

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*There are now but two camps: the camp of reaction and anarchy, which acknowledges more or less distinctly the direction of God: the camp of construction and progress, which is wholly devoted to Humanity.—*  
COMTE.

## Religion and Cruelty.

IN the month of April, 1891, Dr. Jayne, the Bishop of Chester, presided at a Town Hall meeting of the local branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. In the course of his speech he asserted that "the persons who were most liable to be guilty of cruelty to their children were those artisans who had taken up Secularist opinions, and who looked upon their children as a nuisance, and were glad to get them out of the way." Dr. Jayne openly relied upon the authority of the Society's Secretary, the Rev. Mr. Waugh. That gentleman, being present at the meeting, jumped up in the middle of the Bishop's speech and corroborated his statement. "It was the case," he said, "that the class most guilty of cruelty to children were those who took materialistic, atheistic, selfish and wicked views of their own existence." Both speakers were challenged by me at the time. I invited them to prove their words or eat them. They did neither. They just said nothing. No doubt they felt it was the safest course. Dr. Jayne stuck to this policy ever afterwards; but Mr. Waugh, having some compunctions, not being quite as hardened as a bishop, subsequently went to Leeds and made a speech there, in which he publicly admitted that he had been mistaken. Since then we have heard very little about the cruelty of Secularist parents.

It is difficult to see why "unbelief" should destroy or pervert our natural instincts. A Freethinker requires to eat and sleep like a Christian. He needs shelter and social intercourse. He wants a home. He marries a woman because he loves her, and both of them love their children by virtue of a law which is as natural as gravitation. The "heathen" love their children. Savages love their children. Negroes are particularly fond of their offspring. Zulus would hardly believe that children had to be protected in England against the cruelty of their parents. The very lower animals are devoted to their helpless progeny. The tigress will feed her cubs with the prey her mate brings in before she lets him touch a bit of it himself; and the poor little barndoor hen will fight creation to protect her chickens.

Shakespeare put immortal words into the mouth of Shylock about the Jew being of essentially the same nature as the Christian. Three hundred years have rolled by and the Master's lesson is not quite learnt. The Jew is still hated in Catholic countries. In Protestant countries he is partially respected. Perhaps in another three hundred years the Master's lesson will be extended even to Atheists. That is, if Christianity lasts so long.

Meanwhile the Freethinkers are justified in pointing out that persons of their persuasion are very

rarely charged with cruelty to children. Whatever other offences they commit, they seem to keep remarkably clear of this one. But it is singular, on the other hand, that some of the very worst ill-users of children since those unhappy speeches at Chester have been Christians. Mrs. Montague, who tortured her child to death by atrociously refined punishment, did so for the sake of its immortal soul. This is what she said, and if we have to discount it to a certain extent, the fact remains that Christianity rather stimulated than repressed her natural malignity. Nor is this all. Mr. Waugh, speaking on Monday evening at the annual meeting of the Loughborough branch of his Society, stated that the prosecution of Mrs. Montague cost the Society fifteen clergymen and two bishops. Seventeen men of God withdrew their support because a Christian lady had been prosecuted and imprisoned for cruelty that would shock a Hottentot.

Now we have the case of Mrs. Penruddocke. This lady has been found guilty of gross, inexcusable cruelty to one of her own children, who has had to be removed from her care. Being a person of wealth and position, she was able to fee the highest counsel for her defence, and to command the sympathy of the judge. Instead of being sent to prison, as any poor woman in the same circumstances would have been, she is fined the ridiculously trifling sum of £50. Personally I am as little in favor of imprisonment for first offenders as anyone can be; but I believe in the administration of even-handed justice to all, and I quite agree with the popular judgment on the conduct of Mr. Justice Bigham.

Mrs. Penruddocke is not a Freethinker. Oh dear no! She would probably resent the mere suspicion of her being one as a mortal insult. She belongs to the Christian persuasion. She is the daughter of a clergyman. Her training was presumably of the most orthodox character. It should be noticed that she tried to excuse her cruelty to the child on the ground that it was meant for the poor thing's good. Mrs. Montague set up the same plea. It looks like one of those hypocrisies to which religious people are particularly liable.

We wonder if Mr. Waugh's Society will lose as much by the prosecution of Mrs. Penruddocke as it did by the prosecution of Mrs. Montague. It is very likely to do so, judging from his own language. He said at Loughborough that he had "never interfered for a doctor's child or the child of a barrister or a clergyman without losing money to the Society and risking proceedings against himself, not on the part of the persons implicated alone, but on the part of a vast number of well-to-do, intelligent, cultivated Christian people." These are Mr. Waugh's words as reported in the *Daily News*. And what a scandal they are to the very name of Christianity! Intelligent people, cultivated people, angry because a helpless child has been rescued from the most infamous cruelty—the cruelty of those who are its natural protectors! What is the explanation? Is it because, in addition to being "intelligent" and "cultivated," they are also "Christian"? Is it the third ingredient that spoils the other two? I do not say it is, but I venture to ask Mr. Waugh for his candid opinion on the point. Will he have the courage to tell it?

G. W. FOOTE.

### Religious Experiences.

THE argument from experience is the last one that a Secularist would treat lightly. It is, indeed, the very essence of his case that experience, either racial or individual, or both combined, is the only guide that man has or can have. The conscious or unconscious experience of all past generations speaks to us to-day through our laws, customs, and even through our instincts, feelings, and bodily structure. Experience is the ultimate reason for believing anything to be either useful or truthful, and in case of doubt we have but prospective experience to supply the required certainty.

But while experience is the only guide man has, his interpretation of it may be, and often is, wildly inaccurate. The objective experience of two men passing through a graveyard at night may be exactly the same, but one will see nothing but half lights and delusive shadows, while the other will distinguish a visitant from beyond the grave. It is a difference of interpretation. And, to take the matter further afield, the historic quarrel between religion and science is essentially and fundamentally a quarrel of interpretations. We are in the same world as our ancestors, the same forces that were in operation in the most primitive ages are in operation now, the difference is that we interpret our experiences in another manner. Where earlier generations saw volition, science now sees unconscious mechanism, and the essence of the dispute is whether the older interpretation is or is not to give place to the newer one.

Experience, then, is a guide—our only guide, in fact—only it is well to bear in mind that it is not an infallible guide, particularly when the interpretation of experience by one generation is marked off and guarded from the corrections of subsequent ones.

It is well to bear these considerations in mind when we are dealing with the argument from individual experience, so beloved by religious pleaders. This argument meets us in a crude form in the "experience meetings" of the less cultured Christian bodies, although it is tolerably common with all. A Freethinker who has never had the good fortune (or misfortune) to believe in Christianity is solemnly warned that he is not in a position to understand Christianity, since he has never tried it; or the critical world in general is reminded that religion does not rest upon historic proofs, or ratiocinative processes, but upon an individual experience. People feel that a new force has come into their lives, they have "experienced Jesus," and against that experience criticism is altogether ineffective. No less a person than Prof. W. James, the eminent psychologist, has recently advanced these individual experiences as some scientific proof of a transcendental existence, and this being so, it is, perhaps, worth while to consider what is their exact value.

It is well to begin by separating the fact from its interpretation. Certain individuals, an ignorant peasant in one place, an educated man in another, pass through what they both call a religious experience. The one jumps up in a revival meeting and shrieks out that he feels the influence of Jesus, the other writes a volume—more or less intelligible—describing his condition of mental exaltation, and asserting the existence of a whole order of being, to which average mankind is completely oblivious. It is impossible to deny the existence of these feelings in either instance. A man is the ultimate authority as to the feelings he possesses, and, although we may query their evidential value, we have no defensible right to question their existence. But, while one is an authority so far, one is not always the best authority as to either the cause or the meaning of one's own experience. If a man complains of a feeling of intense depression or lassitude, no one will question his truthfulness; but if he goes on to suggest that this is due to the spirits of departed enemies hovering round him, an educated listener would dismiss the theory of spirits, and substitute that of a badly-working liver. We do

not usually take an individual as the best authority as to the cause or meaning of his physical or mental states in ordinary affairs; we consult a specialist. If we do not do so in the case of one set of bodily or mental affections, why should we do so in another? Why should we frequently refuse to accept an individual's own statement as to the cause of a headache, and yet be asked to accept his version as to the cause of some obscure impulse that has awakened his religious interest? The position is indefensible on the face of it.

But the subjects of religious conversion, we are assured, realise that a change has come over them, and there is often an actual change in their conduct. I can grant both statements without at all admitting that it is due to religion. Let us take a common case. A man who is, say, over-fond of drinking or gambling, attends a revivalistic service, listens, is impressed, and finally "surrenders himself to Jesus," and moderates or gives up his besetting propensity. What need is there of supernaturalism here? In the first place, the very temperament of the drinker is an ill-balanced, impulsive, and emotional one. The weakness of character that prevents him withstanding the temptation of drink opens him to the emotional temptations of the religious gathering—a gathering which appeals almost wholly to the emotions, and but little to the intellect. And, once "saved," surely the constant presence of new friends, the desire to stand well in their estimation, the new class feeling evoked—in short, the purely social influence brought to bear, is quite adequate to account for the comparatively small number of "saved" cases. The same instances of reform may be noted apart from religion altogether, although, outside religious circles, people are not encouraged to perpetuate their degradation by repeated advertisements of their "cure."

The recent researches in the phenomena of "conversion" by Professor Starbuck, a lengthy notice of which appeared in the *Freethinker* some time ago, thoroughly bears out this position. Reviewing a large number of cases, Professor Starbuck found that conversion was everywhere a phenomenon of adolescence. With very rare exceptions, cases of conversion occur between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. People are either converted between these years or they are not converted at all. Of course, it is easy for one to assume that during these years human beings awaken to the existence of a spiritual sphere, although there is not a shadow of evidence in support of the hypothesis. But a plain and common-sense explanation lies ready to hand. The organic changes consequent on arrival at puberty are enough to answer all the requirements of the case. The organism, undergoing structural and functional changes, flooded with new impulses, longings, and desires, alone induce such a condition of irritability that it is peculiarly open to any unusual stimulus that it encounters. That in the majority of cases this stimulus is of a religious character is a mere accident of the environment; that it should yield to it is only what one might expect. It is the period during which epilepsy, criminality, and intemperance are most likely to manifest themselves, and in each case the development is to be explained along the same lines—that of an organism being subjected to unusual stress and strain during its most unstable period. The phenomenon is thus partly social, partly pathological; and to propound a fanciful hypothesis such as that usually put forward by religious philosophies is to fly directly in the face of all scientific method.

One writer, dealing with this question of religious experience, says that "Religion has its rise always as a free movement of the soul." This, I presume, is one way of saying that it does not arise in the individual in the same way that a belief concerning any matter of science comes into being. It is a matter of individual conviction alone. Then how is one to distinguish it from pure fantasy? The beauty of any scientific teaching is that it is *not* a matter of individual conviction only, but that it is the same

to all whose faculties are normal, and who are able to understand the subject. A belief that is subjective only, and which does not admit of any subjective proof is absolutely worthless. A man who insists on treating the statement: "I have a strong feeling that Jesus is helping me," as evidence is adequately answered by the retort that he mistakes indigestion for inspiration. The man who argues that he derives a comfort from religious beliefs and that they are therefore true, is exactly upon the same level as the man who should adduce the pleasures of drinking as a proof of the morality of drunkenness. Feeling for feeling, the evidence of one is as strong as the testimony of the other. And the reply that one would make to the drunkard is exactly that which one ought to make to the believer.

The same writer, dealing with the individual religious experiences of St. Paul, St. Teresa, and others, remarks:—

"It is the fashion in certain circles to-day to disparage such experiences in the name of pathological science. We have a medical materialism which will describe you St. Paul's vision on the Damascus road as "a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic"; will dismiss St. Teresa as a case of hysteria, and Francis of Assisi as a "hereditary degenerate." But all this is too amusingly superficial."

But why superficial? The same visions occur to people now as well as then. It is not uncommon to find people who see visions, who believe themselves to be visited by supernatural beings, and even who believe themselves to be deity incarnate. Why is it superficial to say that the same phenomena in different ages must be due to the same causes? To my mind there is nothing more certain than that a greater collection of pathologic cases does not exist than the *Lives of the Saints*, or a more instructive one, properly handled. There is no essential distinction between the visions of those who live now and those who lived centuries ago. The difference is that nowadays we do not enshrine their experiences in an inspired volume, we record them in a journal of mental diseases; we do not speak of "celestial visions," but of their pitiable delusions.

In brief the subjective experience of individuals in matters of religion is of absolutely no value whatever. The only experience that is of value is that which may become the experience of others, either in imagination or in actuality. It is almost enough to make one believe that a kind of dry rot has set in in the human mind to find a psychologist of Professor James's standing solemnly arguing that although the "saints," so far as we know their life history, have been men and women of organically unsound character, yet we are to put this evidence on one side and believe that they have actually been in communion with "spiritual powers." While there is a known cause at hand adequate to explain everything, why should we call in an absolutely unknown one. While we are able to explain the whole phenomena of religious experience as due partly to a clothing of social forces in religious phraseology, partly to the misdirection of human energies at a time when the organism is peculiarly susceptible to outside influences, and partly to sheer neural disease or functional disorder, why should we invoke the philosophy of the Dark Ages, and assume the existence of spiritual powers for the existence of which the whole history of man has failed to furnish a single proof?

C. COHEN.

### An Invitation.

READERS of this journal are invited to distribute, as judiciously as possible, copies of the National Secular Society's Manifesto on the present struggle over Mr. Balfour's Education Bill. It is entitled "The Religious Difficulty: and the Only Way Out." Copies for free distribution can be obtained by applying, in person or through the post, at the Society's office, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

### George Eliot.

"O may I join the choir invisible—  
Whose music is the gladness of the world."

It is twenty-two years since the world was trying to realise the extent of the gap made by the death of Mary Ann Evans, universally known by her pen-name of "George Eliot." She had long been accepted as one of the foremost imaginative writers of her age, and, what is not always the case with Free-thinkers, she was very popular with the great body of general readers.

The interval has affected her reputation. Her fame has perceptibly, even considerably declined. Her books are neither so much read nor so much quoted as they were during her lifetime. As regards some of her work this is not surprising. *Theophrastus Such*, with its repellent title, is dead. Nor is there much life in *Daniel Deronda*, *Spanish Gipsy*, or *Middlemarch*. But that *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *Silas Marner*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Romola* should be obsolete is incredible. This priceless legacy in books must last while the world values superlative achievements in English prose.

There is a leaden rule of criticism which goes by asking what qualities an author did not have, and proceeds to set these forth elaborately by quotation and comparison. This method is chiefly of value for displaying the learning and omniscience of the critic. Tried in this way, the art of "George Eliot" could be shown to be wanting in a most lamentable number of qualities. But as we choose our friends for the good qualities they possess, we ought not to apply any less sympathetic test to one who gives us such genuine delight as our favorite novelist. There are waves of fashion in all things, even in novels, but "George Eliot" wrote to no fashion, but in obedience to an artistic impulse, with Nature before her. She made life seem better than it really is, she made it appear simpler; but she never debased or distorted the image of humanity acting in it. Her placid, careful, and at times beautiful style reflected her view of existence. A play of free and generous emotions not always leading to happiness, under the open and eternal air which has its storms as well as its calms.

"George Eliot" is unique in English literature. No woman has attained so high a place among the writers of our country. She has often been spoken of as Shakespeare's sister. The simile is a happy one. They were both cradled in Warwickshire. They were both nursed by the same outward influences. The same forest of Arden was round them both. It is pleasant to think that the rookery elms of her childish memories, survivors of the great Forest, may have cast their shadows on that immortal poet to whom we owe the deathless gifts of the ever-charming Rosalind and the melancholy Jaques. There was something Shakespearian in "George Eliot's" genius. Who that has known them can forget pretty Hetty Sorrell, poor Mr. Tulliver, or the Dodson Sisters? Mrs. Poyser is one of the most extraordinary creations in all literature. She took her place from the first moment by the side of Sancho Panza. It was but a few weeks after the appearance of *Adam Bede* that a speaker in the House of Commons quoted one of Mrs. Poyser's sayings, certain that his hearers would understand him. "George Eliot's" sketches of women were especially wonderful, but the characters of Tito, Arthur Donnithorne, and of Grandcourt show that her pitiless penetration was not confined to her own sex.

"George Eliot" was at once freethinker and poet. In her dual character she united the critic who analyses and the artist who creates. The pen which had interpreted Strauss and Feuerbach—two most relentless opponents of the Christian superstition—this very pen drew for us the charming portrait of Dinah, the Methodist girl, and composed the touching prayer in the condemned cell. All writers, but the greatest—a Shakespeare, a Goethe, a Scott, a

George Eliot—take interest in their own class, their own religious ideas, alone. The characters are merely marionettes. But the really great writer shows that even the humblest,

if you prick them, will bleed,

and discovers the good in most unpromising characters: in frivolous Hetty Sorrell, in sensuous Arthur Donnithorne, as well as in pious Dinah and Mr. Irwine. Or, as the Master saw it, in pleasure-loving Falstaff, in crafty Iago, in ambitious Lady Macbeth, or in mad Lear.

"George Eliot" was one of the freest of thinkers on all subjects. Her union with George Henry Lewes is a proof of its extent. This union was, undoubtedly, the most important event in her life. It was a true marriage, undertaken with all deliberation, and was a source of strength and happiness to both. The dedications of the manuscript of each succeeding novel declare in varying language how her beloved friend was the only source of all her insight and all her strength. She was, in his eyes, at once a genius and a loveable woman. Without his literary guidance and sympathy, it is doubtful whether she would have produced the writings which have made her fame. A fable has been invented that this marriage was the tragedy of "George Eliot's" existence. It is as absurd as it is false. The man who talks of the immorality of "George Eliot" invites the scathing denunciation of Laertes over the dead body of the drowned Ophelia:—

Lay her in the earth  
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,  
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be  
When thou liest howling.

The greatest writers draw inspiration from philosophy. George Eliot was no exception to this rule. She coined the term Meliorist to express the position of one who was neither an Optimist nor Pessimist:—

the blessed mood  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world  
Is lightened.

The "still, sad music of Humanity," which had fired the imagination of Comte, was to her a well of exhaustless inspiration. When the history of modern Freethought is written, it will be impossible to neglect the personality of "George Eliot." The greatest woman among her contemporaries, maybe the greatest of all women, she did magnificent work in her day and generation. She counts among the social pioneers of the age. She was one of the first to attempt to free the life of the nation from the alien rule of ecclesiastical authority, as she had, indeed, freed herself. Loftiness of purpose and splendor of genius have won for her the highest place in the Valhalla of her country, and no more worthy name is inscribed upon the long bead-roll of noble Englishwomen.

MIMNERMUS.

### They Knew Moses.

A YOUNG railroad official of Chicago, who lives in a suburban town, and teaches a class of young hopefuls in Sunday-school, is obliged to adopt most remarkable methods in order to bring past lessons and Bible characters to the minds of the boys, says the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. The youngsters range in age from seven to nine or ten. Not long ago lesson books were passed for the beginning of a new quarter, in which the life of Moses was to be retold. On the title-page was a picture of Moses in the bulrushes and Pharaoh's daughter and her maids just approaching.

"Well, boys," said the railroad official, "about whom are we to study this quarter?" No one knew. "Doesn't any one know?" he asked, and the heads bobbed from side to side. "Well, who was placed in the bulrushes when he was a baby, and a king's daughter came and found him?" asked he, showing the picture. Still no answer. Then he exclaimed: "Well, who was in the cellar when the light went out?"

"Moses!" yelled every boy in the class.

## When We Die Are We Dead?

PROBABILITY SAYS, YES—HOPE SUGGESTS  
ANOTHER ANSWER.

BY DR. J. E. ROBERTS

(Minister of the Church of This World, Kansas City, Mo.)

(Concluded from page 747.)

THE only idea of a future world that approaches common sense is the idea of the much-abused Spiritualists. They speak of the life beyond as a continued responsibility, a continued moral obligation, and continued opportunity; in other words, they represent the world beyond as a place of progression. They do not make it unnatural or inhuman. They say that after a man is dead he is the same man—no better, no worse. It is the only rational conception of the world beyond. If to die is to forget, to become something different, to no longer know and love those who have loved us here, then immortality has nothing that a god man wants. It would be better, a thousand times better, to die and turn back to dust than to wake up to immortality and be utterly indifferent and forgetful towards those who had made life divine in this world. The idea that there is a changing or transforming power in death proves too much. If we are to lose, and lose at once, all of our imperfections and limitations, then we may at the same time lose our virtues and our excellencies, if we have any—our loves and our friendships, too. If, on the other hand, it is but a continuation; if, after a man is dead, it takes him a little while to find out that he is dead; if, indeed, it is so much like living that he must look at the body that he is now freed from and say to himself, "That was mine—it was not I"; if they are right about that, and we take up life exactly where we laid it down, and remember and love, then there is nothing appalling or hideous about death. It is of a great deal of moment to me that they took away the old limitations of the universe and left no localised spot for heaven. It is much more congenial to my thought to believe that when anyone dies he does not need to hurry away from the world if he does not want to; he can tarry—to believe that there is no throne before which he must be brought for judgment, no angry judge to separate the good from the bad, any more than there was while we were in the flesh. If a man separated himself from the bad here, he did it by his own volition; if he chose the good, he chose them because he preferred the good; if he lived in light, it was because he loved the light; if he walked in dark and shadowy places, it was because he loved the darkness rather than the light.

The fact is our imaginations are limited; we think only of life associated with the flesh because we cannot think of it in any other way; but may it not exist? Who can tell but that this world in which we live is the great ample field of effort for those who have been in the body? How do we know but the very processes of life are in part the result of the activity, the toil, and the thought of those who were in the body once before? How do we know but that the springtime, with its opening and unfolding life, is but the great landscape opportunity, the garden of God, in which those that loved toil, those that found their enjoyment in activity, in doing things—how do we know but that is the place where now they are bringing things to pass? If it could only be shown that after death there is something to do, that we need not be idle and listless, and lie about and wait for the eternity's passing; if we did not have to get out of the active processes of this busy world; if we could keep up our loves and our work and our joy; if we could extend and increase our knowledge and carry forward our studies and enlarge our refinements and widen our powers, then we would not be afraid of death. But there is the silence, the cold obstruction, and the old-time notion of an idle heaven, and it leaves nothing in death to be desired, nothing

in immortality that is attractive. I am inclined to believe that, if there is a life beyond, the Spiritualists have the right idea about it. Make it a thing of activity, and we shall be glad to begin it.

I am persuaded that we take life too seriously; that we do not need to prove the hope; that it is wiser to accept the hope as a fact, to cherish and believe it, to add our voice of acclaim with every volume of exultation that goes up from the world on this day or any other day, to say that we believe in it with them, perhaps not for the same reason or in the same way, but we believe in it, we hope in it, we trust in it, it is a part of our human life. Nature is responsible for it, and not we. If she is to keep faith with her creatures, she must fulfil it. She consumed many ages in the making of man. Millions of years before the first man came nature seems to have been providing for his coming; in order that he might have a place to be she formed the globe; in order that he might have shade she built the forest; that he might have food she provided fruits and nuts and herbs; that he might progress and improve she gave him a brain; that he might not be dismayed and despair with life's too hard and weary way she whispered to him a secret that she would not tell, and in that instinct of immortality gave him the prophecy of what her further purpose was.

The only proof there is, the only proof there ever can be, is the return to the living of someone who died. All the rest is speculation, it is philosophy, it is presumption. It may be a rational hypothesis, but it never can be proof. We may speculate about inhabitants of the planet Mars. We may show that there is an atmosphere enveloping the planet; that the constituent elements of the planet and the atmosphere correspond with the matter that forms this earth and its atmosphere. We may make it a reasonable presumption that there are human beings on the planet Mars, but we never can prove it unless we hear from them. It is precisely the same way with the world beyond. There never have been any positive utterances about that life except such as were founded upon the belief of spirit return.

There always have been people in every age of the world who believed that the dead returned and manifested themselves. How did this faith in spirits come to be? And it is an increasing faith. There are a large and an ever widening number of people in this age and in this land who believed in that same thing. Why can't we all? Why isn't that faith for you and me? We have our dead and our longings; why are we denied? Why is the silence tongueless for us, and the vast mystery unexplained? I cannot answer; I do not know. Maybe it is the fact that the world is not yet upon a plane sufficiently high to be given the splendor of that knowledge. Maybe it will require yet thousands and thousands of years before man has reached a sufficient intellectual and spiritual self-command to be able to have that knowledge and still keep his poise in the life that now is. Maybe it is coming just as fast as it can, but one thing is certain: the knowledge is of no value at second hand.

There have been great men and women who honestly owned they did not wish to live again. Harriet Martineau was such a one, and said before her death that all she asked or hoped for was rest—dreamless, unawaking sleep. Would immortality to her be a bane and a punishment? As for me, I wish to live always. I like it well, this life. Its pain I know—its self-reproach. The cup I press to these lips has had its draughts of sweet and wormwood too. This heart, its joys, and its blood has reddened more than once the barbed shaft of pain. Before the ideal, severe, august, fallen has it been more than once in humiliation and self-rebuke. Kind it would have been, perforce, and just, yet knows full well that more than many times unkindness, cruelty, and wrong has been the portion it has bestowed. All it knows full well, and yet loves life. Nothing is finished here. Nothing rounded out. Love, with its intoxication, but inflames the thirst it cannot quench. Wrong and evil require for their atone-

ment and reparations other world than this, e'en so, 'twere good enough. We may yet become sufficiently wise to live together with absolute justice. We may be yet so wise, so intelligent, and so well acquainted with the laws of being, with the laws of Nature and life, that we can escape the burdens beneath whose weight we faint and fall now. If the other world is no better, it is good enough. If we remember the pain with the joy, the bitterness with the gladness, if we can take up the old story of human life and find again those we loved, those whom we have hated, and cherish the one and understand the other, and make reparation for all the wrong that we have ever done, that will be a sufficient heaven, and will, perhaps, require all the eternities.

Suppose we give up the fancy about this life or that, or eternity, or endless existence—suppose that we lay the great emphasis upon the fact of being. We are not responsible for that, it is Nature's decree; we are in line with her purposes, we are part of her progress, we are necessary to her consummate all. She could not take out an atom or a human being without being unjust, bringing disorder and discord somewhere. She has set our feet upon the King's Highway of life. Let us rejoice there can be no here, no there, no before, no after. This is eternity as much as any moment in the duration of the ages and we are living now. To live this now well, there all the glory lies. Until we know more of life we cannot affirm immortality or deny it. What man is we only guess. This we know: That as the Greeks said, "he is the being that looks upward." Impelled by some resistless law, he is for ever attempting to utter the unutterable, to know the unknowable, to attain the unattainable. In these pathetic and hopeless attempts there may be the promise and prophecy of keener faculties, enlarged powers, and expanded refinements. Then may the living know that the dead are living too—then may the vanished be near, the invisible seen, and the silences have speech. Meanwhile we do not know, we cannot tell, we can only hope and wait.

### Real or Fictitious Woe.

By many a league of street and lane  
The great dim city glooms afar;  
Beneath, the turmoil and the pain,  
Above, the tranquil evening star.  
The church bells jangle through the air  
And well-fed preachers prate below;  
Outside, the city's toil and care  
And want and misery and woe!  
They tell again the well-worn tale  
(On those false lips a brazen lie)  
With mock heroics mean and stale—  
The threadbare crime of Calvary.  
Meanwhile, by many a corner bar,  
Foul, grimy women stand and brawl,  
Where poison draughts and gaslights are,  
And drunken ruffians reel and fall.  
Can these be women?—brutal eyes,  
Gin-sodden faces, dirt and rags—  
Can these be *children*, thick as flies  
Upon the wet and slimy flags?  
Shrunk limbs and faces thin and pale;  
Their shouts have nought of childhood's glee;  
For them no sweep of flower-gemmed vale,  
No swelling of the sunlit sea!  
See yon poor waif—unwhited tomb  
Of youth and love and manhood's glow,  
Who ne'er has seen the roses bloom  
Through thirty years of Pimlico:  
And she, whose cruel destinies  
Have seared her woman's heart with hell—  
There linger in her faded eyes  
The violets of her native dell.  
Tho' years have passed her beauty by  
From silken shame to reeking slum;  
And that dark crowd that drink and die  
Until a better kingdom come.  
Are *these* not worse than nails and scars  
In dreams of agony to be,  
What time the everlasting stars  
Shone pity on Gethsemane?

F. B. O'NEILL.

## Acid Drops.

MR. JOHN H. THATCHER, secretary of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, Moss-lane Chapel, Manchester, and Teacher of No. 1 Select Female Class, seems to be very anxious about the safety of Mr. Foote's immortal soul. He writes to say that he once dropped into the Manchester Secular Hall out of curiosity, and heard Mr. Foote lecture; his impression being one of regret that a man of such ability should be blaspheming "the Most High God" and "His Only Begotten Son." Mr. Thatcher more than hints that Mr. Foote may be "stricken down" by one or other of the offended parties aforesaid; and, no doubt with the best intentions, he begs the "infidel" to pause before it is too late. He also encloses a newspaper cutting, containing a cock-and-bull story about a party of "colored Socialists" who ascended Mont Pelée before the late eruption, pulled up a great crucifix that had stood there for many years, and, amid obscene rites and blasphemous songs, cast it into the crater. Mr. Thatcher takes this story for gospel truth, and regards the eruption as "God's vindication of his outraged majesty," and vengeance for the "awful insults" offered to Jesus Christ. Some forty thousand people were killed by the eruption who had no share in the sin. But that does not in the least disturb the robust faith of the Manchester Christian. He says it is usual for the innocent to suffer with the guilty. Perhaps it is in many cases, though few people see the justice of it. But in this case it was quite unnecessary. If the Lord had an eruption on hand he might have sent it after the "colored Socialists" and settled their hash while they were on the mountain—without waiting until they got safely back to St. Pierre and mixed up with the other inhabitants. The God of Mr. Thatcher, in short, is a bit of a fool and more of a scoundrel; and the wonder is that Mr. Thatcher, being at large and presumably sane, does not see it. Any man who acted in the way this God does would soon be hounded out of human society—probably by way of the gallows.

After such a "palpable warning as the Martinique disaster," it is "surprising" to Mr. Thatcher that Mr. Foote can "go on uttering his blasphemies." Well now that is absurd! Mr. Thatcher doesn't see that *he* is the blasphemer. He represents God as murdering forty thousand innocent people for two reasons; first, to get his own back on some colored fellows who had insulted him; and, secondly, to warn an "infidel" five thousand miles away to behave himself. This is the conduct of a criminal lunatic—and on a scale that makes it appalling. How on earth, we ask, can a man who ascribes to the Deity such an infamous character call another man a blasphemer for venturing to think he is mistaken? And if there be a God, which would he consider the worse, a Christian who painted him like an intoxicated Devil, or an Atheist who doubted the genuineness of the portrait?

The six hundred enumerators of the "great religious census" for London, undertaken by the *Daily News*, we presume on behalf of Mr. George Cadbury, were entertained the other evening at a supper in Exeter Hall. Several eminent persons in the religious world, who were unable to attend, sent letters of apology for their absence. Dr. Clifford wrote that "If, as the Liverpool census suggests, there is a growing alienation of the people from institutional religion as it exists amongst us, it is of the utmost importance to us as citizens that it should be known." The "if" in this sentence is extremely discreet, and "suggests" is a very good word in the circumstances. It will comfort some people who fancy that facts can be modified by words. The "citizens" in the last part of the sentence shows how Dr. Clifford has got this term upon the brain. The truth is that it is as a Christian, not as a citizen, that he is interested in the question of whether church attendance is declining or otherwise.

Mr. T. P. Ritzema, Managing Director of the *Daily News*, who presided at this census supper, made quite a startling statement. "He believed," he said, "that after the census it would be found that not one per cent. of the adult male working-class population went to a place of worship." When we call this statement *startling* we mean that it will be so to religious people. It does not startle *us*. We were familiar with the fact before.

Why do the working-classes decline to attend "divine service" in London? How is it that the men of God are unable to lure them with the latest bait of the "Divine Socialist" and the "Carpenter of Nazareth"? A working-man Savior is offered them, and the working-men will have none of him. Why? Mr. Ritzema hinted that some people

would advance the theory that "Christianity was after all a cunningly-devised fable." But that was not true. Mr. Ritzema denied it, and that settled it. Having done which, this gentleman proceeded to assign other reasons "why the Church failed to reach the masses." And the first of these reasons was "poverty, arising from unequal distribution of wealth." Well now, this is positively funny. Jesus Christ taught "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich"; and here is one of his disciples saying that one reason why his Gospel doesn't catch on with the masses is because they are poor! Could absurdity go further than this?

The Roman Catholic Church has dotted Bishoprics, as far as it can afford them, over England. One of them is named after a delightful spot near Bristol. The Bishop of Clifton is a man to be envied. A good living in a good house in a good position is not to be sneezed at. It is a lot better than a poor residence in a Bristol slum. We note, too, that the Bishop of Clifton is able to travel. According to the newspapers he has just had an audience of the Pope. We congratulate him on making the best of *this* world. It is so much more sensible than looking forward to something nice in the world to come.

We always thought it would come to smoking in churches at last. A beginning was made at Sunningdale Congregational Church last Sunday. A man sat near the stove and lit a cigarette, which he enjoyed smoking to the end, and nobody interfered with him. It is said that the other worshippers were shocked, but the feeling of some of them may have been one of envy.

Sir Alfred Jones, toasting the health of Sir George Denton, Governor of Gambia, at the Constitutional Club, said that the African native should be educated to be of use to himself and the world. "In the past," he added, "there had been rather too much missionary and rather too little technical education."

A post-office in Jerusalem! What a thought! Yet the French, Germans, Russians, and Austrians have post-offices there, and Mr. Henniker Heaton wants to know why there is not an English post-office too. The Postmaster General replies that there is no demand for one. This shows that Britishers have too much respect for the Holy City to profane it with such a modern invention; or else that they give the Holy City the go-by and think very small cheese of the spot where their blessed Savior died for them.

While the Church clergy and the Nonconformist ministers are fighting over "the kids" and the schools, in order to determine which of them shall dose the youthful mind with religious absurdity, thousands of the said "kids" are being slaughtered through the ignorance of their parents. Mothers bring sick babies to the Children's Hospital in Great Ormond-street, and cheerfully confess to having fed them on pork and whisky—to say nothing of herrings and black puddings. Is it not high time that the kingdom-come business were dropped, and that "common people" were taught some useful knowledge about the present world?

The late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes was Chairman of the Committee that drew up the Free Churches Catechism. They met at his house. And according to the Rev. Thomas Law he "regarded this compilation of the Catechism as the best piece of work in which he had been engaged." This Catechism is dealt with in Mr. Foote's new pamphlet, *Dropping the Devil*. The Committee left the Devil out of it. There is not so much as a reference to him. One of our friends wrote to a member of the Committee and asked why the Devil was omitted, and the answer was that "he appears to have been overlooked." What a farce! We advise Free-thinkers to circulate *Dropping the Devil* as widely as possible amongst the orthodox folk. It will help them to see through the tricks of theology.

Mr. Hughes's second great achievement (his friends say) was his putting the final touch, through Mr. Davitt's *Labor World*, which then had a large circulation in Ireland, to the hounding down of Parnell. That Catechism achievement was a comedy: *this* achievement was a tragedy. It was a bad day's work for Ireland, and we have yet to learn what good it did to the rest of the world. But the Nonconformist Conscience was satisfied. The man who "went wrong with a woman" was kicked out and killed. He was the greatest statesman of his day, but what did that matter? The future of Ireland was nothing to the "feelings" of dear good kind Christians like Hugh Price Hughes.

If there be a ghost world, and the shade of Charles Stewart Parnell ever happens to pass the shade of Hugh Price Hughes, with what a proud and taciturn disdain the states-

man would glance at "the thing" that helped to undo him. *Glance*, we say, not *gaze*. Parnell would not look so long on such an object. *Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa.*

What a world this is! And how proud of it "Providence" ought to be! Take the report of that little tragedy at Cork. There's not much in it. 'Tis just one of the thousand tragedies that are enacted in this world every day. A poor "unfortunate," named Margaret Ryan, runs down to one of the quays, takes off her shawl, ties her three-year old child with it to a chain-post, gives the little thing a farewell kiss, and then jumps into the water and ends her drama. And the great world rolls on as before, and "the one above" takes no notice, and the incident is soon forgotten. There is only one "unfortunate" less in the world, and one child whose first memory will always be a mother's kiss and a leap to death. On with the dance! The Master of the Ceremonies up there smiles. He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. And the old human tragedy is the same too.

Rev. F. Peacock, vicar of St. Paul's Halliwell, speaking at Chapel-en-le-Frith, said that at many Church tea-parties in his own neighborhood the Devil had the pre-eminence instead of Christ. They had "ping-pong tournaments" and all kinds of "tomfoolery." It was just a variety show and God was completely absent. Just for a show of respectability they had the Benediction at the close, but it stuck in their throats. Mr. Peacock is evidently a plain-speaker—and also a patron of the good old muffin-struggle entertainments.

The Abbé Soulier, Curé of St. George's, Lyons, is persecuted by his superiors because he is a Republican. Various charges have been trumped up against him, but none of them have been sustained. The faithful are ordered to get up and leave the church when he preaches. Gendarmes have to protect him to and fro, and guard him in the pulpit. Nor is this all. "The filthy weapons used in Brittany in defence of the nuns' schools," the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News* says, "are resorted to by his enemies. It would need the pen of a Swift or Zola to describe the state of his doorsteps every morning, and of his window shutters."

"Christian Science," the *Lancet* says, "is neither Christian nor scientific." Scientific it may not be, but is the *Lancet* an authority on what is Christian? Trusting to medical science is certainly not taught in the New Testament; on the contrary, the teaching of that book is all in favor of the cure of bodily ills by spiritual means—such as prayer, fasting, symbolic anointing, and the laying on of hands. We do not agree with the *Lancet*, therefore, when it says that Christian Science is not Christian. Our contemporary is nearer the mark when it says that "Christian Science is a swindle pure and simple." But how many swindles have been, and are, perpetrated in the name of religion! Christian Science is only one of them—the latest trade between flats and sharps.

"Tay Pay" thinks it was a dreadful thing for George Eliot to have to fight the faith of her fathers. Poor man! He judges her by himself. He forgets that if somebody didn't fight the faith of his fathers a good while ago "Tay Pay," instead of being a Roman Catholic, or whatever he is, would be a Druidic stone-worshipper or something of that kind.

The following Ward Beecher story was recently printed in the *Westminster Gazette*. A New York newspaper man wrote to the famous preacher: "Dear Mr. Beecher,—You made an ass of yourself yesterday.—Yours truly, John Smith." Beecher replied: "Dear Sir,—The Lord saved you the trouble of making an ass of yourself by making you an ass at the beginning, and 'His work standeth sure.'—H. W. Beecher." The first letter is sheer vulgarity. But is the second letter witty? If it is, there are a great many witty people in the world.

Ingersoll was a witty man. He was very rarely savage, but even then he could say a cutting thing without calling his enemy names. He once tackled a newspaper editor for slandering Thomas Paine. The man was invited to give proof of his statements. Finding he could not do so, he shuffled, and did everything but apologise. He even tried to smooth the matter over by inviting Ingersoll to dinner. "Sir," wrote Ingersoll, "I would as soon dine with Ezekiel."

In the course of a very interesting essay we have just been reading by Mr. F. J. Gould on "The New Secularism" he assumes that the right of free speech is definitely won in England. "Are we," he asks, "to go on pleading for rights that we possess, and for a hearing which is always assured

us so long as we observe the laws of courtesy and prove our good faith?" The question as he puts it admits of only one answer. But the question involves the assertion that Secularism—in which Freethought must be included—has no persecution or ostracism to suffer as long as it speaks with courtesy and good faith. Now the very fact that this qualification has to be made is enough to throw doubt on the accuracy of the assertion. Who thinks of saying that Churchmen, or Catholics, or Wesleyans, or even Salvationists, are sure of a hearing while they are courteous and honest? Language of this kind is only used in the case of persons or bodies whose position is dubious.

Mr. Gould has never been much engaged in iconoclastic work. We do not say this to his discredit, for his work has always been very useful and necessary. We merely state a fact which has some bearing on this particular point. Mr. Gould's own line of propaganda does not bring him into special conflict with orthodox susceptibilities. Moreover, the one town in England of which he has quite a definite knowledge is Leicester; and it is a great mistake to assume that the state of things in Leicester is characteristic of England generally. Secularism has enjoyed special advantages in Leicester. The movement has been more or less organised there for fifty years. For a good many years it has been privileged to carry on its activities in a handsome and commodious home. All this has naturally told upon the public opinion and sentiment of the town. Secularism has won a certain respect there. But let it by some accident become homeless and distressed, and see how much respect it would command then.

Birmingham has had an organised Secular propaganda for many years, but it never had the advantages of Leicester. Mr. Daniel Baker tried to make a home for Secularism at Baskerville Hall, but the situation was rather unfavorable, and there were other reasons why the costly experiment he made from 1891 to 1894 failed—reasons into which we need not enter just at present. With all its difficulties, the N.S.S. Branch has steadily kept a stiff upper lip. It has had to face bigotry, and it has had to face calumny. Once a year the Mayor is liberal enough to allow the Branch the use of the Town Hall on the same conditions as other societies in the borough. But that is about the end of the pleasant chapter. The unpleasant chapter is much longer. Hall after hall in the town has been denied to the Branch for special lectures by representative men. Hall after hall has been denied for an N.S.S. Conference. When the Branch succeeded in obtaining the use of the Bristol-street Board School for Sunday evening lectures, and attracted crowded meetings there, a dastardly campaign was started for its ejection. Slanders and libels flew about, the clericals on the School Board were "shocked" and managed to impart the shock to several Nonconformist members, the Bishop of Coventry saw his opportunity, and by means of barefaced falsehoods and appeals to orthodox prejudice he induced the Board to shut the Secularists out of its schools for twelve months. That twelve months has lasted a long while. The Secularists are shut out still.

It would be little short of a mockery to tell the Birmingham Secularists that they are "always assured of a hearing so long as they observe the laws of courtesy and prove their good faith." They *have* proved their good faith, and something more, by declining to have the use of the Bristol-street Board School again except on the same conditions that apply to all other parties in the town. As for the general situation in Birmingham, it may be summed up in a single illustration. Mr. Foote, who can bring a big crowd of respectable, orderly, and appreciative listeners to the Town Hall, when he is lucky enough to get it through the Mayor's liberality, has at other times to lecture in a room where none but enthusiasts could be expected to assemble.

We are afraid that the battle of free speech is far from being over. In many parts of the kingdom it is more difficult to obtain good halls for Freethought meetings than it was twenty years ago. It should also be remembered that the Blasphemy Laws are still unrepealed; and that Charles Bradlaugh, who knew what he was talking about, constantly warned the Freethought party of the danger thence arising. Oh, it may be said, the last prosecution was in 1883; Mr. Foote was the last victim of those foolish laws. But how does anyone know who will be the last victim of laws that are still in existence? Who knows that the dormant serpent will never wake and sting again? People said the Blasphemy Laws were obsolete before Mr. Foote's imprisonment. Mr. Justice Stephen himself said so in his *Digest of the Criminal Law*. There had been no prosecution under those laws since the case of Thomas Pooley in 1857. They were allowed to slumber for twenty-six years, and then they were put in operation so as to procure Mr. Foote a sentence which was

really the heaviest ever passed upon a "blasphemer." For the old imprisonments were of a more lenient character. Prisoners for blasphemy wore their own clothes, fed themselves if they could, saw frequent visitors, wrote frequent letters, had books to read, and pen, ink, and paper to write with. Richard Carlile and Robert Taylor wrote Freethought books and articles in gaol. Mr. Foote was treated like a common criminal in every respect.

No, the Blasphemy Laws are *not* obsolete. No law is ever really obsolete until it is repealed. And these particular laws will not be repealed in a hurry. If the ordinary Christian cannot often use the old stick with which his forefathers beat "infidels," he likes to see it hanging up. When the great Charles Bradlaugh, at the top of his influence, after carrying his Oaths Bill, brought in a Bill for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, he found only forty-five members of the House of Commons prepared to walk with him into the division lobby. Mr. Holyoake afterwards formed a Liberty of Bequest Committee, which was going to do great things in its way. A Bill was introduced, and got printed, to legitimate bequests for Freethought purposes, but it never got any further, and seemed at length to be forgotten. Mr. Foote, being tired of waiting, set his wits to work and devised a scheme to counteract the financial disablement of the Blasphemy Laws. The result was The Secular Society, Limited. The model was designed substantially once for all. It is easy to copy an invention that cannot be patented. "All may grow the flower, for all have got the seed."

A number of Leeds laymen have signed a protest against the Dean of Ripon's "Natural Christianity." We suppose they are persons of some local eminence; otherwise their protest is little else than a waste of clean paper. We also presume they have sent a copy, by wireless telegraphy or some other conveyance, to the celestial authorities; for it is not much use troubling the ecclesiastical or temporal authorities on such a matter, as the time appears to have gone by for heresy-hunts within the Church. Whether the celestial authorities will take any notice of this protest remains to be seen.

These Leeds protesters say that Dean Fremantle's views, having been extensively circulated by organs of the press (instead of being kept to himself, we suppose), have created "widespread consternation and pain amongst Churchmen generally." Shall such a state of things be allowed to continue? Perish the thought! "As no retraction or satisfactory explanation from the Dean has appeared," these gentlemen say, "and such opinions being opposed to fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith as taught by our Church, we desire to protest against their dissemination by a clergyman holding high office in our diocese, and to express our earnest hope that steps will be taken to render the further spread of such teaching within the pale of the Church of England impossible."

This is the natural penalty of dogmatism. The clergy train the laymen in blind belief, and when the clergy see it is advisable to move forward a bit, the laymen insist on holding them back.

Lord Charles Beresford probably thought he could speak freely at a Savage Club dinner, though perhaps he did not think that some of the things he said would be reported. He devoted a few minutes to the Education Bill, and the following was one of his utterances on the subject. "Whenever religion is brought in," he said, "I always observe that the opposing parties fight like devils for reconciliation, and they do their best to murder each other for the love of God." Whereat the "Savages" laughed hilariously. No doubt they understood the game. One or two of them may have recollected Byron's couplet:—

Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded  
That all the Apostles would have done as they did.

One or two, we repeat, no more. For who reads *Don Juan* nowadays, except a few eccentric persons like the "brutal illiterate editor of the *Freethinker*" who read everything?

The Booth-Clibborns, son-in-law and daughter of General Booth, joined Old Dowie's Church of Zion at Chicago when they left the Salvation Army. They have now left Old Dowie. They say they have had enough of him. He says he has had enough of them. It is possible to believe both sides in this case.

Having tried Old Dowie with unsatisfactory results, the Booth-Clibborns might try another old party who is said to be not as black as he looks.

A long account of the Doukhobors appears in the

*Morning Advertiser*. The writer says it is "easy to point out how the logical consequences of certain religious opinions would upset existing social conditions. But," he continues, "Pliny the younger wrote of the early Christians that the superstition of these people is as ridiculous as their attachment to it is astonishing." This can only mean that the Doukhobors are *not* fanatics or that the early Christians were. We dare say the latter is the writer's real meaning, if he could only venture to express it frankly in a "respectable" newspaper.

Clerical misdemeanors are so common in America that nobody takes much notice of them—except the police. From a number of such cases in one of our American exchanges we take the following:—The Rev. W. G. Rabe and Miss Augusta Busch, missionary, were found asphyxiated in the pastor's room behind the pulpit in the German Baptist Church, Omaha. The dead bodies were locked in a close embrace.

Many views of the Salvation Army have been expressed. The following is a new one from *Higher Science*, a monthly published at Los Angeles:—"The Salvation Army is doing the world more good than any other army or any other religion. It shows the ridiculous sides of both armies and religion, in such glowing colors that people with even a moderate amount of intelligence cannot ignore the joke. It is such a good burlesque that the thinking people of both the old and new worlds are willing to tolerate it upon the streets for the good it does. Even little boys follow behind it to laugh."

### Naturalism and Supernaturalism.

From the earliest times of which we have any knowledge, Naturalism and Supernaturalism have, consciously or unconsciously, competed and struggled with one another; and the varying fortunes of the contest are written in the records of the course of civilisation, from those of Egypt and Babylonia, six thousand years ago, down to those of our own time and people.

The records inform us that, so far as men have paid attention to Nature, they have been rewarded for their pains. They have developed the Arts which have furnished the conditions of civilised existence; and the Sciences, which have been a progressive revelation of reality and have afforded the best discipline of the mind in the methods of discovering truth. They have accumulated a vast body of universally accepted knowledge; and the conceptions of man and of society, of morals and of law, based upon that knowledge, are every day more and more, either openly or tacitly, acknowledged to be the foundations of right action.

History also tells us that the field of the supernatural has rewarded its cultivators with a harvest, perhaps not less luxuriant, but of a different character. It has produced an almost infinite diversity of Religions. These, if we set aside the ethical concomitants upon which natural knowledge also has a claim, are composed of information about Supernature; they tell us of the attributes of supernatural beings, of their relation with Nature, and of the operations by which their interference with the ordinary course of events can be secured or averted. It does not appear, however, that the supernaturalists have attained to any agreement about these matters, or that history indicates a widening of the influence of supernaturalism on practice, with the onward flow of time. On the contrary, the various religions are, to a great extent, mutually exclusive; and their adherents delight in charging each other not merely with error, but with criminality, deserving and ensuring punishment of infinite severity. In singular contrast with natural knowledge, again, the acquaintance of mankind with the supernatural appears the more extensive and the more exact, and the influence of supernatural doctrines upon conduct the greater, the farther back we go in time and the lower the stage of civilisation submitted to investigation. Historically, indeed, there would seem to be an inverse relation between supernatural and natural knowledge. As the latter has widened, gained in precision and in trustworthiness, so has the former shrunk, grown vague and questionable; as the one has more and more filled the sphere of action, so has the other retired into the region of meditation, or vanished behind the screen of mere verbal recognition.

—Professor Huxley.

Nebuchadnezzar shouted for joy as he was turned into the grass patch. "Suppose," he said, they had tried to make me eat breakfast food!" With a violent shudder as he passed the sawdust pile, he started his dinner with a choice piece of clover.—*New York Tribune*.

### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, November 30, Victoria Assembly Hall, Fowler-street, South Shields: 3, "Zola the Atheist; his Life, Work, Death, and Funeral"; 7, "Good without God, and Happiness without Heaven."

Monday, December 1, Lovaine Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne: 8, "Life, Death—and After? With Special Reference to Mrs. Besant's New Opinions."

December 7, Athenæum Hall; 14, Leicester; 21, Camberwell.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 30, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham-court-road.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

"BOSTON INVESTIGATOR."—You reach us irregularly—which is a pity, as you are always welcome. We have received several copies of your October 11 number; other numbers have not arrived at all. Please dig under the fifth rib whoever is responsible.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your useful cuttings.

G. W. B.—The matter is "off our beat."

T. BAMBER.—Pleased send future orders for literature direct to the Freethought Publishing Company—not to Mr. Foote.

A. G. LYE.—A pamphlet such as you suggest would probably be useful, but we have not time at present to write it. Still, we will bear the suggestion in mind. The N. S. S. Manifesto on the Education question is now ready.

W. R. AXELLEY.—Thanks for cutting see paragraph.

THOMAS EDWARDS.—It is easier to deal with the mythological aspects of Christianity in a book than in *Freethinker* articles. The subject is dealt with in a popular way in Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*, and in a more academic way in J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*.

A. LAWSON.—You ask us which work we consider most "reliable"—a villainous word, generally meaning *trustworthy*—Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Meredith's *Prophet of Nazareth*, or *Supernatural Religion*. These three works really do not come into competition with each other. If you want an all-round criticism of the Gospel story of Jesus, read Strauss; if you want a criticism of the teachings and character of Jesus, read Meredith; if you want a long and learned criticism of the documents, read *Supernatural Religion*. Unless you are a scholar, you would probably find the last work tedious. Giles's *Christian Records* would be likely to serve your turn better.

W. TREADWELL.—Under consideration.

E. CHAPMAN.—The sixpenny *Age of Reason* is reprinting, and will be on sale again shortly. A parcel of other things has been forwarded to you at South Shields.

W. H. BARRETT.—Sorry but not surprised to hear that you find Bristol "rotten with religion." Your cuttings will always be welcome. See "Acid Drops."

W. H. MOORE.—Both pamphlets on the "Atheist Shoemaker" case have been sent to you. You will now be able to show your Christian friends the facts.

H. E. DONSON.—See paragraph. The date is now in Mr. Foote's list, as you will see. Subject forwarded.

A. JOHNSON.—The Freethought Publishing Company does all its own printing now, having set up a well-furnished composing-room on its new premises. Outside printing is not sought at present, though it may be in the course of time.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Lucifer—Reynolds's Newspaper—Portsmouth Evening News—Chicago-Record-Herald—Boston Investigator—Huddersfield Examiner—Railway Times—Freidenker—Torch of Reason—Truthseeker (New York)—Newtownards Chronicle—Morning Advertiser—Journalist—The Crescent—Dartmouth Chronicle—Porcupine—Haltwhistle Echo—Public Opinion (New York)—Daily Dispatch.

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.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE had a much improved audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and his lecture on "The Greatest Lie in the World" was very warmly applauded. Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Nov. 30) in the Victoria Assembly Hall, Fowler-street, South Shields. On Monday evening he lectures in the Lovaine Hall, St. Mary's-place, Newcastle-on-Tyne, by special request, on "Life, Death—and After? With Special Reference to the New Opinions of Mrs. Besant."

Mr. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Nov. 30), his subject being "Giordano Bruno and Modern Thought."

Mr. Cohen lectured at Liverpool on Sunday, and his audiences were rather better than usual—which is a gratifying sign in view of the late religious census in that city. Mr. Cohen's lecture at Leicester on the previous Sunday evening was fairly reported in the *Midland Free Press* and other local papers.

Our "American Novelties" are going off fairly well, as we dare say they will continue to do. A Camberwell friend reports that he heard a Christian Evidence lecturer say it would be a good thing for the orthodox to get hold of as many copies as possible of *Facts Worth Knowing*, in order to prevent their getting into circulation. We don't think there is much reason to fear such tactics. Bigots are not fond of *paying*. They like their mischief on the cheap.

Mr. Foote's new pamphlet, *The Passing of Jesus*, is now on sale. The sub-title is "The Last Adventures of the First Messiah." The price is twopence. This pamphlet ought to have a wide circulation. It deals with the last days and hours of the Prophet of Nazareth in a way that should be interesting to Freethinkers and suggestive to Christians. The Chapter headings are (1) Good Friday, (2) The Crucifixion Fable, (3) Christ's Week-End in Hell, (4) The Jerusalem Ghost, (5) The Flight of Jesus.

The Camberwell Branch has arranged to let the Social Democratic Federation have the use of its hall on the last Sunday in each month. Many members of the Federation are Freethinkers, and it is thought that these monthly lectures will attract a number of fresh people to the Hall, and thus make it more extensively known.

Progress is being made with the *Secular Annual*, into which the old *Secular Almanack* is to be merged. We hope to advertise the full list of contents, and announce the date of publication, in our next number.

Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, shortly before her death, wrote the following estimate of the value of the Bible as a reading-book in schools, which we extract from the *Boston Investigator*: "In view of the recent judicial decision that the Bible shall not be read in the public schools of Nebraska, I suggest that inasmuch as the Bible degrades women, and in innumerable passages teaches her absolute subjection to man in all relations, in the State, the Church, the home, and the whole world of work, it is to her interest that the Bible, in its present form, should be taken from the schools and from the rising generation of boys, as it teaches lessons of disrespect for the mothers of the race; or else to get out an expurgated edition of the Bible, putting in one volume all the grand declarations, the moral lessons, poetry, science and philosophy, and in another all the Christian mythologies, for those who would value it as ancient literature. The first would then be fit to place in the hands of the rising generation.—ELIZABETH CADY STANTON."

Freethinkers should look out for our new venture, the penny monthly, a popular propagandist organ for the general public, the first number of which is to be issued from our publishing office on the first of January. It is impolitic to announce the title before the eve of publication.

### Lot's Wife.

Lot, upon being notified that his wife had been turned to salt, was observed to shed tears.

"Why in blazes couldn't she have turned to coal?" he muttered, angrily.

But this vision of a sudden fortune having been speedily shattered, he resumed his weary march onward.

—*New York Times*.

### The Case against Luther.

IN speaking against Luther, one must not be supposed to be a Catholic apologist, or to regard Luther as wholly bad, or as opponent of his wholly good. The party feeling of inherited ignorance, which is the main source of the historical opinions of nine out of ten people in England, does indeed generally regard a man and a movement as either wholly right or wholly wrong; but the scientific method in history and psychology is aware that all men and all motives are of mixed character. If it can be decided that the work of Luther, at a critical moment of human history, brought more loss than gain to mankind, then one is justified in speaking against Luther and against his work and his method. And this is just what the scientific method in history seems to have decided. The charge against Luther is as follows: He appealed to a wave of ignorant feeling as if it were the source of truth and the guide of life, and this appeal resulted in theological controversy and warfare, and put off for many years the gradual leavening of Europe by pacific science and culture. And secondly, he and the new Protestant Churches clung to the local princes and great landlords, toward whom they preached absolute obedience from their subjects, with the result that the moral and economic position of tenants, artisans, women, and children was lowered for many years. The reason why all Germany welcomed at first the cry of Luther was because Luther appealed to feeling; and, as feeling is naturally spasmodic and optimistic, all classes thought that there was a good time coming, because the German hearts and pockets were to be released from the tyranny of a distant Italian Pope. In effect, most classes lost by the change, except the local princes, noble landlords, and capitalists, who set up a present tyranny in every State and village, and whose Protestant little finger was more potent than the far-off Catholic trunk. This fact was gradually discovered, until all classes, except the governing and a few of the ignorant, ceased to follow Luther. Luther appealed to a wave of assertive feeling in theology. "As my heart is, so is God," was his phrase. The thrill of the noble heart tells me that I and everybody can find out absolute truth by private judgment, from the instincts of our hearts, aided by Bible texts. The thrill of my heart tells me that it is my noble heart that makes me right or wrong, I am justified by faith only, saved by right feelings, notions, and phrases. Good works are not necessary. If I am favored here, my heart tells me I am one of the elect, and shall go on being favored in heaven after death. If I am not favored here, my heart tells me that I ought to be compensated in the next world. The heart is optimistic, and holds by faith that all seeming evil and pain is really good, being the will of one Omnipotent Providence, and that therefore we must not try to oppose it. The thrill of my male heart tells me that polygamy is allowable for princes, because Abraham had many wives. Luther supported the Pauline theology of forensic substitution, and the evil practice of bullying at schools and Universities, by appeals to instinct and by virulent abuse of opponents. One is reminded of the phrase, "Nay, an' thout' mouth, I'll rant as well as thou. Show me what thou'lt do." A private feeling is no guide to objective truth. The absurdity of Luther's appeal to the private judgment of the thrilling human heart is obvious when we realise that hearts are not made alike, that aspirations differ, and that prejudices are due to local education and temporary environment. One heart revolts against the idea of eating God in the Mass; another heart thrills with awe and pious enthusiasm in its favor. Why should the dicta of Pastor Luther or Presbyter Calvin be more infallible than those of the Roman Pope? The appeal to the undisciplined feelings of individuals and mobs of ignorant partisans leads to warfare, Pharisaical bitterness, and chaos, ending in subsequent tyrannies of force. Moreover, it stands in the

way of the only valid method of attaining truth—namely, that of science.

Bishop Wilberforce thrilled emotionally *versus* Darwin's discoveries, but Darwin was right, and Wilberforce was wrong. The absolute convictions of the individual merely show the force of his ignorant vanity as influenced by temperament and training, and do not show that they correspond to objective reality. But Luther is crammed with this private conviction and foolish emotion. "The water of baptism," he says, "takes away sin, death, and unhappiness"; "He who will be a Christian must not ask how it can be that bread is the body of Christ"; "I am proud and exalting on account of my blessedness"; "He who despises me despises God"; "Six thousand years ago the world was nothing"; "Flesh and blood is the wall between me and Christ, which will be torn away"; "Before the Fall the sun was much brighter, the water much clearer, the land much richer"; "A Christian man has power with Christ"; "Lamb! I weep only for joy over thy suffering; the suffering was thine, but the merit is mine"; "Reason is the devil's harlot"; "Works do nothing; only consider one thing needful, to hear God's word and believe it—that suffices and nothing else." These passages illustrate the appeals of Luther to the noble thrills of feeling of his own converted heart, which resulted in the absolutism of ignorance, the decay of science, the growth of controversy, and in mental and moral anarchy and disintegration in the Germany of the sixteenth century.

Culture, toleration, and science to-day exist in spite of, rather than through, Luther. The propertied classes captured the red flag of the theological controversy to use for their own ends. Groups of ignorant fanatics formed themselves. Lutheran, Zwinglian, Calvinist, and Anabaptist dogmas crystallised into new intolerant orthodoxies, defending themselves by vulgar rhetoric and coarse abuse, by Bible texts divorced from their context, and by force of law, police, and armies. The new Lutheran dogmatism of "No Pope, Justification by Faith, and Consubstantiation," forced the Roman Church, by the Jesuitical reaction, into formulating opposite dogmas in the Council of Trent. The times of the Nicene Council, of the age of Jerome and Julian revived, and decades were wasted in bitter theological controversy and party strife. The men of culture, seeing these facts, withdrew, disgusted, from Luther. "I confess," writes Pirkheimer of Nürnberg, "that at first I was a good Lutheran, even as our late Albrecht Dürer, since we hoped that the Roman trickery and knavery of monks and priests would be bettered. But, as one sees, matters have grown worse, so that these evangelical rogues make the former appear pious."

In 1532 Luther printed a fierce tract against "Sneaks and Hole-and-Corner Preachers"—*i.e.*, the early Anabaptists. Saxony established and endowed Lutheranism, and instructed visitors to spy out Papists and Anabaptists, and to Lutheranism their views or make them leave the country. Luther revived the popular hatred against heretics, Jews, and witches. "No one should show mercy to such people; I would myself burn them, even as it is written in the Bible that the priests commenced stoning offenders." He told the ignorant mob that people were possessed by devils and the air crammed with perilous ghosts. The Anabaptists, he says, "have not only the false doctrine, but meet for murder and riot;.....such knaves are to be forbidden by the severest punishment." He calls Zwingli and Ecolampadius "in-and-in, through-and-through, out-and-out, devil-possessed, blasphemous hearts and impudent liars." As to the Jews, he writes: "Let him who can, throw pitch and sulphur upon them; if anyone could throw hell-fire upon them it were good, so that God might see our earnestness."

The ignorant, prejudiced heart is not only absolute in its own convictions, but intolerant against rival convictions. Tolerance is in no way due to Luther, but came in spite of him; it is due historically to

the fact that Christians split into so many sects that no single one could silence or destroy all the rest; and out of their vulgar and foolish squabbles toleration, in spite of them, emerged. But this did not come about until all Europe had been deluged with blood. Lutheran emotion was absolutely opposed to reason, science, and culture, and appealed mainly to race hatreds, class scorn, party prejudice, and superstitious sensationalism. Reason, said Luther, is the "archwhore and the Devil's bride." Reason, in the case of Beham and Münzer, led on to Theism and Socialism, and these new doctrines made Luther foam at the mouth. Reason, says Luther, only sees in Christ the teacher and the holy man, and not the Son of the living God. So "reason is possessed by the Devil, and breeds unbelief"; "Rabbis should be forbidden, on pain of death, to teach"; "As to Cardinals and Popes, we should wash our hands in their blood"; "The Universities deserve to be pulverised; nothing savoring more of hell or Devil has come upon earth since the beginning of the world"; "If I wish to be a Christian, I must believe and do what other people do not believe or do"; "Rather than God's Word should fall and heresy stand, faith would wish all creatures to be destroyed"; "As thou believest of God, so is He to thee"; "The cardinal wickedness is unbelief." People listened to such reactionary tirades for faith against reason, and the mob rushed out to burn pictures and books and statues, and the landlords found excuses for disendowing schools and guilds and colleges. The sober and gradual revival of cosmopolitan culture, which had begun in Italy with an interest in literature, poetry, painting, and the drama, and in Greek and Latin classics, was continuing with Erasmus, Dürer, and Pirkheimer in Germany; it was gradually leavening public opinion in favor of moderate and tentative reforms, when Luther rushed in with his wave of frantic, absolute passion, and so culture and science were put down and thwarted for one hundred years. The ignorance of the people and the greed of the princes, to which Luther appealed, prevented the gradual reformation desired by the scholars and Humanists through cosmopolitan culture from within, which might have taken place without theological squabbles and ignorant disruption. Scholars and poets, long before Luther, had satirised the ignorance and professional greed of the monks, and the worldly riches and political intrigues of the bishops.

In 1518 Catholic Germany stated her grievances to the Emperor and suggested reasonable remedies, not Lutheran stones of dogma and princedom. They asked that the income of fields, mines, and tolls should go, not to Rome, but to administer justice, to put down robbers, and for war against the Turks. They asked that old endowments should be used for hospitals, schools, widows and orphans; that begging friars should cease, and posts be found for scholarly German clergy instead of for ignorant Italian absentees. The popular Anabaptists in 1525 asked for Boards of Conciliation in economic quarrels. Erasmus had opposed all intolerance. "Why should it be thought more proper to silence all heretics by sword and faggot, rather than correct them by sober and moderate arguments?" Erasmus spoke against the artifices of imposters, "who impose upon the credulous by framing stories of demons and ghosts." Erasmus believed in appealing to the latent good in men rather than in cursing them as wholly fallen; he preached good works above orthodox notions, and he used the ironical method against sins, making them seem base and mean and vulgar. He believed in the refinement of taste. In his little book, *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, he exhorts men to follow Christ's example of godly life, of plain living and high thinking, as a remedy against "the error which makes religion depend upon ceremonies." "To be a Christian is not to be anointed or to be baptised, nor is it to attend Mass," says Erasmus, "but to lay hold of Christ in one's inmost heart and show forth his spirit in one's life." "Whatever is pious and conduces to good manners ought not to be

called profane." "I can almost say, Holy Socrates, pray for us."

Wimpfeling demanded moral actions in schools, and asserted that "the reformation of the Catholic Church to its native purity ought to begin with the young." Brandt said to the ignorant disputants and vulgar Protestants, "Go home and cure your own sins, your idleness, drunkenness, luxury, love of dancing and of dress; when you've done that, which is no light matter, then come and fight for the purity of the faith." This advice was not followed. Lutheranism rushed into the field, and culture and ethics declined. In 1523, writes the Rector of Erfurt University, "all learned studies lie despised in the dust." What need was there of culture when the thrill of each heart could give men the truth? What need of morals when the thrill of conversion gave one future salvation?

But Lutheranism might be defended by some people, on the ground that, if it destroyed culture, it yet helped religion and morals, and improved the economic status of the poor and the weak. But, in effect, it did exactly the opposite. In their war against Pope and Emperor, the new black brigade of pastors appealed to the greed and tyranny of local princes, magistrates and governors. Along with the Roman lawyers, they exalted the local home-ruling prince into an absolute tyrant, king by divine right, to resist whom was blasphemy against Jehovah the Lord of Hosts, who should put down all opposition by force and establish Lutheran theology and ritual as the one uniform State system, exclusive and upheld by law and sword. Luther burnt with the Papal Bull a copy of the Canon Law. This meant the sanction of Roman law to the despotism of kings and of private property. Catholic Abbot Tritheim writes at the time, "What can we say of Christians, who, appealing to a heathen system of law, intend to introduce a new slavery, and flatter the powerful of the earth, that they, since they possess the might, have also all right and can measure out to their subjects at will justice and freedom." This is just what Protestant lawyers and clerics did do. The property of old guilds, abbeys, monasteries and colleges that should have been used to make hospitals and schools and orphanages went mainly into the greedy maws of the prince and his parasites. The State manufactured a new pauperism. The Church was starved. New landlords were created, who used the Roman law to enclose fens, commons, wastes, and forests, to evict the peasants and to turn arable land into pasture. In North Europe, the Protestant national princes and landlords got all the money that had previously gone to Italy and a great deal more. A local despot was set up in every State and in every parish. When Henry the Eighth and the Landgraf of Hesse wanted more wives than one, Cranmer and Luther found arguments from the Old Testament to justify their lust. Individualism in the spirit and in theology meant individualism in trade and economics (*i.e.*, the tyranny of the strong over the weak). Salvation by faith only was taken to mean, "I may satisfy, by any means, my lust and be as cruel as I like." Luther himself allows, "Nobody gives any longer; now every man skins his brother, and each will alone have all." "The longer the gospel is preached, the deeper people sink in pride, greed and luxury," complained Melancthon, and Luther once said that "It would almost seem as if Germany, after the great light of the Gospel, had become possessed of the devil." The fact was that the gospel of Protestant Pharisaism and of personal salvation by faith only encouraged selfishness in trade and in politics. Individualism means the tyranny of the (legally favored) strong over the (legally crushed) weak. In Scotland, as in Germany and England, the landlords suppressed abbeys, and appropriated to themselves the money intended for schools and hospitals. Luther sided entirely with lord versus peasant. "Had not Abraham serfs?" he said. "The peasants should be slaughtered like mad dogs." The squire as Justice of the Peace kept down Hodge's wages, and pastors smiled assent. The lawyer

magistrate, and employer tyrannised over the craftsman whose guilds had been destroyed or turned into oligarchies. Each male despot tyrannised over wife, children, servant, and prentice. "Sir Omnes must be driven like swine," said Luther. All should marry early, and "let God take care how the children are to be supported." "If a woman becomes weary, and at last dead from child-bearing, that matters not; let her only die from bearing, she is there to do it." "She shall bend before her master, and fear him, and be to him subject and obedient." This evil advice of Luther, besides helping woman's slavery, meant the increasing supply of cheap labor, to be sweated by landlords, and to be "food for powder" for ambitious princes. Wherever Lutheranism had sway, there prince and landlord became absolute local tyrants.

The moral of this essay is as follows:—Don't trust in the thrill of the untutored heart, or in private judgment of sentiment, ignorance, and prejudice; they lead to anarchy or to capricious despotism. Trust in science and culture, in scholarship and study, in persuasion and the peaceful leavening of public opinion. Economic reforms will never come from religious bigotry, but rather from the systematic and independent organisation of the down-trodden classes, appealing to the intelligent sympathy of men of culture, and awakening the consciences of a few of the rich.

J. A. FALLOWS, M.A.

### The Progress of Man.

WHAT is the picture that presents itself? Scattered here and there over the wild, voiceless desert, first the holes and caves, next the rude-built huts, the wigwags, the lake dwellings of primitive man. Lonely, solitary, followed by his dam and brood, he creeps through the tall grass, ever with watchful, terror-haunted eyes; satisfies his few desires; communicates, by means of a few grunts and signs, his tiny store of knowledge to his offspring; then, crawling beneath a stone, or into some tangled corner of the jungle, dies and disappears. We look again, A thousand centuries have flashed and faded. The surface of the earth is flecked with strange quivering patches; here, where the sun shines on the wood and sea, close together, almost touching one another; there, among the shadows, far apart. The tribe has formed itself. The whole tiny mass moves forward, halts, runs backward, stirred always by one common impulse. Man has learnt the secret of combination, of mutual help. The city rises. From its stone centre spreads its power; the nation leaps to life; civilisation springs from leisure; no longer is each man's life devoted to his mere animal necessities. The artificer, the thinker—his fellows shall protect him. Socrates dreams, Phidias carves the marble, while Pericles maintains the law and Leonidas holds the barbarian at bay. Europe annexes piece by piece the dark places of the earth, gives to them her laws. The Empire swallows the small State; Russia stretches her arm round Asia. In London we toast the union of the English-speaking peoples; in Berlin and Vienna we rub a salamander to the *deutscher Bund*; in Paris we whisper of a communion of the Latin races. In great things so in small. The stores, the huge emporium displaces the small shopkeeper; the Trust amalgamates a hundred firms; the Union speaks for the worker. The limits of country, of language, are found too narrow for the new ideas. German, American, or English—let what yard of coloured cotton you choose float from the mizzenmast, the business of the human race is their captain. One hundred and fifty years ago old Sam Johnson waited in a patron's anteroom; to-day the entire world invites him to growl his table talk the while it takes its dish of tea. The poet, the novelist, speak in twenty languages. Nationality—it is the County Council of the future. The world's high roads run turnpike-free from pole to pole. One would be blind not to see the goal towards which we are rushing. At the outside it is but a generation or two off. It is one huge murmuring Hive—one universal Hive just the size of the round earth. The bees have been before us; they have solved the riddle towards which we in darkness have been groping.

—Jerome K. Jerome.

Sunday School Teacher—Who was the wisest man? Tommy—Solomon. He had 800 wives and remembered all they told him.—*Somerville Journal*.

### Growth of Cremation.

THE London Cremation Society has been building a Crematorium at Golder's Green, in the midst of fields overlooking the Finchley-road, and separated by a narrow lane from the Jewish Cemetery. It was formally opened on Saturday, November 22, by Sir Henry Thompson, whose speech contained a very interesting account of the progress of Cremation in England. We take the following report from the *Daily News*:—

"Sir Henry Thompson said that having long been convinced of its sanitary value he published an article on it in the *Contemporary Review* of January, 1873. In the same month the Cremation Society of England was formed, with himself as president, a post he had held ever since. (Applause.) Among the first members were Shirley Brooks, Mr. Ernest Hart, the Rev. H. R. Haweis, Sir T. Spencer Wells, and the Rev. C. Voysey. Of all he had named but two remained alive, and both were at this meeting, a reference to the Rev. C. Voysey as well as to himself. Subsequently the Society was joined by Lord Bramwell, Sir C. Cameron, Dr. Farquharson, M.P., Lord Playfair, Sir Douglas Galton, and the late Duke of Westminster. The first hon. secretary was the late Mr. Eassie, who, Sir Henry regretted to say, was, as a Roman Catholic, condemned by his family to suffer the indignity of burial. He was succeeded by Mr. J. Swinburne-Hanham, who had not only held the post ever since, but was now managing director of the London Crematorium Company. Although there were crematoria on the Continent before any in this country, the Cremation Society of England was the oldest of its kind. Its way at first was hard. It had to struggle against much prejudice and opposition. Notwithstanding all it had accomplished at Woking, Viscount Cross, when Home Secretary, forbade cremation, and the interdict was not removed till the well-known judgment of Justice Stephen laid it down that cremation was not illegal if it caused no nuisance. In considering the history of cremation, the name of the ninth Duke of Bedford should never be forgotten. So ardent was he as a supporter of the movement, that Sir Henry had to arrest his generosity, on the ground that it would be well to go slowly until the attitude of the public became clear. Among other acts the Duke built a small crematorium for himself and his family alongside the large one at Woking, and in January, 1891, when unhappily he died, his remains were reduced to ashes in it. The disfavor with which cremation was at first viewed in this country had passed rapidly away. In 1835 there were only three cremations at Woking. The number last year was over 300, and by the end of next December the total for the eighteen years would be at least 2,300. (Applause.) In the meantime crematoria had been built at Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Hull, Darlington, and Birmingham, and one was being erected at Leicester. Altogether there were 445 cremations in this country last year. We were, however, far behind other peoples.

"The United States possessed twenty-five establishments, where 3,613 human bodies were reduced to ashes last year. In Paris all the dead from hospitals and prisons were treated in the same way, and in addition there were 306 private cremations at Père Lachaise in 1091. Germany had seven crematoria, where 693 bodies were burned in the last twelve months. Italy had twenty-two, Switzerland three, Sweden and Denmark one each. If they went to more distant countries, such as India and Japan, they would find cremation the rule. Whether it would be so here he could not say, but the prospect was encouraging. The Act enabling public authorities to erect crematoria would come into force on April 1, 1903, and a Home Office Committee to consider what rules should be framed under it had been appointed. One result, he hoped, would be a satisfactory and uniform method of registering causes of death, so that the fear of cremation being used to conceal crime might be got rid of for ever. (Applause.)"

### A Fellow Feeling.

Jonah stood on the sandy shore, gesticulating wildly at the whale, which was rapidly receding over the rim of the horizon.

The little knot of natives eyed him with interest and listened politely to his remarks. At last Aminadab, the fishbite, spoke.

"I know just how you feel about it, Mr. Jonah," he said, "I let one bigger than that get off my line last summer, and I reckon there ain't anything else that riles a man up so much."

But Jonah only turned agrily away and strode to the market place, where he moodily asked the price of gourd seed.—*Judge*.

### The Holy Gas.

(In Metre).

THE sire of God-the-Son, as solid beef,  
Became the son of God-the-Sire, as spook ;  
The tale, though droll, is worthy of belief  
Because 'tis old, and printed in The Book.  
The first was once a god-dad—which was odd ;  
The second was a god-son—which was queer ;  
The third was once a girl's goodman—Good God !  
Yet saints are shocked when saner johnnies jeer.

The pa of God-the-Son  
Is son of God-the-Pa ;  
Plus Ghost, they're 3 in 1,  
Or more, with God-the-Ma :  
Say 3 point 5, because  
She's but a demi-rep God ;  
Or 4, with Joe, who was  
God's step-pa, hence, a step-God.

The pa is neither Holy Ghost nor son ;  
The son is neither pa nor Holy Ghost ;  
The Holy Ghost's a ghost, a "Holy" one ;  
The rest, if ghosts, are common ones at most.

If 1 and 2 are ghosts, as well as 3,  
The last is "Holy" ; 1 and 2 are not ;  
At least, it seems, they do not claim to be ;  
The last is nicknamed "Holy," not the lot.

If neither son nor sire—but ghost—is gas,  
And yet the 3 are 1, 'tis clear enough  
The abstract, concrete, mystic, mongrel mass  
Is merely 1 of ghost to 2 of stuff.

If all the three are ghosts, and holy, too,  
Why call but one the "Holy" Ghost, or Gas ?  
The heav'nly Gas Co., clique, cabal, or crew,  
Are equal all in volume and in mass.

The Son and Ghost of God-the-Son  
Are Father of the Father ;  
The Ghost "proceeds" from both as one—  
A simple thing ; but, now it's done,  
We're sometime doubtful, rather ;  
And so we say, by way of trope,  
The dad's the dank, the Son's the soap  
The Holy Ghost's the lather.

Since ghostites say that all the 3 are gas,  
In equal volumes—not some, more, and most—  
'Twould seem—excluding Joseph and his lass—  
The heav'nly Firm should be: "Ghost, Ghost, and  
Ghost." G. L. MACKENZIE,

### The Bible in Schools.

EXCEPT as a book of "divine authority," the Bible has had and can have no standing with the people, and only for that reason is it read by them. Simply as "a masterpiece of English literature" the Bible as it is known to English-speaking people would never have been preserved in their use. It would have become an obsolete book long ago if its vitality had not been sustained by religious faith in its divine authorship and authority ; nobody except students of history, of philology, and of archeology would have read it ; instead of being, as it is now, the most widely circulated book in the world, it would be only on the dusty shelves of libraries, consulted by the learned and scholarly. Undoubtedly it has had, in the King James version, a profound influence on English literature. But why ? Because it was regarded as the Book of books, the one and only revelation from God.

The decision of the Nebraska Supreme Court, therefore, is irresistible. The reading of the Bible in public schools is distinctively a religious exercise and can be made nothing else, unless by common consent the Bible shall be relegated to the place of human and secular literature merely, without supernatural and religious authority.—*The Sun* (New York).

### Hugh Price Hughes.

(Speak nothing but Truth of the dead.)

EPITAPH.

Here lies Mr. Hughes who did earnestly try  
To write what he thought wouldn't pass for a lie ;  
His candour was such that, when truth wouldn't do,  
He wrote what he really thought ought to be true.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

### The Great I Am.

THERE'S a God somewhere who always was and will be ;  
Not born to die like any other freak.  
And whatever is or isn't, he will still be ;  
But he's never there—no matter where you seek !  
He can creep, like rats and mice, into a closet ;  
Though the earth is a hayseed in his hand !  
He sees each coin his worshippers deposit,  
And keeps a strict account of hair and sand.  
Some people save their thre'p'ny bits to treat him,  
And he hoards their credit somewhere in the sky.  
But Nick's the only devil who can cheat him,  
And the only other freak that cannot die.  
The universe is God's ; he once began it ;  
And for a job like that he can't be beat.  
But if his hands can hold a sun or planet,  
You'd wonder where the deuce he puts his feet !  
He is angry, children, when you hear the thunder ;  
And the rainbow showeth when he smiles again.  
When earthquake tears a city's streets asunder,  
'Tis a gentle hint God hasn't ceased to reign.

A. S. V.

### Bill Jones on Prayer.

WELL, I'm not much of a hand at prayer,  
It's hardly in my line ;  
I am pretty fair at a laugh and a swear,  
But a duffer at a whine.  
And if so be that a God there be  
On high above the sun,  
Why, who can know so well as he  
What's the best thing to be done ?  
And since he is no less good than wise,  
And has all power thereto,  
Why should one pester him with cries  
Of what he ought to do ?  
God helpeth him who helps himself,  
They preach to us a fact :  
Which seems to lay up God on the shelf,  
And leave the man to act.  
Which seems to mean—You do the work,  
Have all the trouble and pains,  
While God, that indolent Grand Old Turk,  
Gets credit for the gains.

—JAMES THOMSON (B.V.).

### Correspondence.

#### THE "HIBBERT JOURNAL."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—We have heard a good deal lately about the *Hibbert Journal*, but a magazine which has received the approval of the Nonconformist Conscience in the person of Dr. Robertson Nicoll, and whose contributors include such philosophers as Dr. Horton (that writer with a scintillating style, as a journalist recently described him) is not likely to cause much perturbation amongst Freethinkers. Mr. Cohen has drawn attention to some of Dr. Horton's gems, scintillating or other, and I thought it might not be without interest to point out another "gem" by a writer from whom one would have expected better things. Mr. Stopford Brooke, in his article on Arnold, alluding to the religious controversies of fifty years ago, states that "Some took refuge in a quiet infidelity, content.....to fulfil their duties to mankind ; others, laying aside the unnecessary in Christian dogma and history, have won a veteran and simple faith at the point of the sword, and abide in a noble peace above the storm." Mr. Brooke is a Unitarian, and it was Arnold himself who compared a Unitarian to a man who is unable to believe that the fairy godmother could create with her magic wand a coach and four, but found no difficulty in believing that she could create a hansom cab. So it appears that the "hansom cab" believer, having "at the point of the sword" got rid of two wheels and three horses, "abides in a noble peace," while the man who has no belief whatever in the creative power of the fairy godmother, is but a "quiet infidel," content to do his duty. Thus do the methods of the pulpit reduce a fine scholar and literary critic to the tactics of the common exhorter. One would like Dr. Brooke to explain why he uses the incorrect word infidelity in this connection, unless he meant to be offensive, when there are other and correct words that he might have used ; and also by what means he could prove to another that the Unitarian "abides in a noble peace" or disprove that the "quiet infidel" does not abide in a peace equally noble, and at an equal altitude above the storm.

O. V. S.

## 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 ATHENEUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Giordano Bruno and Modern Thought."

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

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell) 7: Social Democratic Federation. Special lecture.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Harold Johnson, B.A., "The Ethical Renaissance."

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: December 1, at 8.30, monthly meeting will be held in the Hayfield Hall, 160 Mile End-road.

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

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell) 7, J. A. Fallows, M.A., "John Ruskin."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, J. A. Fallows, M.A., "The Quakers."

## COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY: Performance of *East Lynne* by Dramatic Society. To be repeated on Tuesday, December 2, at 8 o'clock.

GLASGOW (Secular Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class. Open discussion; 6.30, Orchestral Concert. Tickets (sixpence each) from D. Baxter, 123 Trongate.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, BSc., "The Riddle of the Universe."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, J. B. Hudson, "Theology: Its Relation to Scientific and Social Progress."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Victoria Assembly Hall, Fowler-street): G. W. Foote; 3, "Zola the Atheist; his Life, Work, Death, and Funeral"; 7, "Good without God, and Happiness without Heaven."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson, "An Hour with Herbert Spencer."

## LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, 51 Longside-lane, Bradford.—December 7, Failsworth; 9 and 10, Staleybridge: Debate; 11, Pudsey; Debate with Rev. W. Harold Davies; 21, Glasgow.

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