first century miracles would not happen.

Of course they would not happen. There is not enough credulity now to make the fortune of fresh miracles. There is only enough to keep up the reputation of old ones. Nothing but early training saves the population of this island from utter "infidelity."

The Dean of York is wise in his generation. He declines to commit himself. "Dean Fremantle's views," he says, "are too serious to be the subject of newspaper controversy." In one sense we agree with him. It is "serious" to let the cat out of the bag in the sight of all the people.

Canon Scott Holland has "heard strong condemnation" of Dean Fremantle's views, but does not say he shares it. The Deans of Wells and Durham think the Dean of Ripon must have been misunderstood. The Bishop of St. Asaph "hardly imagines" any attack "will succeed where eighteen centuries have failed." Which is hypocritical nonsense, for the "attack" has never had a fair chance until lately. It was put down with bloodshed for ever so many centuries, and afterwards with imprisonment. The truth is that the "attack" has succeeded, is succeeding, and will succeed. Human reason, as Newman saw, is a solvent of every form of faith. No supernaturalism can stand against it. Its triumph is merely a question of opportunity.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Freethought and the "Daily News."

A LITTLE while ago the English people were greeted with what was intended to be cheering news. The *Daily News* was for the future to be conducted on Christian lines, it was to pay special attention to religious news, and keep a general eye on the spiritual welfare of the people of this country, to say nothing of those outside. Sporting news, for the insertion of which bookmakers do not pay, was excluded, but advertisements announcing the flotation of all classes of companies, for which large sums are paid, was retained, as also were the Stock Exchange quotations, although the distinction between one who puts "a shillin' on a 'orse," and the one who gambles on "differences," is far too subtle for my discrimination. Theology—that is, Christian theology—began to run riot in its columns. It cropped up in its leading articles, which, by combining theology with politics had just enough of each to spoil the sense of the other, Dr. Clifford and one or two others spread themselves at fearful length in its pages, and, above all, "Liberty," "Freedom," "The Rights of Conscience," etc., etc., were served out so liberally, that one almost began to wish that there were no such phrases in the English language.

But we had a Christian daily paper; that was something—although it must be admitted that with the exception of resolutions passed at Nonconformist meetings hailing its advent, the world took its appearance with unexpected equanimity. And in some respects it must be admitted that it quite lived up to the best traditions of the Nonconformist Conscience. For one thing it continued the policy of suppressing anti-Christian news. Letters attacking a theological opinions—Christian theology, that is—or those attacking any prominent Nonconformist preacher, were instantly consigned to the W.P.B. Mr. John Burns is found saying something in praise of the Christian Sunday, and a half column is given him. The same gentleman, at a meeting against the Education Bill of the Government, speaks in favor of Secular Education, and his name is not mentioned in the next day's report. The speeches of Mr. Lloyd George, Dr. Macnamara, and others in the House of Commons, against the measure, are reported at great length. Mr. Labouchere's speech, in the same place, advocating secular education, thus raising the real issue of the whole question, is summarised in about a dozen lines.

There is, thus, no mistake as to the *Daily News* having become a Christian newspaper. Of course, it may be argued that other papers follow the same plan in their reporting. This is admitted, only there is an important distinction in the two cases. The ordinary newspaper is a money-making or a party concern. About the poor gullable public it cares little or nothing so long as it buys the paper. These papers therefore suppress news or misrepresent opinions out of a spirit of worldly wickedness. The *Daily News* is of another class. It is a highly moral Christian newspaper, and therefore—it suppresses news or misrepresents opinion on principle.

In its anxiety to guard the people from the danger of running up against opinions that might undermine its faith, the *Daily News* recently gave birth to a leading article solemnly warning the public against the issue of cheap editions of books that had for their object the destruction of orthodox Christianity. It does not say that these books, as books, ought not to be published, oh, dear no! Liberty is too often invoked in its columns, and conscientious convictions too tenderly nursed, for such a teaching to be put forward. It simply objects to them on the broad grounds that "A popular tribunal is not the tribunal before which such questions can be tried.....The question is that the unlearned reader, and the biased or prejudiced reader, cannot understand the value of the arguments." And to guard against this the editor advises—by implication—that all heresy should be published at a high price, or written in Latin, or high Dutch, or, better still, in Chaldaic.

Well, I suppose it is true that the "unlearned reader" will not understand the drift of a long and involved argument that aims at the destruction, or support, of anything. But what one would really like to know from our Christian editor is what on earth the price has to do with this aspect of the case? Gambling is strictly taboo in the *Daily News*—except in the stocks and shares column—or I would venture to give that journal long odds that I will find among the first hundred men picked up haphazard who cannot afford to spend more than sixpence or a shilling on a book, as large a proportion that will understand the heresy of Huxley, or Arnold, or Darwin, as well as a hundred wealthy people picked out in a similar manner. Really ignorance, or want of intellectuality, is not peculiar to the sixpenny or shilling class. It is as common with the twenty-one shilling order. And it is really too bad for this great, Democratic, Christian, Nonconformist paper to strive to make heresy a special luxury of the wealthier classes.

Professor Kingdon Clifford (a very eminent mathematician and scientific thinker, I may point out for the benefit of the editor) was not a Christian, and he would in all probability have regarded the imputation of being tainted with anything like the Nonconformist Conscience as a deadly insult. He had something to say in one of his lectures on this subject, and it was not in line with the *Daily News'* advice. Here it is:—

"It is constantly whispered that it would be dangerous to divulge certain truths to the masses. 'I know the whole thing is untrue; but then it is so useful for the people; you don't know what harm you might do by shaking their faith in it.' Crooked ways are none the less crooked because they are meant to deceive great masses of people instead of individuals. If a thing is true let us all believe it, rich and poor, men, women, and children. If a thing is untrue let us all disbelieve it, rich and poor, men, women, and children. Truth is a thing to be shouted from the housetops; not to be whispered over rose water after dinner when the ladies are gone away."

This is not quite the teaching of the *Daily News* leader writer, but we may be excused believing it to be much healthier.

Let us look at the matter seriously for a moment. These attacks on Christianity ought not to be published in a cheap form because the people, in the mass, are not educated enough to understand them. Now, as I have said, this thesis means that heresy should be confined to the so-called upper classes, or it means nothing. For it must be remembered that a treatise on the origin of the Gospels, or on the crucifixion myth, is not more interesting at sixpence than it is at a guinea. A man either reads such a book because he is interested in the subject, or he leaves it unread, even though it were thrown at him. All that a cheap edition does is to place within reach of a class of readers who are interested in such subjects, books that were formerly beyond their reach.

Or, again, it may be argued that a book dealing with the origins of religions is not a bit more difficult of understanding than many of the cheap editions of the classics published by some of our most respectable and responsible firms. Some of the writings of Plato, of Aristotle, of Pascal, and of many another famous writer may nowadays be purchased for a sum well within a florin, and the man who can read their works, and understand them, need not be afraid of any question of theology.

The editor would probably reply in defence that, whether a man accepted Aristotle's opinions or ethics, or Plato's opinions on the ideal republic, was a matter of comparative unimportance, but it was a much different matter whether he supported or attacked religion. And I suppose this would be the essence of the objection. You are attacking religion, and, above all, the Christian religion, and not merely attacking Christianity, but doing so in a form that places a knowledge of its weakness within reach of the sporter of the humble "bob." It is the old religious objection to popular heresy. Paine's greatest

fault was that he wrote for the people. Bradlaugh's great crime was that he spoke to the people. Had Paine written in Latin at a guinea per volume, had Bradlaugh spoken in such a manner that not one out of fifty would have known what on earth he was driving at, their offence would have been nominal. Their offence was serious because they believed that truth would take care of itself in a sixpenny quite as well as in a sixteen shilling volume, and that the knowledge that was useful in the palace or university, was also useful in the cottage or the market place.

And there is yet a further word of criticism to be offered. The *Daily News* is a fervent believer in the Bible—in its own version of the Bible, that is; because it does not believe in gambling—except Stock Exchange gambling; whereas the casting of lots, which is somewhat analogous to our familiar "sweepstake," is one of the stock Biblical methods of conducting affairs. Now, there is no book that can be bought more cheaply than the Bible. You can get it as low as a penny, and if you cannot afford that you can get it for nothing. There is a society for distributing it free in hotels and railway waiting-rooms, and other organisations formed for the purpose of unloading innumerable copies upon a long-suffering public. Now, what kind of a public is required to understand this book? A public, to understand the Bible, must have a knowledge of comparative philology, archæology, ancient history, comparative religions, etc.; and when it has got that knowledge it ceases to believe in it. Books to explain the Bible are written by the ton, and the foremost scholars of the civilised world are at loggerheads as to what on earth the Bible means, where on earth it was written, who on earth wrote it, and what on earth it was written for. Yet the *Daily News* does not advocate the withdrawal of the Bible from promiscuous circulation. Only one Church has ever had the courage to advocate this, and that Church is anathema to the Nonconformist Conscience. But surely, if there is one book on earth of which it might be said that a popular tribunal cannot understand the questions raised therein, it is the Bible. Yet this book is to be scattered broadcast among the people, and, while they are to have it thrust upon them at every conceivable opportunity, any criticism of it should be published at a price that would prevent them ever coming across it.

Oh, rare Nonconformist Conscience! This society of ours bristles with many forms of mental dishonesty, but this one can beat all others hollow. A paper that prates of democracy and would withhold knowledge, that dilates upon the iniquity of a Government conducting an inquiry into the conduct of the war with closed doors, and would conduct an inquiry into the validity of religious doctrines in exactly the same manner; which clamors for free speech and suppresses opinions that are distasteful to its religious supporters; which praises the benefits of enlightenment, and would yet only place it within reach of the well-filled purse; a journal which damns the Church of England parson for using the power of place to obstruct opinion, and sedulously helps the Nonconformist minister at the same game.

Yet, let us not be too severe, even upon the *Daily News*. A paper or a person that sets out with such a heavy burden as the Nonconformist Conscience has a heavy strain put upon his, or its, honesty. We who are not saddled with such a load can criticise easily; but human nature is weak, and it is probable that, were we in the position of those responsible for the conduct of the *Daily News*—had we to hold the candle to the antics of a Clifford, a Horton, or a Hugh Price Hughes—perhaps we should come out of the ordeal but little better than our poor editor has done.

C. COHEN.

## Vivisection and Utilitarianism.

IN a recent article in the *Freethinker* on Vivisection, Deputy Surgeon-General Thornton says that, as far as he can see, "vivisection can only be defended by purely Utilitarian and Materialistic arguments, by appeals to cowardice and selfishness, and by specious but illusory promises of future benefits."

I think it strange that a gentleman who is appealing to the justice and humanity of Utilitarians and Materialists should expect to gain their support by associating their principles with cruelty and selfishness. As this kind of prejudice and misrepresentation arises primarily from Religion, which naturally slanders its opponents as a means of glorifying and establishing itself, I propose to open the eyes of Surgeon-General Thornton to the fact that vivisection, and the infliction of agonies in general, can far more readily be defended by religious precedents and arguments than by Utilitarianism, which aims at the promotion of happiness, or by Materialism, which sees that animals are far more nearly akin to us in feelings and faculties than is agreeable to the monstrous self-conceit of multitudes of pious persons who believe that their own petty souls are immortal and divine, and that, consequently, they themselves are so infinitely superior to the lower animals that they need feel little or no sense of moral responsibility towards them.

The Old Testament and the New agree in telling us that David was a man after God's own heart. No one will accuse God's favorite of being a Utilitarian or a Materialist. David, we find, put his enemies under saws and harrows (2 Sam. xii. 31). As 1 Chron. xx. 3 says, he "cut them with saws and harrows of iron." This vivisection of human beings was carried out for the special purpose of torturing them. The Bible does not condemn the inspired Psalmist for this vivisection. It says, indeed, that "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings xv. 5). The example of Samuel hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord, and the doom pronounced upon David's predecessor, King Saul, because he spared Agag and his cattle, shows that the Lord preferred the severe ruler to the more merciful one.

The Bible often directs that people shall be stoned to death by the congregation for trivial offences, such as Sabbath-breaking. It commands wholesale destruction of idolators, of witches, and of the seven nations of Canaan. It utters no condemnation of human sacrifice in such cases as those of Jephthah's daughter and Abraham's son. It favors, or indeed enjoins, child-beating (Proverbs xiii., 24; xxiii., 13, 14), and directs that disobedient sons shall be stoned to death by the people. It represents God as pouring forth his fury upon man and beast (Jer. vii. 20), as ordering the slaughter of all animals, as at Jericho, as killing all the first-born of animals as well as of men in Egypt, as destroying animals wholesale by pestilence and famine and universal deluge for the sins of men, as ordering Achan's animals to be burnt as well as Achan and his family, and so forth. Even Jesus is represented as consenting to the drowning of two thousand swine by the devils who only entered them by his special permission. St. Paul, who is alleged to have written half the books of the New Testament, asks contemptuously, "Doth God take care for oxen?"

The God of Nature, as of the Bible, carries on processes of vivisection and torture throughout his creation. Innumerable species of carnivorous animals that tear their prey in pieces furnish proof of the cruelty of his methods and designs. Vast numbers of the organisms he plans devour their prey from within, as in the case of the ichneumon flies, whose larvae make at once a home and a meal of the caterpillars they inhabit and slowly destroy. Man's experiments in bacteriology are as nothing beside the stupendous experiments which the God

"What do you think of my idea of making Christians of the Chinese?" "Well," answered the eminent Celestial, "judging from what I hear of New York and Philadelphia politics, I must say I am inclined to hope for more or less heathenism among Americans."—*Washington Star*.

of the Christian carries on by the billion. And man is told to be perfect even as this God is perfect. Perfection thus includes vivisection on the most awful scale, and we are urged to admire and imitate the divine vivisectionist before whose cruelties on earth—to say nothing of the agonies he is to inflict on the bulk of mankind in hell—the achievements of human vivisectionists necessarily sink into utter insignificance. With such an example to guide its policy, and with the teachings and commands of the Bible to direct and strengthen its bigotry, the Church has naturally tortured its foes with fire and with the most diabolical inventions of human ingenuity. It is the spread of the Utilitarian and Materialistic spirit that has wrenched this power from the Church and has substituted the promotion of happiness in this world for the piety that tortured and slew for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

In all ages religion has been the parent of innumerable cruelties in its rites and ceremonies as well as in its persecutions and wars. Animals and men have been systematically sacrificed to gods, and such sacrifices have often been accompanied by frightful tortures of living beings to intensify the sensationalism of religious impressions and to influence supernatural beings the more powerfully. The man after God's own heart had seven men hung in order to induce God to stay a famine (2 Sam. xxi).

According to Christian ideas, God required the sacrifice of his own son in human form and under agonising circumstances to appease his wrath against mankind and to allow him to remit the tortures which he otherwise would have inflicted on the human race. During historic and prehistoric ages millions of human beings and animals must have undergone violent and painful deaths under the primary religious idea of thus appeasing the wrath of supernatural beings by sacrifices and tortures of living things. Another form of religious vivisection is seen in pious mutilations, such as still survive in the circumcision of helpless infants and children commanded in the Bible and practised by Jews and Mohammedans (sometimes with fatal results) and in the severe floggings and penances carried out by various Hindoo fanatics and by certain Roman Catholics. The "chosen people" still refuse to eat the flesh of animals unless the priest has slowly bled them to death in the manner approved by their religion.

The Bible flatters man's conception of his own importance and fosters the idea that animals are of little consequence. It implies that they were made for man's convenience, and that God gave man dominion over every living thing for his own pleasure or benefit. This view is often supposed to justify or excuse the infliction of pain on animals which are supposed to have been created solely for our use or amusement, and to be so greatly inferior to us, the so-called "lords of creation," as to require but little consideration on our part. Italian peasants are not the only Christians who indignantly defend their right to ill-treat animals on the plea that these animals are not Christians and have no souls. I suppose Spaniards, who are notoriously a pious people, would uphold their brutal and demoralising bull-fights on the same grounds; and Christian gentlemen in England similarly satisfy their consciences and justify their indulgence in cruel sports, including the shooting of birds, of which vast numbers must perish miserably of their wounds and broken limbs and slow starvation. We know that English and other Christians justified their enslavement and cruel treatment of fellow-men by Biblical examples and teachings. According to the laws of God as given in the Bible, a slave-owner might flog a slave so severely as to cause a lingering death, and yet the master was not to be punished. If men were thus placed at the mercy of their fellow-men, it is evident that animals would have but scant consideration or protection.

I think that enough has been said to show that cruelty of all kinds is far more easily defended by religious teachings and examples than by the Atheistic

doctrines of a Utilitarianism which revolts against the infliction of useless pain. God, serenely indifferent to the terrible sufferings and agonising deaths with which he tortures millions of human beings and far greater numbers of the lower animals, furnishes ample precedent for callousness, if not for actual rejoicing in cruel deeds; and the perpetuation of atrocities and infamies is still further supported in the alleged Word of God by commands and actions of which many modern Christians are thoroughly ashamed. If Utilitarianism in certain cases may permit or enjoin vivisection, it will only do so on the ground that the total amount of pain is thereby lessened; while religion, not adopting this principle as its guide, sanctions or causes the infliction of pain in innumerable cases simply because the action is demanded or permitted by the supposed will of God. Such vivisection as may be permitted by Utilitarianism will equally, if not more than equally, be justified by the religion of those who believe that God desires them to relieve human suffering by the attainment of such knowledge as may be instrumental in effecting this great object of the higher forms or aspects of religion. The Utilitarian principle, according to Macaulay, indeed, is *stolen* from Christianity, and is part and parcel of it; so that if Utilitarianism sanctions vivisection it will only do so in common with the Christian religion from which it is alleged to have been stolen.

Surgeon-General Thornton, while saddling Utilitarianism with special responsibility for vivisection, fails to give credit to Utilitarianism for the arguments it yields *against* vivisection. Yet he himself bases his appeal upon Utilitarian reasonings and motives, and says nothing of spiritualistic or religious considerations. His chief arguments for the suppression of vivisection are that the practice "renders its votaries utterly callous and insensible to *human, as well as animal, suffering*" (*italics mine*), that it exercises a similarly demoralising or brutalising effect on the public mind, and that men as well as animals are consequently in great danger of being subjected to vivisection by professional vivisectionists. These are Utilitarian and Materialistic pleas. Their fundamental idea is the promotion of happiness or prevention of pain; and they contain no reference to God, or soul, or immortality, or heaven, or hell, or such non-Secular subjects. In its arguments and its omissions, and in its advocacy of "justice, mercy, and humanity," which are essential to human happiness, the article in question practically adopts the Utilitarian and Materialistic standpoint of Secularism. Why, then, should the writer truckle to religious prejudice by countenancing the slander which makes Utilitarianism and Materialism synonyms for the egotism which disregards the sufferings of other beings?

W. P. BALL.

### Christian Evidence Reasoning.—II.

PALEY'S easy and convenient method of proving the authenticity and credibility of the Gospel history has been followed, as already stated, by the great majority of Christian apologists from his day down to the present. As a fair example of the employment of this ridiculous mode of reasoning, I select a paragraph from a work by the once popular Christian Evidence lecturer, the late Thomas Cooper, who was regarded by many in his day as a great infidel-slayer. The works of this zealous defender of the faith, the author himself tells us, contain the substance of lectures delivered in various parts of the country during twenty years, which, having been put into book form, was published for the benefit of infidels in general and the author himself in particular. We are thus enabled to see the kind of arguments supposed to be efficacious in the conversion of unbelievers some decades back. The following is a brief sample of this lecturer's method, culled from his *Verity and Value of the Miracles of Christ* :—

"Christ spat on the blind man's eyes, and asked him if he saw aught. After that, Christ put his hands on

the man's eyes again, and made him look up. 'And he was restored, and saw every man clearly.'.....The disciples could not fail to be convinced by the miracle. There was no ostentation or display. The miracle was performed slowly, that they might observe it completely.....I beg of you to reflect that *there could be no imposture in the case.* Was the man bought or hired by Jesus Christ to feign blindness, and then to pretend that he was healed? How could Jesus hire the man out of his poverty?.....St. Mark only relates this miracle, and he had the account of it from Peter's own mouth—being Peter's interpreter, and writing down the substance of Peter's preaching. Peter had a strong memory for facts; and he was sure to remember these facts clearly" (pp. 95-96).

It is by arguments of this childish character that Mr. Cooper attempts to prove "the verity" of the miracles ascribed to Christ. In the case of the blind man just quoted he tells us that the miracle "was performed slowly" so that the disciples and the bystanders might observe it completely—that is to say, the performance is so represented in the Gospel story. There was "no ostentation or display"—according to the story. Moreover, Jesus certainly *did* do something which appeared to restore the sight to the blind man—in the story. We thus arrive at the very remarkable fact that if the Gospel accounts of the miracles attributed to Christ be true, there could be no deception. If we gratuitously assume that everything took place exactly as recorded in the Gospels, then "there could be no imposture in the case"—the only suggestion in the nature of a doubt being that the man could not have been bribed.

The idea never appears to have entered this Christian Evidencer's mind that a Gospel writer could make the Jesus portrayed in his "history" say or do anything he pleased, or that, if the writer did not deliberately fabricate the accounts himself, he may have credulously recorded a number of stories in circulation respecting Jesus which had not a particle of foundation in fact. According to this Christian advocate, we are to accept the Gospel narratives as in all essential points historical—there really was a man who was said to be blind, upon whose eyes Jesus spat, and who, after suffering this indignity, was able to see—the only objection we are allowed or are supposed to raise being that possibly the disciples and the onlookers might in some way have been deceived. And it is to this silly kind of objection, and to this only, that the author addresses himself throughout the entire work. All his arguments resolve themselves into one: assume that the narratives recorded in the Gospels are historical, then those narratives will themselves furnish proof of their historic character. This is the grand apologetic method of reasoning, which, moreover, possesses one advantage over every other: by this mode of arguing no shaky Jewish or Pagan testimonies need be called.

Mr. Cooper next informs us that the evangelist Mark, who alone records the cure of this blind man, was "Peter's interpreter," and "wrote down the substance of Peter's preaching," and that "he had the account of it from Peter's own mouth." Now, the only foundations for these assertions is a statement of Papias that he was told that such was the case by a presbyter of his acquaintance. The statement, it is true, is repeated by Irenæus and Eusebius; but both writers took their information from Papias, who, it would seem, was unacquainted with the narrative of the gift of tongues in the Acts of the Apostles, otherwise he would have known that Peter could have no need of an interpreter. Mr. Cooper further states, on his own authority, that "Peter had a strong memory for facts," and that "he was sure to remember clearly" the facts connected with this miracle." Nothing is, of course, known of Peter's memory, whether good, bad, or indifferent. Our great Christian Evidence lecturer has here simply drawn upon his imagination, which is another well-known Christian Evidence method of bolstering up the Bible stories. Again, if the "First Epistle of Peter" be taken as a sample of Peter's preaching (the so-called "Second Epistle" is generally admitted to be spurious), Mark had no materials at all for

writing a Gospel; for not one of the miracles ascribed to Christ in those histories (save that of the resurrection) is in that epistle once referred to. Furthermore, in accepting and repeating the statement originated by Papias concerning Mark, Mr. Cooper has ignored the very important fact that the three Synoptical Gospels are not independent histories, the portions common to the three (or to two of them) having been derived from an earlier Gospel. This simple yet incontrovertible fact completely overthrows all apologetic arguments based on the alleged authenticity of the Gospels.

The next Christian advocate to be cited as an illustration of modern Christian Evidence reasoning is Mr. Robert Roberts, the great apostle of Christadelphianism. This heterodox teacher has written a small work which he calls *Scepticism Answered*. The scepticism which he professes to "answer" being a disbelief in the miracles attributed to Christ, including, of course, the supposed resurrection of Jesus. Respecting the latter mythical event, he says:—

"If the evidence of Christ's resurrection rested on the unsupported testimony of Mary Magdalene, it would unquestionably be open to doubt. But what are *the facts*? We must stick to *the evidence*. We must not go outside *the deposition of the witnesses*, as the Court would tell any guessing and romancing counsel.....What are the facts *deposed to*? That Christ appeared alive, first to Mary; then to a group of several women; then to Peter alone;.....then to two in a long country walk in the open air; then to ten of the eleven; then to the whole eleven; then to several disciples while fishing; then to an assembly of 500 brethren in Galilee; and finally to the eleven on the summit of the Mount of Olives, from whom he took his departure to heaven.....The *testimony* by so many *witnesses to facts* of such a nature, is not in the nature of things open to the suggestion of mental disorder. The interviews were mostly in the open air, and mostly with robust men.....They were repeated in various localities to the *witnesses* variously grouped, and during a period of a full month and a half." (The italics are mine.)

All this is unadulterated nonsense, delivered with the usual amount of Christian assurance. We are here treated to arguments of precisely the same character as those advanced by Paley; that is to say, if everything happened exactly as narrated in the Gospels, then the events therein recorded were undoubtedly historical—a fact which no one in his senses would deny. In this particular case, however (viz., the narratives of the various appearances of Christ to his disciples and others) the events related in the Gospels could not take place; for the contradictions and discrepancies between the different accounts are so great and so numerous as to render the narratives absolutely irreconcilable. To take an example, according to some of the accounts (John, Matthew, and Mark No. 2) Mary Magdalene saw and spoke to the risen Jesus; while according to others (Luke and Mark No. 1) she did not see Christ at all. Again, according to the Third Gospel, Jesus ascended to heaven in the sight of the Apostles on the very day (or rather, night) on which he rose from the dead; but, according to the Fourth Gospel, he was still on earth for some days after his resurrection, for he appeared on the eighth day to the eleven in a room in Jerusalem.

Setting aside, however, these and all the other contradictions, where are we to find "the testimony by so many witnesses?" Where is the evidence of Mary Magdalene? Where is the testimony of the two who were taking a country walk? Where are the depositions of the ten? and of the eleven? Where is the testimony of those who were fishing? Where is the overwhelming evidence given by the 500 brethren? or, if that be too much to ask, where is the testimony of even *one* of these brethren? Mr. Roberts is himself "the guessing and romancing counsel." The "court would tell" this Christian advocate that we have not the deposition of a single one of the so-called witnesses. All we possess is a number of stories, written by nobody knows whom, each story flatly contradicting one or more of the others. We have not a single word from the mouth

or pen of one of these "witnesses" to say whether the story in which he, or she, is represented as recognising the resuscitated Jesus be true or false. Like nearly all modern Christian apologists, our great Christadelphian seems not to have had the smallest idea of what constitutes evidence. An incident in a book compiled by some unknown writer is to him, not only the testimony of that writer to the truth of the incident narrated, but is also the testimony of all or any of the persons therein named to the truth of anything the writer may have represented them as saying or doing. Mr. Roberts appears to have labored under the impression that all the *dramatis personæ* in the Gospel accounts of the resurrection—the Apostles, the women, and the brethren—were real persons, who all bore testimony to the resurrection of Christ as an undoubted historical fact, and that the only matter about which there could be any doubt is as to the perfect sanity of these people. The questions, however, upon which evidence is required are precisely those which our unreasoning and uncritical Christadelphian has gratuitously assumed to be true without any kind of evidence whatever. We require proof, in the first place, that Mary Magdalene and all the other characters named in the Gospel narratives were historical persons. Paul, for instance, seems never to have heard that Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, or to "a group of several women," or to "two in a long country walk," or to "ten of the eleven," or to "several disciples while fishing" (1 Cor. xv. 5-8). Next, we require evidence that all the so-called "witnesses" testified to having seen Jesus alive after his death upon the cross; we also want to know the names and depositions of those who heard or took down their testimony. Lastly, we require proof that these "witnesses" were a more truthful class of Christians than their co-religionists who fabricated fictitious Gospels and Martologies, and who systematically employed deception for the advancement of their religion. These are the questions upon which evidence is required; but, needless to say, of such evidence neither Mr. Roberts nor any other Christian advocate has advanced the smallest scrap.

ABRACADABRA.

### The Fate of a Christian Scientist.

A CASE of nitro-glycerine was lying on the ground, A full-blown Christian Scientist was promenading 'round. "Look out!" a little boy cried loud, "there's something dang'rous there!" He did not heed, he did not hear, but kept his "forceful" stare. With lungs inflated, head erect, he said: "All things are mine. I am a part of God! All Good traces my life's design. Fearless am I! I dare to do whatever I desire. For I am life! I choose, I make, I suggest, command, aspire! I am Peace, Joy, Prosperity, Power, Wisdom, infinite; I am a soul! I control matter with subtle might! A man is what he thinks! I pulse with God's almighty heart!" That nitro-glycerine went off, and—blew him all apart! —Emma Rood Tuttle.

### The Impartial;

OR,

'TIS ALL ONE, HAVE I GOODNESS OR HAVE I NONE.

(Dedicated to the Reverends Armstrong and Horton.)

At Sodom—and Gomorrah, too—

By raining down of fire,  
God slaughtered all the people,  
To ease his quenchless ire.

At San Pierre, in Martinique,

By fire rained from above,  
God murdered thirty thousand,  
To ease his quenchless love.

Priest, do you ill, or do you well,

No difference shall it make?  
Must all your Moloch's victims be,  
His mad blood-lust to slake?

SIGVATSON.

### Acid Drops.

THE Doukhobors, who emigrated from Russia, and were accommodated with a large holding in Canada, have hitherto been a harmless body of Christians after the fashion of Count Tolstoy. But you can never be sure of these religionists. They are apt to break out like Malays or "must" elephants. We are not surprised to hear that the Doukhobors have turned crazy. After swearing off meat and leather, and turning their domestic animals loose, they have taken to tramping *en masse* in the cold weather, in the belief that the Lord has just given them a mission to convert the world. The authorities are at their wits' end to know what to do with them. Something *must* be done for the sake of the women and children.

Reuter's agent is really *too* outspoken. He refers to the object of the marching Doukhobors as "their crazy purpose to Christianise the world." Certainly it *is* a crazy purpose; but we are surprised at its being so described in "respectable" newspapers.

It appears that the Doukhobors expect the immediate second coming of Christ. What a pity he doesn't put in an appearance, just for friendship's sake, and give these poor fanatics a bit of rest.

What a sublime old humbug is the Archbishop of Canterbury! Preaching at St. Paul's Cathedral, during the annual service for members of working men's clubs, he tried in his own fashion to "justify the ways of God to man." "People forgot," he is reported as saying, "that all details of life were governed by the providence of God. To many it seemed that there was an unfair share of all things enjoyable. Some seemed to have more than their fair share; others seemed trodden down, and forced to bear troubles for the sake of others." Now "seemed" is good, very good, devilish good. The Archbishop, with his £15,000 a year, is really not better off than a laboring man out of work, with nothing at all. He only "seems" so. Indeed, the Archbishop has to bear the heavier cross; for the poor man's is only wood, and Dr. Temple's is gold. Let us pray.

"Providence" takes a long time setting down in South America. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are still the order of the day there. It is high time the clergy begged "Providence" to be quiet.

The *Church Quarterly* has an article on "Religion at Oxford," in which there are some figures bearing on a matter which is often the theme of complaint at Church Congresses and even Nonconformist Conferences. Students of theology are becoming fewer and fewer at Oxford. "The number examined in the Theological Honors School," this writer says, "has been, on the average of the last five years, thirty-four; the average of these years in the final school of Literæ Humaniores (Greats) being 144, in that of Modern History 192. To put the statistics in another way, the Theological Honor students in the same year were not quite 8 per cent. of the Honor students of the University." No wonder it is hard to find young men ready to take "Holy Orders."

As far as we can make out from a somewhat obscure report in the *Guildford Free Press* there has been a rumpus on the Hospital Board. Miss Healey, the temporary matron of the Hospital, appears to be a Roman Catholic, and the General Purposes Committee seem to have gone against her on that account. When the matter came on for discussion at a Board meeting, a strong objection was taken to such bigotry, and an amendment was carried against the Committee's report by nine votes to three. Thereupon the Chairman resigned his seat. He had so much respect for the parents whose children would go to the Hospital that he couldn't bear the idea of the possibility of their catching Catholicism from the matron. He did not try to prove, however, that Miss Healey had been guilty of religious proselytism; and, as a member of the Board observed, it was time enough to act when she *was* guilty. We hope the Chairman will live long enough to regret his conduct. What on earth has a woman's religion to do with her fitness as matron in a hospital? Is it thought she will administer poison instead of medicine to patients who won't cry "God save the Pope?"

An electioneering handbill in the Plaistow Ward of West Ham called upon "Members of Christian Churches" to "vote only for McDowall" on the ground that he, and he alone, could be trusted to keep the "blasphemous *Freethinker*" off

the Free Library table. We are glad to see this candidate giving us a gratuitous advertisement. We don't thank him, though, for he only means mischief.

Who is this McDowall? Will some West Ham reader of the *Freethinker* enlighten us? We should also like to know whether he got the seat he tried for.

Cardinal Vaughan is up to a new game. He is having prayers offered up for the safe passing of the Education Bill. It is all up with Dr. Clifford and the Nonconformists now—unless they chip in quickly and get the other ear of the Lord before it is too late.

The *Morning Leader* gives a rapturous (some would say a brandy-and-water) account of the Rev. Dr. Clifford. But why did it print *this* as one of John Clifford's words of wisdom? He told the boys that they were to shut their eyes when they prayed because God was inside them! Why too does it refer to John the Baptist and John Bunyan as his "forerunners"? We always thought John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. The *Morning Leader* man is sailing very near the wind of Pigottism.

United States Senator Burton, of Kansas, who has just returned from Hawaii, where he went as one of a senatorial investigating committee, has something to say that is of interest to those who send missionaries to the heathen. "The Hawaiians," remarks Senator Burton, "are a fine people, but they are in hard lines just at present. Their condition is the result of the work of Boston missionaries. A number of missionaries have been over there recently and have given many of the natives certificates guaranteed to admit them to heaven in exchange for their lands. A number of the more ignorant natives have been swindled in this way. Those who have learned their mistake are naturally a trifle suspicious of all Americans."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

"Evolution—does it get rid of God?" was the title of an address by the Rev. F. W. Clarke in the Congregationalist Church, St. Helens. Of course he found that it did not. Nobody expected him to do anything else. Men of God, who get their living as such, are not likely to "cry stinking fish." The clergy will stick to God as long as God sticks to them; that is to say, while there is money to be made in the exhorting business.

Sunday observance is for the masses, not for the classes. There is to be a National Skating Rink Palace in Argyll-street, London; and we read that "a feature of it will be the formation of a Sunday club, in connection with which the names of Lord and Lady Falmouth, Lord Ribblesdale, the Hon. Algy Grosvenor, Mr. Syer, Mr. Genada and other well-known persons are mentioned."

The *Guardian* sent a reporter to practically all the churches and chapels in Leicester, and he says that "the striking feature about the religious congregations of the town is the absence of men." We believe this phenomenon is not confined to Leicester. Still, it may be specially "striking" there. The propaganda of the Secular Society, as well as other liberalising influences, must have told upon the town.

Dr. Fremantle, the Dean of Ripon, is one of the "black beasts" of Father Ignatius. And no wonder. Speaking recently at a meeting of the Churchmen's Union, Dr. Fremantle is reported to have said that the birth of Christ from a virgin ought to be left out of account, because it was absolutely non-existent in the New Testament, apart from the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke. The miracles of healing and raising the dead were got rid of in the same way. The healings were natural, not supernatural, and the "dead" were only swooning. Even the Resurrection was shelved. According to Dr. Fremantle, it was a spiritual fact; the risen Christ was "invisible save to the eye of faith" which is precisely what we have always said ourselves. Evidently the Dean of Ripon is making rapid progress. In a year or two, at the present rate, he will be quite competent to edit the *Freethinker*.

We understand Father Ignatius's indignation at men who take the Church's money and do the enemy's work. But we cannot feel angry as he does. The domestic quarrel does not appeal to us. We want to see Christianity smashed up, and we don't much care who smashes it. We do our own share, but there is room for more, and we are glad to see Dr. Fremantle leading a hand.

Dean Fremantle's address has naturally given umbrage to

the more orthodox clergy. Canon Knox Little voices their indignation. "I hope," he writes, "Dean Fremantle has been misrepresented. The words attributed to him are deplorable. A Christianity without the Virgin birth, without miracles, without the resurrection, is not Christianity at all. Such utterances are inconsistent with the position of any Christian man, much more of one divinely commissioned to teach and a dignitary of the Church of England." A hit, a palpable hit! But we don't believe there will be a heresy hunt, and Dean Fremantle will probably keep his position.

Canon Knox Little goes on to make a very ridiculous statement. "These scandalous heresies," he says, "are only crude revivals of the earlier and now exploded German rationalism." Exploded, indeed! Canon Knox Little must have been asleep like Rip Van Winkle. German rationalism has advanced rather than retrograded. What is called the Higher Criticism in this country is little more than an echo of the thorough-going scepticism of the Continent. The really important work done in England is the work of men like Frazer and Harland. They go beyond New Testament criticism, and show (to those who have eyes to see with) the universal roots of supernatural belief from which Christianity sprang, like every other religion on earth.

A lively account of the conversion of a wealthy Jew is given by the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*. M. Gaston Pollonnais is the son of the rich Mayor of Villefranche, near Nice, who died recently at an advanced age. He took an active part as an out-and-out Nationalist in the Dreyfus case. It is quite natural, therefore, that he should seek rest for his soul in the bosom of the Holy Catholic Church. His reception took place at the Chapel of St. Thomas d'Aquin. About a hundred and fifty persons were present, including the famous (or infamous) Generals Boisdeffre and Gonse, and the unspeakable Paty de Clam. The neophyte's godfather was a General, and his grand mother a Faubourg St. Germain countess. The Jesuit Father Domenech, who administered the sacrament, and turned the renegade Jew into a flourishing Christian, blew upon the neophyte's head, and cried out, *Exorciso te immunde spiritus*—"Get out of him thou unclean spirit." According to the Catholic Church, then, every Jew is possessed of a devil. What a creature must this Gaston Pollonnais be to go through a rite assuming this of his own family as well as the rest of his race! We dare say the Jews are glad to be rid of him.

The dear *Daily News* is at it again! Reviewing a trumpery religious book, it says that "No competent opponent of Christianity believes that miracles are *a priori* impossible; Professor Huxley, *e.g.*, believed that they were quite possible and conceivable. He only maintained that the evidence in their favor was insufficient." This is like the Devil citing Scripture for his purpose—only it was not suggested that the Devil cited inaccurately. Professor Huxley did not say that miracles were possible *and* conceivable; what he said was that they were possible in the sense of *being* conceivable. Nothing, he said, has a right to the title of an 'impossibility' except a contradiction in terms." It is not impossible, therefore, for a man to jump over the moon. You can *conceive* him doing it, just as you can conceive him walking on the water. That was what Huxley meant by possibility and impossibility. And anyone who has read him, and then cites him without mentioning this fact, is simply practising upon the ignorant credulity of orthodox readers.

Bishop Potter is the President of the Actors' Church Alliance in the United States. We don't know how many actors there are in this body, but there seem to be a good many clergymen. Several of them are on the newly appointed Alliance committee, who are instructed to visit all the New York theatres and report whether the plays "are fit for religious men and women to see and for children to know about." The report of these gentlemen will be sent to the clergy throughout the States; and the clergy, in their turn, will make an effort to induce their congregations not to patronise the plays that have been adversely reported upon. Whether they will succeed in this effort remains to be seen. We rather fancy there will be a run upon the naughty plays. But the clergy were always foolish in their ways of dealing with vice: which is a thing, by the way, that has always had an irresistible attraction for them. They talk more about it than twenty times their number of other men, and one can hardly help wondering how they picked up their information.

A sad case was that of the Rev. William Lee, D.D., who died at Hackney quite recently. He was sixty-three years of age, had lost about £1,000 through the Liberator frauds, had given up his Church living on account of ill-health, and had since earned a precarious living by doing literary work

"for Lord Rothschild and other noblemen." The inquest resulted in a verdict of "Death from phthisis and starvation." It seems very odd that one clergyman should die from sheer want while others have princely incomes. But it was ever so with the "religion of love."

Trial by newspaper is one of the outrages that ought to be put down with a strong hand. Directly the arrest of George Chapman, at Southwark, was effected, the newspapers started on their old game of ministering to the prurient curiosity of the mob. The cheap Radical papers are as well to the front as the other organs in this competition. It can hardly be pleaded that the liberty of the press is at stake. The proprietor or the editor of a paper is only a man, and cannot possibly have any more rights than other men. Why should he be allowed to act as an amateur detective, and print and sell his "discoveries," when a fellow-citizen is arrested as a criminal, and is fighting for his liberty, and perhaps his life?

Religion is becoming quite rampant in this country. We are actually threatened with a formal Nonconformist party in the House of Commons. Mr. F. A. Atkins, in the *British Weekly*, advocates this tactic. "Half-a-dozen able men," he says, "ready and practised debaters, who meant business, who would sit together and act together, and seize every opportunity of advocating justice and freedom, resisting the force of clericalism, and exposing the arrogant despotism of the priests, would make an immense impression on the House and on the country." Would they? We doubt it. Mr. Atkins does not see that speeches no longer decide votes in the House of Commons. For all practical purposes the votes follow party lines, and might just as well be taken before the speeches as after. As for the "immense impression on the country," it is open to the "dozen able men" to make it now—if they can.

Mr. Atkins suggests the names of Dr. Clifford, Mr. R. J. Campbell, Mr. Silvester Horne, Mr. Hirst Hollowell, Mr. Silas Hocking, Dr. Lunn, and Mr. W. M. Crook. While these "Nonconformist leaders" were worrying the Tory-Church party in parliament, assistant ministers might be supplied for their pastoral work by means of a public subscription. We have not heard whether Mr. Balfour trembles at the prospect, or whether it accounts for Mr. Chamberlain's visit to South Africa.

European royal families have their children christened with water brought from the river Jordan. They suppose there is a particular spiritual efficacy in that fluid. We need not wonder greatly, therefore, at the superstition of John Chinaman, who wishes his body to be buried in his native earth. There is, indeed, a certain amiability in this sentiment. For this reason it is distressing to read that five hundred coffins, filled with Chinese corpses for interment in the Celestial land, have gone down in the "Ventnor" sailing from Melbourne to Hong Kong. One may smile, however, at the worldly "hedging" displayed in the fact that all but forty of the coffins were insured at £10 each. This will be a solace to the wounded feelings of the mourning relatives.

It is stated that the Wyndhamites, at the recent Glasgow University election of the Lord Rector, surrounded a certain polling booth and prevented the Morleyites from voting; and that it was through this that Mr. Morley lost the chair. But what on earth were the Morleyites doing? Couldn't they fight for their own rights if the authorities refused to keep the way to the polling booth open? We can quite understand, however, that the "agnostic" dodge was worked for all it was worth against Mr. Morley. It is said that the lady students were mostly supporters of Mr. Wyndham. He was not an unbeliever, and he was handsome; two very distinct advantages with the common run of "the sex."

### Galileo's Triumph.

GALILEO was imprisoned by the Inquisition for maintaining that the earth moved.

"How about the 1st of May?" he asked his judges, triumphantly.

Chagrined at their open display of ignorance, they immediately released him, and he took his place in the van of science.

—Sun.

To pray is to flatter oneself that one will change entire nature with words.—Voltaire.

### In Articulo Mortis.

WHAT care I for creeds or for curses that creed-upholders may utter,  
With their torch for a sign extinguished in horrible stink and sputter,  
And their bell and their book and their candle? No, let the fools mumble and mutter.

I have firmly planted my feet on the flat immovable world;  
I take my stand on science. Let thought's freest flag be unfurled;  
No faith shall abash that banner, no curse from a priest's throat hurled.

Should I pin my faith to a book? Should I sell my soul to a pope?  
Should I barter my own free will for a little allowance of hope,  
For a trust in a dim hereafter beyond death's graveward slope?

Lo! are ye not fools and blind, looking up to the sky from the sod,  
Enthroning a horrible tyrant and bowing your backs to his rod?  
Not such is the God I adore, if indeed there be any God.

And yet what proof can ye proffer? Ye know not what ye say.  
On a perilous path, for a little, man walks in a glimmer of day,  
Ere thick darkness ensnare and entangle his feet, and en-compass his way.

For look, if ye will, when the glory of all the western sky  
Is lit as with love overflowing and life that cannot die;  
Say, what is it all but a token that night is the surelier nigh?

Night black as the pit's own mouth, black night not lit by a moon;  
Night grim with thick darkness and horror will cover the landscape soon;  
Night hiding the murderer's head, night with ghoulish-ghostly dreams for its boon.

Oh, yes, my life's been a failure, and fortune has not been kind.  
Yes, I have had plenty of trouble. I do not know why I should mind  
Whether Providence orders our goings or whether the fates are blind.

I have done what I could for men. If example can teach, I have taught.  
I have lived and suffered in silence, and all men know I have fought  
To the death with the beast, superstition. My life has not all been for naught.

No, I have no need of your unction. I turn me about to die.  
At least my death shall bear witness my life has not been a lie.  
This pallor is not from fear of the great Unknown on high.

I lay me down in peace, and what should I do to be sad?  
Not one of you all can assert that my manner of life has been bad,  
In spite of the fierce persecution that well-nigh drove me mad.

Now leave me alone to die, and do not slander me dead.  
Though little I reck of your slanders, I would not it e'er should be said  
That the infidel shuddered at hell as he lay on his dark death-bed.

I die at peace with all men, not hating even a priest.  
I leave enough to provide for the usual funeral feast.  
The hand of death is upon me, that levels proud man with the beast.

The Physician—"Do you practise what you preach, parson?" The Parson—"Hem! Do you take your own medicine, doctor?"—*Daily News* (Chicago).

The Parson—"I trust that you see the error of your ways." The Convict—"Betcherlife I do. Next time I'll have better sense dan ter hire a cheap lawyer."—*American* (Chicago).



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, November 9, Secular Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell-road, S.E.; 7.30, "Beyond the Grave."

November 16 and 23, Athenæum Hall; 30, South Shields; 31, Newcastle. December 14, Leicester.

### To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 9, Birmingham; 16, Leicester; 23, Liverpool.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.
- T. WILMOT.—Glad to know you are still working hard for the movement, though the Branch secretaryship has passed into other hands.
- S. TYE.—See "Acid Drops." Pleased to hear you so enjoyed our article on "God and the King."
- W. PHILLIPS.—You are in error in assuming that Mr. Cohen regards human reason as being super- or extra-natural. The sentence quoted from his article on "Catastrophies and Moral Order" does bear that interpretation on the face of it, but Mr. Cohen was dealing with an argument that assumed human nature and cosmic nature to be distinct things, and so was compelled to deal with it in this manner. You will find his own point of view put in the concluding paragraph of the article for Oct. 26.
- A. J. Y.—Pleased to hear that your wife accompanied you (for the first time) to the hall, heard our lecture on Zola, and was "delighted." In a certain sense, every woman won over to Freethought is worth at least two men; for she is the mother, and first moulds the minds of the children. If all the men were Christians, and all the women Freethinkers, the children would be Freethinkers for a certainty. The priests know this social and psychological truth well enough, and always act upon it. Thanks for your personal good wishes.
- W. BAILEY.—The Ingersoll quotation on the religious tract you send us is a forgery. A literary student would see that the style is not Ingersoll's at all. The thing was repudiated by him publicly. But we dare say its career is far from ending. As Ingersoll himself said, nothing flourishes like a good, sound, healthy religious lie.
- PLYMO.—(1) Ingersoll had a perfect right to choose whom he would reply to. Neither he nor any other Freethinker in America thought Father Lambert worth an answer. Ingersoll replied to Lambert's betters. Crossing swords with Gladstone and Manning was more in his way than sparring with an obscure priest. (2) Andrew Carnegie is reputed to be an Agnostic, but we have no right to call him one. (3) Mr. Foote would be happy to visit Plymouth if the local "saints" would only bestir themselves a little. There must be some persons on the spot to see to the necessary arrangements.
- T. R. ALMOND.—Always glad to receive cuttings.
- F. R. PHILLIPS.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- W. P. BALL.—Your well-selected cuttings are always very welcome.
- C. D. STEPHENS.—See "Acid Drops."
- C. BLAKELOCK.—We are writing you on the subject. Pleased to hear that our old friend Mr. G. Alward has been returned to the Grimsby Town Council again. There cannot be a worthier man in the borough.
- F. S. writes: "I have pleasure in sending herewith a cheque for £3, which, with the amount previously subscribed by me, will make £5 in all, for the Camberwell Fund. I trust the remainder will come in during the week, so that you may be able to proclaim on Sunday next 'It is finished.'"
- CAMBERWELL FUND.—F. S., £3; Well-Wisher, 10s.; M. A. Brown, 1s.
- A. G. LYE.—(1) Wesley's observation that giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible occurs in his *Journal*. (2) The Biography of Richard Carlile was published by Bonner. (3) With regard to cheap editions of Paine, you can get the *Age of Reason* for 6d., the *Miscellaneous Theological Works* for 1s., and the *Rights of Man* for 1s.—all from our publishing office.
- W. MANN.—Shall appear. Thanks.
- L. E. S.—Miss Vance executes your order. Write to her, at our publishing office, if you want to join the West London Branch, which has lately been reorganised.
- TOM PACEY.—Branches are always welcome to a paragraph. We are only too glad to be able to assist them.
- B. STEVENS.—Thanks. In our next.
- E. CHAPMAN.—All right. Send on a bill or one of the tickets at convenience.
- EDWARD PALMER.—It was Tyndall who suggested the prayer experiment to which you refer. He did it on behalf of a friend, and the friend is known to be the great Sir Henry Thompson. Tyndall's article appeared in a monthly magazine, we think the *Contemporary*, in the early seventies.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Public Opinion—Newtownards Chronicle—Haltwhistle Echo—Freidenker—St. Helen's Advertiser—Zoophilist—Torch of Reason—Railway Times (Bombay)—Leicester Reasoner—Crescent.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, 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.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted. LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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### Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures for the Camberwell Branch this evening (Nov. 9) at the Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell-road. The subject chosen is "Beyond the Grave." It should attract a large audience. There will be vocal and instrumental music from 7 to 7.30, when the chair will be taken for the lecture.

Partly owing to the too-brief notice, but more owing to the fact that the bills did not get a show on the hoardings, in consequence of a riot of mural literature during the municipal elections, Mr. Foote's audiences on Sunday at Sheffield were only moderate. The local "saints" were present, and some came from Rotherham, Barnsley, and other places; but the outside liberal-minded public could hardly have heard of the meetings, and thus had little opportunity of attending them. No doubt it will be better luck next time. Meanwhile it must be said that Mr. Foote was pleased to meet some old friends again, who seemed no less pleased to see him. His audiences, too, were appreciative and even enthusiastic. He was repeatedly asked to "come again."

Mr. Cohen had an improved audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Birmingham friends will please note that he is lecturing in their city to-day (Nov. 9).

The Athenæum Hall platform will be occupied this evening (Nov. 9) by Mr. R. P. Edwards, who will lecture on "The Religions of the World." This is Mr. Edwards's first appearance there. We hope he will have a good audience and a good reception.

Two Freethinkers won seats at the recent Birmingham municipal elections. Mr. Stephen Middleton who gained a seat in St. Stephen's Ward was once president of the local N. S. S. Branch. Mr. J. A. Fallows, who gained a seat in the Bordesley division, has recently been contributing to the *Freethinker*. He stood as a Socialist candidate. Mr. Fallows was ordained for the Church, but he resigned his curacy to live a freer intellectual life. Some months ago he inherited a considerable fortune, which left him at liberty to work for his principles without fear of consequences.

Mr. Asquith was less satisfactory than Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman at the Alexandra Park demonstration. "It would do no harm to the children of England," he said, "and it would wound the consciences of a very insignificant number of parents, if we confined the religious teaching in our public elementary schools to those simple facts and truths which were the common heritage of Christianity." Sir Henry said something better. "If we had our way," he said, "there would be no religious difficulty at all. We should confine ourselves—I believe nine-tenths of Liberals would confine themselves—to secular education, and to such moral precepts which would be common to all, and would not be obnoxious to people who do not come within the range of Christianity." Every clause of this statement was loudly cheered.

Mr. Goldwin Smith, in a letter to Mr. John Ogilvy, of Dundee, writes sensibly on the present education struggle in England. "I thank you," he says, "for your very interesting and instructive letter. I sympathise with your remarks on education. What you say as to the political tendencies of the Anglican clergy is manifestly true. They carry the same tendencies with them even on this side of the water. Their Synod here, when the war was going on, wound up with three cheers for Lord Roberts. But then, why not direct your efforts at once against the Established Church, and strike for "a free Church in a free State"? It is surely rather inconsistent to be acquiescing in the establishment and endowment of the clergy and at the same time to be

complaining of their influence. They may not unreasonably say that they are doing their duty to the nation which establishes and endows them by forming its character in their religious mould, and that nothing is more essential to this than their influence over the education of the young. My friends in England tell me that Disestablishment has entirely dropped out of sight. If it has denunciation of clerical influence is surely rather illogical. The educational problem itself will be approached with better hope of a sound solution when the distorting influence of this quarrel with the clergy is out of the way."

The November number of the *Leicester Reasoner*, edited by F. J. Gould, contains a notice of that "incisive, lucid, and philosophical lecturer," Mr. Cohen. Mr. Cohen was born at Leicester, and he is lecturing there next Sunday (Nov. 16). Mr. Gould writes notes on "The School Board," of which he is a member. He also gives a strong view, not far removed from our own, of the attitude of the Nonconformists in this Education struggle. "The Nonconformists," he says, "have not appeared to advantage either in Leicester or up and down the country generally. Disgust with their narrowness, and deeper reflection on the Government's proposals, have led me to adopt a much more favorable attitude towards the Bill. I believe future Liberal Governments will be able to render its machinery more democratic, and that its ultimate tendency will be towards secularisation."

Mr. George Meredith's opinion of Mr. John Morley will interest a good many of our readers. It was printed by Mr. Morley's election committee during the recent contest for the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University as the testimony of "Britain's Greatest Novelist." The full text of Mr. Meredith's letter appears in our next paragraph.

"Mr. John Morley bears the name which speaks for itself. There could not be a candidate for any high office in this country better qualified to distinguish it. His political integrity has impressed electors of all parties to this degree, that he is regarded as inflexible. He is firm in truth. But he is a statesman, and he can bend to the conditions and needs of the times, though he has never been the dupe of opportunism. The statesman's view in him embraces morality and humaneness as well as policy. Our permanent besides our present interests are constantly before him, and there is always the danger for the far-sighted politician that he will be temporarily misunderstood. What he has had to endure in this respect has been relieved and, it may be said, brightened by his character. Even the majorities against him have acquiesced in the national sentiment that he is one of our most trustworthy. In the day of majorities with him, we shall hear that he is sagacious. As an orator and as an author Mr. Morley is comprehensible to the simplest of minds, while he satisfies the most exacting critical taste and adds to our stores of great speeches and good literature. It is not too much to say of such a candidate that in receiving a distinction he confers one.—GEORGE MEREDITH."

There should be a brisk demand for Mr. Foote's new pamphlet, *Dropping the Devil: and Other Free Church Performances*. The price is twopence. Mr. Foote has other fresh publications in preparation, which will be issued as rapidly as possible.

The Freethought Publishing Company has still a few sets left of the splendid Dresden Edition of Colonel Ingersoll's Works. The volumes can be seen by those who take the trouble to call at Newcastle-street. Others must take our word for it—and we know something about books—that this Dresden Edition is in every way worthy of the great and noble Author.

Mr. H. Percy Ward debates on "Spiritualism or Secularism?" with Mr. G. H. Bibbings in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool, on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, November 12 and 13. We hope the local "saints" will do their best to bring bunting audiences.

The Camberwell Branch held its annual meeting on October 26. The secretary informs us that "a vote of thanks was accorded Mr. G. W. Foote for his services to the Branch in starting and so energetically pushing the Camberwell Fund." This was "carried by acclamation." A hearty vote of thanks was also passed to Mr. J. Rowney for his disinterested services to the Branch during the outdoor lecture season. Mr. V. Roger was re-elected president and Mr. W. F. Herbert vice-president. Mr. Wilmot having taken over the secretaryship of the Hall Company, and saddled himself with many voluntary duties in that direction, it was thought advisable to give him some relief by appointing a new Branch secretary in the person of Mr. Dodson, whose address is 20 Clarence-street, Clapham, S.W.

## Down Our Way.

It seems to be tacitly understood between the numerous and antipathetic sections of the Christian brotherhood that the dwellers in the east of London are in perilous proximity to hell-fire. The reason of this understanding is hard to get at. Perhaps the godly folk have been deceived by the chemical works which emit, occasionally, odors that are strongly suggestive of sulphur. Anyhow, they consider the inhabitants of the East-end as fit subjects for their evangelism, and their efforts to rescue East-enders from the clutches of the Devil are the cause of much disturbance and a more than customary use of swear words, especially in our district.

The mildest of our offenders is the representative of the Church of England. He hails from the oldest college in England, is very bigoted, has a style of voice which savors somewhat of the haw-haw way of speaking, is of athletic build, and is reputed to be good at cricket, football, and boxing. He is dead against beer-drinking, and is of opinion that Atheists ought to be disposed of in some way or other. He asserts that a drunkard is necessarily an Atheist, but then he has never evinced any marked originality of mind, and only says this because he has heard others of his cloth say the same. He is inclined to Ritualism, but hopes he will never attract the notice of the Kensits.

With the idea of reforming the Hooligans of the locality, he started a boys' club—a superior sort of affair, with coffee-bar, billiard and bagatelle rooms, a reading-room, an apartment for boxing and fencing, and withal a plentiful intersprinkling of religion. For about a week things went famously. The boys kept unusually quiet, and seemed capable only of open-mouthed astonishment at what they saw. But the tempter intervened. Trouble first began when the billiard and bagatelle balls came thumping down the stairs. Then someone filled the parson's tall hat with water. However, the climax was reached when the club had become a month old. It was noticed that night that the boys were somewhat peculiar in their behavior. The coffee-bar was crowded, but very little was sold. Suddenly the gas went out, and, in less than five minutes, every boy and all the buns and cakes had vanished.

Our second nuisance is a very brassy band, the delight of the local Nonconformists, which comes forth twice on Sundays and makes our streets hideous with its din. To make matters worse, the bandsmen are mostly self-taught and don't seem to be able to read music correctly, for, in their playing, they interpolate a lot of stuff which, while glaringly redundant, has a most excruciating effect on the listener. And they don't appear to be very progressive, these bandsmen. They have one march, *sacred*, you understand, with which they have regaled us for a number of years. It is an awful composition and is anathema in respectable musical circles, but it is the pinnacle of our nuisance's ability. In their hands it even gains some sort of variety from their individual idiosyncrasies of performance, especially when their instruments are more out of tune than is usual. However, they are proud of their big drummer who, it would seem, bids fair to become a prodigy. He has mysteriously hinted that he intends to startle the musical world very shortly. He has confided to several of his colleagues that he is almost at the point of success—he says that he has nearly succeeded in beating an octave on his instrument.

Last Easter we were favored with something of a sensation in the way of music. On Good Friday, in the evening, the Nonconformist band played the Dead March in *Saul*—that is to say, they played their version of it. A little later the vicar with his choir, headed by a bombardon and a piccolo, came sauntering through the streets chanting what seemed to me a funeral dirge. The neighborhood was not edified.

But our *bete-noire* is a detachment of the Army of

Salvation. This detachment has twelve members—three "brothers" and nine "sisters." Of the men one is tall, thin, grey-haired, with the manner of a Colney Hatch Emperor of China; the remaining two are of middle height, intellectually lacking in appearance, and can testify like steam-driven talking-machines. The "sisters" are expert tamborine-rattlers, and their commanding officer, Captain Mary Jane, sometimes accompanies the singing on a concertina.

Captain Mary Jane is quite a remarkable and important personage in the eyes of our Salvationists. She seems to have been something on the stage, but was rescued to righteousness by the "Army" while careering gaily on the downward path to destruction. She is evidently a glaring example of the effect of Boothism. About twice a week she inflicts on us the words of a hymn set to the tune of a tipsy-sentimental music-hall song. The way in which she travels up and down the scale is nothing short of marvellous. Without doubt she is a *prima donna* nipped in the bud. But some of our neighbors, who are unkind in their criticism of her vocal abilities, say that the cats of the locality arch their backs and spit viciously, and the dogs throw back their heads and give vent to long-drawn *Ohs* whenever she sings. Nevertheless, how Captain Mary Jane attains her top note is a topic much commented upon by our lady residents. And while the remaining "sisters" are nonentities are far as we are concerned, the tall, thin, grey-haired Colney Hatch Emperor-of-China-like "brother" is a most outlandish orator, who jerks out aphoristic sayings in a nasal one-toned voice, and who, should he ever aspire to Messianic honors, would, in our opinion, make a very passable Jesus Christ of the American variety.

But his testifying colleagues are considered as "spirit-stirrers" and "soul-savers" of the first order. Endowed by nature with large empty heads, wide mouths, and powerful lungs, their terrific shouting has an almost startling effect on our neighborhood. The voices sound for all the world like the siren of a befogged steamer feeling her way up Channel. Immediately they start their bawling the nearest dog sets up a furious barking, which is echoed by other dogs, until all our canine inhabitants are yelping in chorus. Then, frightened by the barking of the dogs, the cocks and hens commence crowing and cackling, the ducks and geese of the local greengrocer join in, and, finally, the hee-hawing of his donkey completes the animal orchestra. And, if anything, the noise of the animals is just as intelligible as the articulated nonsense of the Salvationists.

JAMES H. WATERS.

### Secularism.

SECULARISM is the religion of humanity; it embraces the affairs of this world; it is interested in everything that touches the welfare of a sentient being; it advocates attention to the particular planet in which we happen to live; it means that each individual counts for something; it is a declaration of intellectual independence; it means that the pew is superior to the pulpit, that those who bear the burdens shall have the profits, and that those who fill the purse shall hold the strings. It is a protest against theological oppression, against ecclesiastical tyranny, against being the serf, subject, or slave of any phantom, or of the priest of any phantom. It is a protest against wasting this life for the sake of one that we know not of. It proposes to let the gods take care of themselves. It is another name for common sense; that is to say, the adaptation of means to such ends as are desired and understood. Secularism believes in building a home here, in this world. It trusts to individual effort, to energy, to intelligence, to observation and experience, rather than to the unknown and supernatural. It desires to be happy on this side the grave.

Secularism means food and fireside, roof and raiment, reasonable work and reasonable leisure, the cultivation of the tastes, the acquisition of knowledge, the enjoyment of the arts, and it promises for the human race comfort, independence, intelligence, and, above all, liberty. It means the abolition of sectarian feuds, of theological hatreds. It means the cultivation of friendship and intellectual hospitality. It means living for ourselves and each other; for the present instead of the past; for this world rather than for another. It means the right to express your thought in spite of popes, and priests, and gods. It means that impudent idleness shall no longer live upon the labor of honest men. It means the destruction of the business of those who trade in fear. It proposes to give serenity and content to the human soul. It will put out the fires of eternal pain. It is striving to do away with violence and vice, with ignorance, poverty, and disease. It lives for the ever-present *to-day*, and the ever-changing *to-morrow*. It does not believe in praying and receiving, but in earning and deserving. It regards work as worship, labor as prayer, and wisdom as the savior of mankind. It says to every human being: "Take care of yourself, so that you may be able to help others; adorn your life with the gems called good deeds; illumine your path with the sunlight called friendship and love."

Secularism is a religion—a religion that is understood. It has no mysteries, no mummeries, no priests, no ceremonies, no falsehoods, no miracles, and no persecutions. It considers the lilies of the fields, and takes thought for the morrow. It says to the whole world: "Work, that you may eat, drink, and be clothed; work, that you may enjoy; work, that you may not want; work, that you may give, and never need."

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

### Walt Whitman.

"I shall raise the despised head of Poetry again, and, stripping her out of those rotten and base rags wherewith the times have adulterated her form, restore her to her primitive habit, feature, and majesty, and render her worthy to be embraced and kissed by all the great and master spirits of our world."—BEN JONSON.

"I belong neither to God nor Devil, and I find this condition very comfortable; though, between you and me, I think it the most natural in the world."—M<sup>ME</sup>. DE SEVIGNE.

OF all the English-speaking countries outside the British Isles, America is the only one which has hitherto contributed anything of real consequence to the sum of the literature of the English language. Australia and Canada are but in leading-strings. Doubtless they will soon form their own ideals, and shape their own literary future to noble ends. At present their literature is more or less an echo of the writing of the land of Shakespeare. The most notable among the men who labored to lay the foundations of a national literature for America was Walt Whitman. There are poets who have revolted from the bonds of convention and tradition, and who have chosen to deliver their message by original modes of speech. But Whitman went further than that. He tried to found a democratic art—an art free in its choice of style, free in its choice of subject. Classicism he regarded as aristocratic. This strong American genius contended that democracy can never prove itself worthy until it finds and produces its own special form of art, as distinctive in its own sphere as all that exists or has been produced under opposite influences. Whitman, therefore, revolted from literary tradition of set design and purpose. With the music of the great poets in his ears, he deliberately elected to displace what exists. He knew the melodies of the Elizabethans, whose language America has inherited. Yet he turned his back on it all. His own work is incomparably unlike anything else in poetry. It was not the freak of a writer trying to be eccentric at all hazards, but the genuine outcome of a quite new and extended criticism of life. If Walt Whitman had merely rearranged the old poetic materials, such a departure would in no wise be remarkable. But he resolutely set him-

self the Herculean task of dealing with the world in the nineteenth century without any regard to convention. His contemporaries were content to carve cherry-stones. This man elected to hew granite.

The appearance of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 raised among the critics and the reading public a storm of applause and discontent. To hear one party, you would fancy the author was an obscene madman, indulging in vagaries of language and dispensing with common sense. According to another, his opinions were inspired and his eloquence was as unbounded as his genius. Never did a book sin so grievously from outward appearance, or a man's style so mar his subject and dim his genius. It was rugged and colloquial; it abounded with foreign words, strange epithets, uncouth expressions, astonishing to those who loved poetry best when it set noble thoughts to noble music. A man, at the first onset, must take breath at the end of a sentence, or—worse still—go to sleep in the midst of it. But these hardships become lighter as the traveller grows accustomed to the new road, and he speedily learns to admire and sympathise, just as he would admire a Gothic cathedral in spite of the quaint carvings and grotesque images on door and buttress.

In *Leaves of Grass* Whitman expressed his conception of the supreme value of individuality. Shakespeare had asked:—

Which can say more  
Than this rich praise, that you alone are you?

Shakespeare was addressing a beloved friend. Whitman said the same thing to the whole world.

The *Song of Myself* is the most complete utterance of Whitman's superb egoism:—

Nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is.

Whitman's emancipating influence is based on freethought. He does not look upward to the blind sky.

What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred ways  
But that man or woman is as good as God,  
And that there is no God any more divine than yourself.

This, be it understood, is no random utterance. It is the general tenor of his teaching.

Of a deity, although he sometimes used the word to obtain emphasis, he at no time had any definite idea. Nature, also, was never a religion for him. He wisely refused to admit an abstract Humanity. Of "man" he had nothing to say. In the universe there are only individuals. This egoism may be strenuous, it is certainly not religious. The man who held such ideas could not help being audacious. This egoism is the centre from which the whole of Whitman's morality radiates.

Morality to Whitman is simply the normal activity of a healthy nature, not the product of tradition or rationalism:—

I give nothing as duties,  
What others give as duties I give as living impulses.  
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

It is this idea, that whatever tastes sweet to the most perfect person is finally right, that underlies the much-abused poems, *Children of Adam*. It is the antipodes of the Christian ideal. It is, in some measure, a return to Nature. Whitman cannot help speaking of man's or woman's life in terms of Nature's life, of Nature's life in terms of man's. He mingles them together. All the functions of human life are sweet to him, because they bear about them a savor of the things that are sweet to him in the world:—

Of the smell of apples, of lemons, of the pairing of birds,  
Of the wet of woods, of the lapping of waves.

It was from this standpoint Whitman always wrote. His was a poetic attempt to raise noble functions, for twenty centuries ignobly tainted with obscenity, to their true dignity and natural relation in the universe. Truly, a worthy mission. Emerson's praise was not overcharged when he commended Whitman's courage and his free and brave thought.

Whitman himself was no trained scientist, yet it is impossible to question that he had absorbed or divined scientific truths of the utmost importance. Take his attitude towards sex and the body generally. For the lover there is nothing in the beloved's

body impure and unclean. Most men, however advanced, would stop here. To Whitman it was true of every living creature. This entirely new conception of purity is but a poetic rendering of the scientific fact of the beauty and purity of organic life. It was a lesson most sorely needed in our overstrained civilisation. No poet peers with such longing and audacity into the "superb vistas of death." Whatever else may be said of Whitman's poetry, it must be conceded that he has treated this eternal theme with a new power and significance. The awful dreams that may come in that sleep of death have no terror for "the tan-faced poet of the West." The dead are made one with Nature. Throughout the poetry of Whitman death is presented as a friend, is "lovely and soothing;" and the body, weary of life, turns like a tired child, "gratefully nestling close" in the bosom of this soothing mother.

Never has the loveliness of death been sung in a more sane and virile song than the solemn death-carol in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed."

Dark mother, always gliding near with soft feet:  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome.  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song, that when thou must indeed come, come  
unfalteringly.

Over the tree tops I float thee a song,  
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the  
prairies wide,  
Over the dense packed cities all and the teeming wharves and  
ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O Death.

Truly, Whitman was a pioneer. He has left the priests and their superstitions far behind. Beyond the fabled hells, the tiresome purgatories, and the tawdry paradises, the resplendant vision of the great poet floods the sky, like

The noiseless splash of sunrise,  
and pours its serene splendor over the world.

MIMNERMUS.

### A Japanese View of Religion.

THIS is rather too great a question to discuss in a short article. I do not know whether I shall be able to make clear the point which I most want to emphasize. In the first place, What is religion? Its definition and true meaning are important.

The people talk so carelessly about it and many do not seem to know of what they talk. It seems to me that they do not care particularly for the question, but prefer to say: "Let us believe some religion, what it may be is not an important matter to us. Let us simply accept it. Let us have a faith, because our fathers had one." This, I think, is the most common conclusion; it is a great mistake. As long as we are rational beings we should examine things first before we accept them, that we may find whether they are good or bad, healthy or unhealthy. People often say, "My father was a Methodist, or a Congregationalist, or a Unitarian, therefore I am the same," but never ask why one should be a Methodist, a Congregationalist, or a Unitarian. This, I believe, is a very important question, and it has been greatly neglected. Did you ever think yourself where you stand, where you are going, and which way you have to choose? If you merely follow after your father's way, you would have no progress, no improvement, no life, and no happiness.

Now let us see what religion is. According to the ancient philosophers, religion is the worship of God. "The object of religion," says Seneca, "is to know God and to imitate Him." Even among modern thinkers, a man like Schleiermacher held that religion is to worship God and obey His commands. Immanuel Kant, the great German philosopher, once said, "Religion consists in our recognising all our duties as divine commands." Many other scholars concur with this opinion. But it seems to me that these are the definitions given to the religions of the past. Such is the definition of the historic religions. It is not the definition of ideal religion, not of the religion of the new age, not of the religion of the future. It is too narrow and one-sided.

Religion is not merely the worship of God. It is one's sincere attitude toward the universe and life. In this sense, we may call socialism a religion, positivism a religion, and Buddhism a religion. If religion is merely to worship a God, Buddhism may not be called a religion, because it names no god to worship. But no historical scholar of religion would overlook it. Buddhism is, undoubtedly a religion. One of the representative scholars on comparative religion says, summing up all definitions of religion, that religion is the

worship of higher power in the sense of need. This seems to me much better and a little broader. Edward Caird wisely adds to this that "a man's religion is the expression of his summed-up meaning and the purport of his whole consciousness of things." I think this is as nearly perfect a definition of religion as modern philosophers can give.

Now, turning to the practical side, let us ask another question: "Where does religion stand?" Does religion stand in church, in temple, or in synagogue? Does religion stand in the Bible, in the sacred books of the East, or in the Koran? Decidedly not. No religion stands in such things. As far as religion is man's ultimate and sincere attitude toward the universe and life, it should stand on the great foundation of the universe and in the very depth of the human heart.

I wonder why people care so much for such formal things. If you study the early history of Christianity, you will find that there was no church in the time of Jesus, and no Gospels or anything of the kind at all. But as a matter of fact, there was a burning faith in the heart of the people. The one faith of God and nothing else. This was the only inspiration of the people. They did not learn the existence of God through books written by men. But they went direct to the universe itself. Nay, to God himself.

It is the strangest thing to Oriental people that the Christians think that God was rightly acknowledged in Christendom only. They teach that the God of whom the Bible taught is the only God of the universe. But God is not the God of the Christians alone.

The concept of God had existed in all nations of the world. Confucius talked of Him. He called him "the Ruler of the Heaven," meaning the higher governing power, the law, and the eternal. Lao-tsze had also a clear conception of God. He expressed the idea in his *Taotih-king*, in saying that "God is indeed a deep mystery. We cannot recognise his presence; if we advance toward Him we cannot see what is behind Him; if we follow Him we cannot see what is before Him." Shintoism has God, Islam has God, Brahmanism has God; all these religions have God. If God as set forth by Christians is the only God of the universe, then He must have been a very ignorant and selfish being, because He did not like the heathen, and He did not know the Oriental people. They had lived and existed for so many years without His care and love. How absurd this would be!

Again, I do not understand why the people read the Bible so much and always look back to Jesus. The Bible is only an imperfect religious history of the Israelites. If it is the word of God, it is the word through the Israelites as the word is in Confucianism through the Chinese. The Bible is nothing more than Confucius' or Buddha's books. God in the Bible is the God of Israel, but not the God of the universe. Suppose the Bible was destroyed, would men then lose all faith in God? No, never. But remember, as long as people cling to the Bible, their God is not the God of the universe. As long as the people only go back to Christ and claim to be Christians, the world will never make genuine progress.

Jesus was not the only great soul of the world. If you compare his teachings with those of Confucius and Buddha you may easily find the same value in them and sometimes a far greater value. Confucius lived and died about 550 years before Christ. He said, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." Six hundred years after, Christ repeated the same idea in a positive and I should say a better way, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." In the fifth century before Christ, Buddha of India said, "Let us live happily then, not hating those who hate us; among men who hate us let us dwell free from hatred." Five hundred years later Christ says, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Are they not great teachers who taught us the same things before Christ was yet in this world? Are they not great men who revealed to us this noble life to live?

The world is a world of progress. The first century cannot be compared with the tenth. The nineteenth century is much better than the fifteenth, not in one, but in many respects. Thus generation after generation, century after century, the world is constantly advancing. Since the great theory of evolution was discovered by Charles Darwin, no one denies the fact that the living organism is evolving from one state to another, from lower to higher.

"Go back to nature!" was the cry of a crazy Frenchman of the eighteenth century, observing the dark side of society of the day. Even in our own time, a man like Count Tolstoy of Russia cries out repeatedly: "Go back to primitive Christianity!" Fortunately, however, these eccentric views of things do not represent the true current of the day. These one-sided views of things have simply made them crazy. The world is still growing, evolving to

the better and the higher. The history of mankind never repeats itself, but the human activity toward the ideal was and ever will be the same.

We do not need to go back to olden time nor to old religions. We do not need to go back to Jesus, or Buddha, or Confucius, but we do need something new, something better, and something higher. We do not need a traditional religion, or an historical religion, but we do need the new religion based upon the light of modern scientific truth—the truth of reasoning and investigation.

Christianity is a traditional religion, a historic religion, and so is Buddhism, so is Islam. Let science examine them and if desirable destroy them, and let us build there the new, the true religion of science. The Bible of the new religion should be science, but not that of the imperfect religious histories of Israelites, Hindoos, or Chinese. Astronomy, biology, chemistry, and psychology are the four gospels of the new religion. I do not say perfect gospels. They are still imperfect. We must make them perfect.

The true gospel of the new religion is the universe itself. Look up to the heaven—how beautifully the stars shine! Hear the birds—what sweet tones they sing! See the flowers—how lovingly they smile along the peaceful stream! What harmony! What mystery! Are they not grand gospels of our mother nature? "Thanks to the human heart," says Wordsworth, "by which we live, thanks to its tenderness, its joy, and its fears, to me the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Indeed, even a flower of the roadside reflects the mighty nature of our mother creator. Fichte says that the divine idea of the world lies at the bottom of all appearance. Let us now close the fallible gospels of the old and turn our eyes to the real gospel of the universe, where we will find the true meaning of the Almighty, the true end of our life, true happiness and true joy.

The Nirvana of the Buddhist is too abstract for the majority of the people, and the heaven of Christians is too mythological for a scientific mind. Mankind does not want Christianity, Islam, nor Buddhism. Mankind wants the truth, and the truth is brought out by candid and impartial investigation. Mankind is destined to have one religion, and one universal truth. Science will spread, slowly but surely, and the scientific world-conception is leading the way to the religion of truth—the one truth, the one religion, the one moral end and the one eternal God who exists forever.

*Metaphysical Magazine.*

KIICHI KANEKO.

### Obituary.

I HAVE to record the death of Mr. John Downing, of Cosgarne, St. Austell, Cornwall, which took place about eleven o'clock on Saturday night, November 1. It would be affectation to express sorrow at the event; old age had impaired his sight, he had been bedridden for several months, and in such circumstances death can only be regarded as a release. Although I had never met Mr. Downing, I had formed a very definite idea of him from correspondence, and I shall always think of him as an accomplished, thoughtful, and high-minded gentleman. He certainly retained his interest in Freethought to the very last, as I know by letters I received from him quite recently. These letters had a pathetic look to me, for only the signature was in his handwriting, and this bore signs of the bodily enfeeblement that had fallen upon him. Mr. Downing was a good reader and a good judge of literature. It was pleasant, therefore, to know that he had quite a different opinion of the *Freethinker* from that entertained by some feeble and fastidious persons. He warmly recognised the value of Mr. Wheeler's contributions, and paid me many an encouraging compliment on my own work. More than once he wondered how I was able to do so much. After my late breakdown he said it was only too natural, and begged me to be more economical of my strength in the future. Mr. Downing was always a liberal friend of Freethought. Many subscriptions came from him for various funds. He gave £200 at once not long ago. When he read of the crisis in my own affairs—upon which I need not expatiate—he wrote me that he wished some part, or even the whole, of that subscription to be devoted to my personal assistance, as he thought sustaining me at such a moment was more important than any other object. Such a letter touched me deeply; I prized it, but I kept it to myself. It is one of a few documents I turn to now and then, in the darker moments of life, to refresh my faith in human nature. I am not sorry, I am glad, that the writer has gone to his rest. It is good to know that such a gentle and generous spirit is not doomed to suffer constant discomfort and perhaps too frequent pain; discomfort that nothing could palliate, and pain that could only grow in intensity. I am sure from what I knew of him that he must still be living in many other lives; that he has indeed joined "the choir invisible, whose music is the gladness of the world."—G. W. FOOTE.

**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, R. P. Edwards, "The Religions of the World."

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell) 7.30: G. W. Foote, "Beyond the Grave."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, J. Oakesmith, Litt.D., M.A., "Epicureanism as a Religion of Every-Day Life."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, E. Pack.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell) 7, Dr. W. Sullivan, "The Modern Interest in St. Francis."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, J. Oakesmith, Litt.D., M.A., "The Ethical Movement and the Past."

## COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): C. Cohen: 3, "Giordano Bruno and Modern Thought"; 7, "The Present Position of Religion."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY: 7, C. H. Johns, "Tolstoi's Resurrection."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. C. Balfour, A lecture. Wednesday and Thursday (Nov. 12 and 13) at 8, Debate between H. G. Bibbings and H. Percy Ward, "Spiritualism or Secularism: Which is the Better System?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. Percy Ward: 3, "Ghosts: An Exposure of Spiritualism"; 6.30, "The Gospel According to Charles Darwin." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business meeting. Lecture arrangements.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Mr. Dyson, "Messiahs—Old and New."

## LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, 51 Longside-lane, Bradford.—November 9 Manchester; 12 and 13, Liverpool: Debate with G. H. Bibbings; 16, Liverpool; 25 and 26, Bolton: Debate with G. H. Bibbings. December 7, Failsworth; 9 and 10, Staleybridge: Debate; 11, Pudsey; Debate with Rev. W. Harold Davies; 21, Glasgow.

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