

# THE Freethinker

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*To Dogmatism the Spirit of Inquiry is the Spirit of Evil; and to pictures of the latter it has appended a tail, to represent the note of interrogation.*

—DOD GRILE (*Ambrose Bierce*).

## Ingersoll's Agnosticism.

MR. HOLYOAKE, I believe, has a great admiration for the late Colonel Ingersoll. I have a great admiration for him too. He was a splendid man, a magnificent orator, and a deep thinker. This last fact is too little recognised. Many take the clear for the shallow and the turbid for the profound. Others love decorum even though it drops into dullness. Ingersoll's brightness, no less than his lucidity, was detrimental to his reputation. It is commonly thought that the witty man cannot be wise. But a minority know how false this is. Shakespeare was the wittiest as well as the wisest of men.

Be that as it may, the point is that Mr. Holyoake and I both admire Ingersoll. We may therefore appeal to him on this question of Atheism and Agnosticism. Not that he is to decide it for us, but it will be profitable to hear what he has to say.

Ingersoll published a lecture entitled *Why Am I An Agnostic?* This was during his mellow maturity, when some hasty persons said he was growing too "respectable." He was perfectly frank, however, and even aggressive, on the question of the existence of Deity. Here is a passage from the very first page of this lecture:—

"Most people, after arriving at the conclusion that Jehovah is not God, that the Bible is not an inspired book, and that the Christian religion, like other religions, is the creation of man, usually say: 'There must be a Supreme Being, but Jehovah is not his name, and the Bible is not his word. There must be somewhere an over-ruling Providence or Power.'

"This position is just as untenable as the other. He who cannot harmonise the cruelties of the Bible with the goodness of Jehovah, cannot harmonise the cruelties of Nature with the goodness and wisdom of a supposed Deity."

After giving several illustrations of the Deist's difficulty, Ingersoll proceeds as follows, introducing for the first time the word Agnostic:—

"It seems to me that the man who knows the limitations of the mind, who gives the proper value to human testimony, is necessarily an Agnostic. He gives up the hope of ascertaining first or final causes, of comprehending the supernatural, or conceiving of an infinite personality. From out the words Creator, Preserver, and Providence, all meaning falls."

Mr. Holyoake might reply that he endorses every word of this paragraph; but I should have to tell him that there are much stronger things to come. My point for the present is that Ingersoll in a lecture on Agnosticism makes it look remarkably like Atheism. Certainly he dismisses the only idea of God that a Theist would ever think of contending for.

Let us now turn to the last address that Ingersoll ever delivered, before the American Free Religious Association at Boston, on June 2, 1899, only a few weeks prior to his sudden death. This lecture was published under the title of *What is Religion?* Curiously it sums up all that he had ever taught on

the subject. There is an autumn ripeness about it, and its conclusion has the air of a final deliverance in sight of the grave. Nor is this astonishing; for he knew the nature of his malady, and was aware that death might overtake him at any moment. It should be added that Ingersoll *read* this address, which was printed from his manuscript.

Now this lecture on *What is Religion?* contains a careful and elaborate statement of the speaker's Materialism. It runs as follows:—

"If we have a theory we must have facts for the foundation. We must have corner-stones. We must not build on guesses, fancies, analogies, or inferences. The structure must have a basement. If we build, we must begin at the bottom.

"I have a theory, and I have four corner-stones.

"The first stone is that matter—substance—cannot be destroyed, cannot be annihilated.

"The second stone is that force cannot be destroyed, cannot be annihilated.

"The third stone is that matter and force cannot exist apart—no matter without force; no force without matter.

"The fourth stone is that that which cannot be destroyed could not have been created; that the indestructible is the uncreateable.

"If these corner-stones are facts, it follows as a necessity that matter and force are from and to eternity; that they can neither be increased nor diminished.

"It follows that nothing has been, or can be, created; that there never has been, or can be, a creator.

"It follows that there could not have been any intelligence, any design, back of matter and force.

"There is no intelligence without force. There is no force without matter. Consequently there could not by any possibility have been any intelligence, any force, back of matter.

"It therefore follows that the supernatural does not, and cannot, exist. If these four corner-stones are facts, nature has no master. If matter and force are from and to eternity, it follows as a necessity that no God exists."

Here is an argumentative denial of the existence of God, as the term is generally understood. It is true that Ingersoll says, a little later on, that he does not pretend to *know*, but only states what he *thinks*. This qualification, however, while it is a sign of modesty, is not necessary from a philosophical point of view, since no man who is not *inspired* can possibly advance anything on this subject but his opinions. This is so from the very nature of the case, for there is no certainty about the strongest argument in the world unless its conclusion can be submitted to the test of verification.

According to Mr. Holyoake's criterion, therefore, Ingersoll had no right to call himself an Agnostic. He was not merely a doubter, but a denier, and should have called himself an Atheist. Not that he denied any possible God, for no Atheist does that. He denied the God of Christianity and the God of ordinary Theism.

Now if Ingersoll's statement of the Agnostic position, thus qualified and understood, is one which Agnostics in general are ready to endorse, it is perfectly clear that the only difference between Agnosticism and Atheism is one of nomenclature.

There is evidence that this was Ingersoll's own opinion. The complete "Dresden" edition of his works contains an important "Interview" headed "My Belief" (vol. v., pp. 245-248). It is in the form of Question and Answer. We will take the following:—

*Question.*—Do you believe in the existence of a Supreme Being?

*Answer.*—I do not believe in any Supreme personality or in any Supreme Being who made the universe and governs nature. I do not say there is no such Being—all I say is that I do not believe that such a Being exists.

This is precisely the position taken by all the Atheists I ever knew. If this is Agnosticism, every Atheist is an Agnostic, and every Agnostic is an Atheist.

Let it not be said that this is only my inference. It was Ingersoll's own view, as is shown by the following extract:—

*Question.*—Don't you think that the belief of the Agnostic is more satisfactory to the believer than that of the Atheist?

*Answer.*—There is no difference. The Agnostic is an Atheist. The Atheist is an Agnostic. The Agnostic says: "I do not know, but I do not believe there is any God." The Atheist says the same. The orthodox Christian says he knows there is a God; but we know that he does not know. He simply believes. He cannot know. The Atheist cannot know that God does not exist.

I have given the whole of this Question and Answer to avoid any possible misunderstanding. The pertinent and decisive words are in the first half of the Answer. Ingersoll is not *with* Mr. Holyoake, but *against* him. We have only to reverse the order of three short sentences to feel the full force of his conclusion. *The Atheist is an Agnostic. The Agnostic is an Atheist. There is no difference.*

G. W. FOOTE.

—From "What Is Agnosticism?"

### After the Churches—What?

MY last two articles dealt with the almost certain decline of religion in the near future, and it will well follow up that enquiry if, in the present instance, I deal with the query I have placed at the head of this article. It is a question put often enough to Freethinkers, and it has reached me quite recently through a lady correspondent. The question is put to me as follows:—

"Would you deny that the Churches have done a deal of good in the world socially? I know you think they have done evil religiously, but what of their social influence? They have in many lonely villages provided opportunities of social intercourse, and even artistic gratification, by Church music, etc., where none would otherwise exist, and if the Churches are destroyed there will be left a gap that could not easily be filled. Would it not be wiser to work for a reformation of the Churches instead of for their destruction? Or assuming them destroyed, has the Atheist any substitute to offer?"

The question is neatly and soberly put, and it deserves a full and complete answer. It has, moreover, an air of strength due to its containing a truth, the value of which is, however, destroyed by its also enshrining a fallacy. The truth is that organisations in connection with religion have been productive of good; and the fallacy is in attributing the good done to *religious* organisations as such. If I make these two points plain, I shall have answered the question.

We may commence by separating essentials from non-essentials. Any church or chapel has a twofold aspect. On the one side it represents a number of religious doctrines—the belief in God, a soul, and a future life. And on the other side it is a combination of men and women to satisfy the desire for human companionship, or to promote some social or political object. In actual life these two sides of Church life are never quite separated, although it is easy to separate them in thought. Nor would it pay the clergy to separate them. Man's interest in religion is generally of a very interested character; he believes in it because he also believes it pays him to do so, and this belief is maintained by means of jumbling up social subjects whenever possible. It is thus we find clergymen gravely quoting Jesus on

current social topics as though the New Testament were a text-book of economics. Their object is achieved when association of the two things has led people to think of them as inseparable, and also to treat those who are lukewarm in their religious beliefs, as also lacking in a sense of citizenship.

Now I am not aware that any Freethinker will seriously deny that religious people and religious organisations have done and are doing good. What he queries is the belief that this good work, whatever its amount, would never have been done had the religious belief been absent. And an adequate disproof of this belief is found in the simple circumstance that the actions which Christians attribute to the influence of Jesus, others attribute to the influence of Buddha, Mohammed, or Zoroaster. It is surely safe to assert that actions performed by people holding diverse religious views must result from something that they hold in common. This something the Freethinker asserts is to be found in a common social life—common so far as its essential features are concerned—passed through by all men at all times and under all conditions. If this be so, the removal of a particular theology will no more destroy or even seriously disturb man's social nature, than a political revolution would destroy society. The social sense existed long before Christianity was heard of, and there is little fear as to its continuing to exist long after Christianity is forgotten.

Bearing this principle in mind, the answer to the question under discussion becomes tolerably easy. On the one side we have the fact that, in village and town, Church and Chapel do serve as centres of social intercourse and co-operation; and, so far as any Church has done this, it has a claim upon the sympathies of all students of social questions, and furnishes an example that the society of the future may profit by. But organisation is one thing and doctrine another; and, however willing one may be to give praise to the Church as an organisation, one is bound to condemn the use to which such organisations have, in the main been put. For the plain fact staring one in the face is that, although it is the social instincts that have made religious organisations possible, Church and Chapel have *not* been established and maintained with a view to giving them expression or aiding their development. They have been chiefly used to control them, and so to regulate their expression that the interest of a certain class or of certain classes in the community shall not be endangered. Under normal circumstances neither Church nor Chapel are found to be centres of social activity or political effort. Advanced ideas do not originate there, and, if they happen to be introduced, run the risk of dying of inanition or from assault. The tide of social development has always run strongest outside religious organisations, and this alone should be enough to prove their repressive influence.

When we are reminded of the work of the Churches in village life, we do not always remember what the character of that work has been. The prospect of parson and squire watching together over the spiritual and temporal welfare of the villager—guiding him in his perplexities and succoring him in his troubles—is an idyllic picture; but, unfortunately, it is hardly correct. "The Church has brought men to an equality before God in the village service"; but the same Church has not forgotten to insert in its Catechism the duty of each "to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters. To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters." A close examination would show that no other cause has operated so powerfully as religion to stereotype class distinction. This can be seen much more plainly in a village than in a town, where many other forces come into active operation, and so minimise religious influences. But in the village one meets with an instinctive habit of subservience to "superiors" which, while assisted by other causes, is largely induced by religious teaching stretching over many generations. Dissectors, in their attack on the Established Church, are not slow

to point to this as one of its evil influences; and one will be safe in assuming the same influence to exist in town as well as village, and to emanate from all religious organisations according to circumstances.

It was in reply to some such argument as the one just dealt with (a letter from a clergyman's wife, saying that the clergyman was the poor man's only friend) that Ruskin wrote:—

"Alas! I know it too well. What can be said of more ghastly and deadly blame against the clergy of England, or any other country, than that they are the poor man's only friends? Have they, then.....in their preaching to the rich, so smoothed their words and so sold their authority, that, after twelve hundred years' entrusting of the Gospel to them, there is no man in England (this is their chief plea for themselves, forsooth!) who will have mercy on the poor but they?"

In sober truth the lethargy of the people in the face of matters of urgent social importance is the severest condemnation of the work of the Churches in past generations.

So, too, with the plea that for generations the Church was the only organised expression of social life. It reminds one of the argument that the Church was the sole patron of learning during the Middle Ages, because monasteries and churches were almost the only places where books or manuscripts could be found. It is when one realises that the Church had, as far as it was able, suppressed learning outside the Church, had burned books wholesale, and discouraged learning by dungeon and rack and stake, and that the manuscripts in the monasteries were for the most part neglected or misused, that one sees the hollowiness of the defence. It is the same with the present argument. The Church was for long the almost sole expression of civic life for the reason that other forms of expression were not allowed, and the conditions for their existing destroyed. Even to-day attempts at organisation in villages, unless it be in conjunction with, or under the patronage of the Church, are discouraged; and one need only refer to the religious opposition to all advanced ideas to show how general this repressive tendency has been. Weigh the good the churches have done in one direction against the evil they have done in another, and the balance will certainly not be found on the side of religion,

The destruction of theology will not, therefore, remove a stimulating factor from life, but a repressive one. Much of the energy of reformers has hitherto been spent in trying to counteract this influence, and this saving of force must certainly be counted a gain of a very valuable kind. And while the Church as a theological institution is bound to disappear—although it is an event not likely to occur in the life of either writer or reader—the Church, so far as it is a social organisation will remain, and the good it did before it can do still, but with increased efficiency. The desire for companionship, the necessity for co-operation, exists with or without theology; the chief difference will be that in its absence men and women will pursue social ends with a full consciousness of the meaning of their labor instead of permitting it to be exploited by various sinister interests. But it cannot be too often emphasized that the organisation of the Church is not due to religion at all; it is due entirely to the operation of those social instincts that have always been seized upon by Church and Chapel and paraded as part of their theology.

Precisely how or when this change will come about it is difficult to say, nor is it necessary that one should. It is enough to be able to point to certain tendencies in present day life that evidence the gradual secularising of religion and the Churches. Religious doctrines no longer interest as they once did. The most popular preachers are those who put least theology into their sermons. The Nonconformists, quicker than Episcopalians to respond to the pressure of public opinion because they are more dependant upon it, show this clearly enough. Their mouths are full of expressions concerning the duties of citizenship, while Jesus is solemnly quoted to

emphasise the importance of the housing question, or the benefits that will accrue from municipalising the water works. These are all straws showing the flow of the stream, and all in their way bear eloquent testimony to the decay of religion.

The problem is thus solving itself. No one need expect that a religion such as Christianity will ever *die* in the sense that an animal organism dies. Dispersion would be a better word, perhaps, than death for the passing of a religion. It matures and decays slowly, and in its decay the old conceptions are slowly replaced with new ones, pretty much as the organic tissues of an animal are replaced by inorganic material during the process of fossilisation. What I, for one, expect to take place is neither a wholesale conscious surrender of religion, nor the destruction of the churches. So far as the mass of the people are concerned, their religion will pass from them so slowly that they will never be even aware of their loss. And for the churches, as mere organisations, there will always be a place and a use. As I have said, the need for social intercourse will be felt with all the greater keenness when people are no longer divided by sectarian hatreds and fictitious jealousies. The churches may then play a conscious part in social life, such as they have never yet played. They would become centres of enlightenment indeed, places to which men and women could turn with the confidence of receiving the best instruction, the sanest advice, and of being able to discuss the gravest issues of life with a freedom that is at present practically unknown.

C. COHEN.

### God and the "Referee."

THERE is an interesting stage in the progress from orthodoxy to Atheism, in which the erstwhile Christian has gained a measure of mental freedom, but in which his feelings are still dominated by religious prejudice. He may have thrown off the actual dogmas of his creed, but the irrational sentimentalism created by these dogmas is still an active force. Such a man is often rather more intolerant towards those who have passed him on the road to emancipation than is the most unenlightened of zealots.

Such a person writes weekly articles in the *Referee*. He is a gentleman of philosophic leanings, and how he got on the staff of that journal is a problem which probably puzzles no one more than himself. But, being there, he shines by force of contrast. His chief competitors are the sporting prophets, and the maker of dramatic pars., and Mr. "Tatcho" Sims.

In the issue of December 7, this writer (he who modestly disguises his scientific eminence under the pseudonym of "Merlin") discourses on the growth of cheap modern philosophy. On the whole, he is rather glad to see it; only his joy is somewhat mitigated because "in cheapening modern philosophy we are in danger of cheapening reverence."

The trouble is that scientific writers are so little cognisant of the proprieties that they sometimes give utterance to sentiments which "Merlin" does not agree with. And instead of veiling unpleasant truths with ambiguous verbiage, they will sometimes state them in language that is clear and emphatic. There is Mr. Joseph McCabe, for example, who has translated *Die Welträthsel* so admirably. In the preface to that translation he quotes Caro's saying: "Science has conducted God to its frontiers, thanking him for his provisional services." This picturesque phrase is quoted with approval in the sixpenny edition of *The Riddle of the Universe*. No wonder the heathen rage! "Merlin" is white-hot. He calls it "a most monumental insolence." And he declares that "this colossal stupidity is the natural outcome of a mind incapable of anything like an approach to real thought."\*

\* "Merlin" has since confessed that it was merely the "irreverence" of the phrase he objected to.

"Merlin" is a sort of a Freethinker. He has no belief in the god of the Old Testament who made aprons, and whose voice took a stroll in the Garden of Eden. He has got past all that; but he cannot bear to think of the universe apart from *some* god. It is a personality (is it a personality?) of so subtle and gaseous a nature that it eludes the possibility of definition. But although "Merlin" cannot for the life of him begin to form a clear mental image of his deity, he has no doubt whatever of its existence, somewhere and somehow. He believes in a something which for all practical purposes is a complete nonentity. Yet his gorge rises at the suggestion that this nonentity has no business in the domain of positive knowledge.

"Merlin" proceeds to declare that "the science which believes it has abolished a Creator in breaking up a man-made image of Himself, His works and ways, is simply incapable of thought." The meaning of this sentence is somewhat obscured by a too prodigal use of capitals; but the author's intention is sufficiently obvious. He quite agrees that the Bible god is definitely displaced from the realm of science. But it seems there is another god, for whose existence "Merlin" does not adduce a shred of evidence; but whose influence he feels, in a muddle-headed way, to be absolute. If people only *felt* less, and *thought* more! If they could only learn to discriminate between reason and sentiment, and to draw a sharp line of demarcation between!

Now, if the writer had reflected for a moment before penning such a nonsensical sentence as that I have quoted, he might have asked himself the simple question: What possible conception can man have of *anything* (the "Creator" included) but a "man-made" conception? It might then have occurred to him that his own god was "man-made" to exactly the same extent as the Bible deity or the fetish of the savage, and he would not have written so largely and fatuously about men whose store of knowledge is incomparably greater than his own.

"Science has conducted God to its frontiers!" I like that phrase. The sentiment is vigorous, and the style has a quality that fixes it in the reader's memory. It is like the knight of olden time flinging down his gauntlet in front of his enemies. But the best thing about it is that it is *true*. It is as true as that the sun shines, that the universe exists, that the world is infinitely small, and that the conceit of the puny creatures who fret upon its surface with their miserable rancours, their petty hates and jealousies, is infinitely great. Modern science has no use for God; it built the observatories without his aid, and pursued its investigations without reference to his will. In the practical affairs of life the gods are forgotten or ignored. And the fate of "Merlin's" deity, who differs from the rest only in his greater umbrageousness, is foreshadowed in that of his predecessors.

"Science has conducted God to its frontiers." Yes; but the type of mind that created him still exists. God is nothing to science; but he was never more than that, except in the imaginations of the uninstructed. His action was never observable in natural things; it was always reserved for an unnatural domain—beyond the frontiers. But the human mind will not willingly be confined within the limits of actuality; it strives to project itself into the unknown, and peoples it with phantoms that terrify because they are unseen. That is where religion begins, and the will of God is expressed in action—in an unknown region and in an unknown manner. The realm of God is the domain of ignorance.

E. R. WOODWARD.

### The Ten Commandments Obsolete.

WE knew it! We had read in the halfpenny newspapers that the British Army was obsolete, that the Navy was obsolete, that the railways were obsolete, that the horse was obsolete, and British trade methods obsolete—and we were quite prepared to find

the Ten Commandments obsolete too; so that we were not surprised to be invited to a meeting of the Society of Bible Archæology on December 10, to hear a paper by Mr. Stanley A. Cook on "A Hebrew Papyrus with a Pre-Massoretic Version of the Decalogue." Henceforth all Christians will please note that they have got the wrong version of the Commandments, and must beware how they follow them. The new version—or, rather, the original correct version—gives no countenance to the famous text of the "Wicked Bible" which printed the Seventh Commandment as "Thou shalt commit adultery"; but in other respects the received version must be banned with that blessed word "obsolete."

Since the publication of the Revised Version most people have got over the old idea that the English Authorised Version of 1611 was the exact word-for-word composition of Moses and the prophets; and a few of us are aware that the transmission of the Bible writings has not been so simple as was once popularly supposed. Before the invention of printing copies of books were laboriously written out by hand, so that each fresh copy contained some clerical errors; the consequence is that there is no ancient book known that does not contain evident mistakes; and no manuscript agrees exactly with any other manuscript of moderate length. Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible have, for the last thousand years, been copied with such great care that scarcely any variation of importance occurs in any of them, although they are not absolutely alike. It used to be thought that the Jews always exercised this great care; but it is now pretty well understood that it was not until about the sixth century of the Christian era that a school of scribes originated which made the conservation of the sacred text its chief business. We call these scribes the Massorettes. The Massorettes did not trouble themselves about textual criticism, or palæography, or collation. Their method was simplicity itself. They took a manuscript which was held in great esteem, and copied that. Scholars call this manuscript the Mother Codex, and all later Jewish MSS. were slavish copies of this codex. If the Mother Codex had a letter written in it too large or too small, that letter will be found correspondingly large or small in modern Hebrew Bibles. If it had a word spelt wrongly, that word will be found spelt wrongly in modern Bibles, with a marginal note calling attention to the right spelling. And so on. Therefore all known Hebrew Bibles now give the Massoretic text, and no other. But what about the Biblical text before the Massorettes? Well, before their time the Hebrew Bible had been translated into Greek and into Latin; and when we compare these translations with the Massoretic text there are evident disagreements, showing that the translators had before them copies which differed more or less from the edition known as the Massoretic Hebrew version.

After the conquest of Alexander the Great the Greek language came to be spoken over nearly all the Eastern Mediterranean countries. Many Jews left Palestine—partly for trade, partly for political reasons—and settled in Egypt, where they gradually forgot their Hebrew, and spoke nothing but Greek. Accordingly, after a time it became necessary to translate parts of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, in order that it might be understood by the Egyptian Jews. To recommend this Greek translation, a fairy tale was promulgated to the effect that it had been made at the command of a king of Egypt, who paid untold sums to the priests of Jerusalem, who chose six scribes out of each of the twelve tribes, and sent them to Alexandria. These seventy-two scribes were each locked into a separate cell, made their translations independently, and when they were completed each of the seventy-two copies were found to be alike, word for word—a miracle which never occurred again in the history of the Greek text, for all known copies are now divergent. Whatever its origin, however, it seems certain that at the beginning of the Christian era there existed a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, which is usually called the "Sep-

tuagint," in allusion to the mythical seventy-two translators just mentioned. About A.D. 200 the Christian scholar, Origen, made the discovery that the extant Greek translations disagreed from the Hebrew text of his time; so he concluded that the Greek was wrong, and undertook a revision of it, to make it agree with the Hebrew of his day. Consequently what we usually consider the Septuagint translation practically represents the Hebrew as it existed in A.D. 200. But, nearly two hundred years after, St. Jerome made the discovery that the Latin versions of the Bible (which had been translated from the Septuagint) did not agree with the Hebrew text then current with the Jews. It never occurred to him that the Hebrew text had altered. He thought it had been wrongly translated; so he set to work to translate direct from the Hebrew into Latin, and in A.D. 404 he published his famous version of the Bible which is now known as the Vulgate.

The Vulgate Old Testament is very like the Massoretic Version, but not precisely the same; so that it is evident that the Hebrew text had undergone some change between the time of Jerome and the rise of the Massoretic school. The Protestant Reformers, in their turn, seeing there was a difference between the Vulgate and the Hebrew Massoretic, concluded that the Vulgate was an incorrect translation; and the English Authorised and Revised Versions, therefore, have been rendered as close as possible to the Massoretic text.

As previously remarked, all known Hebrew copies of the Bible have hitherto contained the Massoretic text, and that alone. Mr. Cook's announcement of a *pre-Massoretic* Hebrew version, therefore, was a most surprising one; and the Rabbis of London sent their most prominent members to withstand this assault upon the integrity of the Massoretic Bible.

The new manuscript is a small piece of Egyptian papyrus, and it has written upon it in very ancient Square Hebrew characters the Ten Commandments and Deuteronomy vi. 3, 4. Dr. Burkitt, of Cambridge, who is known throughout Europe for his knowledge of the ancient Oriental alphabets, described the peculiarities of the writing upon this fragment, and opined that it must be dated about the third or fourth century of the Christian era—that is to say, four hundred years older than any other known Hebrew document. In view of this date, it is not surprising that the manuscript gives a text agreeing most remarkably with the Septuagint. But the Hebrew language and spelling is also slightly more archaic than that preserved in the Massoretic version, and in some respects it recalls the spelling employed on the Moabite stone.

As anybody can see by comparing them, the common version of the Commandments in Exodus differs from that in Deuteronomy. The fourth Commandment gives a different reason for keeping the Sabbath; and Deuteronomy contains a few words not found in Exodus. But in the Septuagint, although the fourth precept speaks of the Creation, yet Exodus does not present the same omissions as the Massoretic Version; so that there is much less difference between Exodus and Deuteronomy. The new papyrus agrees in all these particulars with the Septuagint version of the Decalogue found in the Book of Exodus. This is a very important point for Biblical criticism. It has hitherto been assumed that Exodus presented the older version of the Commandments, because it was said that if Deuteronomy were older, there would have been no reason to omit these minor clauses. But the new papyrus demonstrates that the Exodus text once agreed with the Septuagint, so that the Massoretic omissions are scribal errors. It is much more unlikely that if the Deuteronomic writer had ever seen a version of the Fourth Commandment ascribing the institution of the Sabbath to the six days of Creation, that he would ever have gone out of his way to give a different reason for it. Consequently the balance of probability now inclines to the priority of the Deuteronomic text.

In Exodus xx. 2, the new papyrus omits "out of the house of bondage." One speaker suggested that

this omission was due to the Judæo-Egyptian scribe, who hesitated to describe his adopted country as a "house of bondage." This view does not appear unlikely when we remember the Septuagint rendering of Lev. xi. 6, and Deut. xiv. 7. In both these passages the *hare* is said to be unclean. The Greek word for hare is *Lagos*; and *Lagos* was the father of Ptolemy, the first Greek king of Egypt. To avoid the treasonable statement that *Lagos* was unclean, the Septuagint translators rendered "hare" by a more uncommon word.

In Exodus xx. 11, the Septuagint says that "the Lord blessed the *seventh day*." The new papyrus has the same reading, in opposition to the Massoretic, which has "sabbath." The Vulgate agrees with the Septuagint and the new papyrus.

In Exodus xx. 12, the Septuagint and the new papyrus read: "Honor thy father and thy mother *that it may be well with thee*" (as in Deuteronomy). The *italic* words are omitted in the Massoretic text.

In the new papyrus the next three Commandments run: "Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal;" as in Mark x. 19, Luke xviii. 20, Romans xiii. 9. The Vatican Septuagint also puts the Seventh Commandment first.

In Exodus xx. 17, again, the new papyrus agrees with the Septuagint against the Massoretic.

In Deuteronomy vi. 3, the Septuagint has the following words following after "milk and honey," *viz.*, "These are the ordinances and the judgments which the Lord commanded the children of Israel in the wilderness when they had gone forth from the land of Egypt." The Massoretic omits these words, but they are given in the new papyrus as an introduction to the *Shemang* (*i.e.*, Deut. vi. 4).

Mr. Cook pointed out that the new papyrus could not possibly be a translation of the Greek Septuagint for various reasons, and that therefore it must represent a Hebrew text coeval with the Septuagint, and most probably the original of the latter. In reply to several questions, he said that many of the variations in the papyrus were to be found in one or other of the Massoretic copies; but there was no known manuscript which gave any appreciable number of them together as in this case.

One of the Rabbis dissented very strongly. He said the papyrus was written in cursive characters of modern date. Somewhere about the tenth century, the more pious Jews began to consider it sinful to use the same alphabet for their worldly business as in their sacred books, and so they evolved a slightly different form of writing which was called "cursive Hebrew" and was not very well known to Christian scholars. [The Christians are wise in their generation, for cursive Hebrew is horrible stuff to read.] He (the Rabbi) had had to do with hundreds of ancient manuscripts, and he knew many of a similar character to the present. As to its divergencies from the Massoretic text, that was to be explained by the fact that it was a vulgar version. Copies of the Scriptures current among the laity were liable to corruption and falsification, because less care was taken in copying them. The Massoretic text was a sacred version, representing a consistent and successive tradition; and its credentials were the fact that it formed the basis of Jewish faith and worship. The Samaritan, the Septuagint, and other Versions were all taken from vulgar texts, and were all inconsistent with Jewish faith and practice.

Another Rabbi, however, seemed to take another view, and argued that the grammar of the new papyrus was much superior to that of the Massoretic text; but his remarks were of a deeply technical character, and need not be dwelt on.

Sir Henry Howorth, as the redoubtable champion of the Septuagint against the Massoretic text (which he considers as a late and corrupt recension made for doctrinal purposes by the rabbis of Palestine), naturally welcomed the new papyrus with open arms, as an important witness in his favor. He pointed out that the Jewish rubric directed all copies of the Scriptures to be written upon parchment; and, as

the present manuscript was a papyrus, it followed that it must be older than the rubric.

Another speaker remarked that the question of importance was not that the papyrus diverged from the Massoretic, but that it agreed so closely with the Septuagint—a fact of the utmost value for Biblical scholarship. For, hitherto, it had been merely a matter of opinion that there once was a Hebrew version which represented the same text as the Septuagint; and now the opinion had been transformed into a certainty by an actual fragment of such a Hebrew version.

Mr. Cook and Dr. Burkitt will shortly publish the new papyrus with photographs and full studies, and will thus afford complete information regarding one of the most important and revolutionary Biblical discoveries of modern times.

Meanwhile the churches and chapels will have to prepare to take down the Ten Commandments from their walls, as they have evidently got an obsolete version, and must replace it with a more correct edition.

D. MACASKI.

### A Father's Love.

If you will list, a tale I'll tell  
Of tender parent's love,  
Which tears from angel eyes should draw—  
If such there be above.

A little dimpled, prattling child  
Upon the line did stray;  
Its father, who the station kept,  
Espied it there at play.

That sight before his eyes he sees,  
On his ear falls the sound  
Of shrieking, tearing monster which  
Like hell-hound now bears down.

One moment, and the father springs,  
Bereft of thought and breath,  
But that his darling babe to snatch  
From such a ghastly death.

With shriek and scream destruction's wheel  
On its way swift doth pass.  
Lo, child and father on the rail  
One bloody mangled mass.

This act of brave endeavor happ'd  
In winter's cold and rime;  
Unsevered thus in love's sweet bond  
Died twain near Christmas-time.

Such was a human parent's love;  
Then would you—dare you—tell  
That one there is his children damns  
To an eternal hell?

That there's a God of truth and love,  
On hapless children weak—  
Who claim from him their being—  
Revenge for aye would wreak.

Away such thought! I'll not believe  
There's vengeance from above  
That stronger is and mightier  
Than a true parent's love.

(Mrs.) J. W. C. S.

### Not Pushed for Time.

OWING to the great mortality among the clergy, Nonconformist and otherwise, and the recent cold snap, Peter had not been called upon to open the gates for some time. At last, to see what the weather was like, he did so. On the celestial doorstep sat a lean, haggard-eyed spook.

"Hello," remarked the saint. "Been waiting long?"

"I reckon," drawled the spook. "Seems like centuries."

"Yankee, hay?"

"I guess," said the spook.

"Why didn't you knock?"

The spook staggered and glared at him.

"Knock?" he gasped.

"Knock, of course," answered the quondam angler. "Why didn't you?"

The spook tore his nebulous locks.

"Wal," he groaned, "that jest about scoops the pool. I was rizz in the States seventy years ago, and Con-blank me ef I ever seed a knocker since I chucked up my feedin'-bottle. Gee-whizz, boss, you're a bit ahint the times up here. I've wasted ten years of bliss ferretin' round this gate to find your durned electric bed-push."

E. J. M.

### Acid Drops.

DR. CLIFFORD has been telling a *Morning Leader* representative that he is "for secular education, including the use of portions of the Scriptures." And by Scriptures he means *his* Scriptures. This is so naive that it almost suggests softening of the brain. How "secular education" can co-exist with the use of the Scriptures of a particular religious faith, is like the peace of God—it passes all understanding. We suspect, however, that there is a certain method in Dr. Clifford's madness. What he really means is probably this, that he doesn't care what the education in public schools is, or what it is called, as long as the Bible has a place in it. Yet it is this professional pulpiteer, fighting for the interests of his own faith and his own order, that is dragging the whole Liberal party at his heels!

The difference between Mr. Balfour and Dr. Clifford was put by the latter with delightful simplicity to the *Morning Leader* representative. "If Mr. Balfour," he said, "means by 'religious education' theological, dogmatic, and ecclesiastical education, I am against it at the cost of the State. If he means by 'religious education' the training of the children in a knowledge of the moral and spiritual teaching of the Bible, then I am for it." In other words, Dr. Clifford is in favor of low Evangelical religion being taught at the cost of the State, but he is opposed to High Church religion being taught at the cost of the State. Which means that the teaching of Dr. Clifford's religion at the cost of the State is perfect freedom, but the teaching of any other religion at the cost of the State is tyranny.

The *Daily News* publishes a further instalment of its religious census of London, the locality being Battersea, with a population of 168,907, consisting of 81,479 males and 87,158 females. The Sunday attendances at all places of worship amounted in the morning to 2,843 men, 3,713 women, and 5,082 children; and in the evening to 4,023 men, 6,901 women, and 4,430 children. How many were present at both services, and were thus counted twice over, it is impossible to say. With regard to the men, even on the most charitable estimate, the figure must be distressing to the religionists. The Church of England had 2,592 men at both services, and the other churches 3,193. Nondescript places brought the total up to 6,766. That is all the men in a population of nearly 170,000 who could be attracted to morning and evening service on a bright Sunday.

The total morning attendance at Battersea was one person in fourteen in the borough; the total evening attendance was one person in eleven. The aggregate attendance, reckoning the morning and evening attendances as those of different persons (which, of course, to a large extent, they were not), was one person in seven. Hampstead and Kensington worked out at one person in four. But Battersea is an industrial borough, where "respectability" does not contribute so much to the filling of the Bethels.

It is worth while casting a glance at the denominational totals at Battersea. The grand total of the Church of England was 10,705—men, women, and children at both services. Wesleyan Methodists came next with 4,884. Then came Baptists with 2,734. Roman Catholics numbered 1,737, Congregationalists 1,641, Salvationists 622, Primitive Methodists 505 and Presbyterians 474. The smaller denominations included a Spiritualist Church with 54, and a Welsh Chapel with 180. We see no trace of the Unitarians.

We have received a postcard from Greville Walpole, M.A., LL.D., secretary of the National Association for the Suppression of Bad Language, asking us to invite the co-operation of those who might be disposed to join the said Association. But the word "bad" is joined to the words "obscene" and "blasphemous," and we are therefore in a quandary. A great many Christians regard every number of the *Freethinker* as shockingly blasphemous. With what grace, then, can we promote an anti-blasphemy association? "Obscene" language we object to at all times and everywhere—even in the Bible. "Bad" language is also objectionable, although some allowance must be made for human frailty; for, as Mark Twain said, if a man goes into a dark room and sits down on the business end of a tincture, his only refuge is profanity. "Disgusting" language is more than objectionable; it is abominable; and we hope Mr. Greville Walpole and his Association will do something to abate it. Unfortunately this is a Christian country, and there is plenty of scope for their labors.

Mr. Sidney Trist, secretary of the London Anti-Vivisection Society, writes to the *Family Churchman* that the "very painful subject of experimentation upon living animals" is

seriously endangering the "faith in an All-Merciful God." Really this gentleman should stick to his own cause—which is a very good one—and not meddle with theology. There is nothing in the horrible facts advertised by the Anti-Vivisection Society of a novel character in relation to the problem of Deity. More than half the animals on earth get their living by vivisection; that is to say, they tear their living prey to pieces; and, in some cases, the greatest refinements in destruction are resorted to. God must have made them, if he made anything; and he is anything but All-Merciful, if we are to judge by the facts of animated nature. After all, Mr. Trist, a cancer will inflict more suffering upon a man than the most skilful vivisector can inflict upon an animal. And, pray, who is responsible for the cancer?

"It is impossible," Mr. Trist says, "to convince people that vivisection is a practice which is in accordance with the teaching and the mind of Christ." Indeed! Did not Christ teach something far worse than vivisection—namely, everlasting torture in hell? What is the pain of a vivisectioned animal, whose sufferings cannot be prolonged more than a few days, to the sufferings of a human being predestined to damnation and roasted for ever in eternal fire?

President Roosevelt has given the Sunday School Union a testimonial. "The work of the Sunday schools throughout the world," he writes, "has been one of the vital forces in the upward trend of individual and national character." Without exactly disputing this, we may ask what it was that President Roosevelt himself learnt at Sunday School. Was it there that he learnt to slander "infidels?" Some time ago, before he was elected Vice-President under President McKinley, he deliberately called Thomas Paine a "dirty little Atheist." It was pointed out to him that while "dirty" was a point that might be disputed *ad infinitum* over any man, Paine was certainly not little, for he was nearly five foot eleven, and certainly not an Atheist, for he wrote brilliantly in favor of the existence of God. President Roosevelt, however, has steadily declined to unsay his printed misrepresentation of a far greater man than himself. He appears to be one of the gentlemen who never admit mistakes, and whose motto is "What I have said I have said."

What lengths religious bigotry will run to! We accidentally overheard one man say to another in a public place, "I hope that man will get off; that man, you know, who murdered Kensit." We had a good look at the face of the man who uttered this atrocity. He was what is called a "gentleman," and his companion was of the same ilk. Both spoke with a "society" accent. We gathered that they were something in the law, and that they were Roman Catholics. And one of them, at least, hoped that a man whom he thought a murderer would get off—simply because the victim was a zealot of Protestantism; It is only one step from approving murder to committing it. And history shows that this step has been found remarkably easy in the cause of religion.

A case of conscience arose the other day at the London County Sessions. William Lee, aged fifty, a groom, pleaded guilty to stealing five coats, a sealskin, and other articles, value £30, from the residence of Colonel A. W. Ray, Park-hill, Balham. Before passing sentence, Mr. McConnell, K.C., the chairman, asked the man when he came out of prison last. He replied, "On September 30," and added, "I cannot get work, and I'm obliged to steal." Which, by the way, may be perfectly true. The man was then asked, "Where is the property?" "If I told you," he replied, "I should get the receiver into trouble." The rest was as follows.—

Mr. McConnell: You decline to answer?

The Prisoner: Yes.

Mr. McConnell: Three years' penal servitude.

Now if this man's sentence was increased because he would not "give away" a friend or associate, we have no hesitation in saying that the judge was guilty of a considerable moral blunder. Even among thieves it is not right to penalise a lingering sense of honor. A man who says, "I would rather suffer more myself than get off in any degree by rounding on my pals," is really displaying a certain heroism; and to increase his sentence for it is to punish him for the only obviously good element in his nature. We are afraid that a terrible lot of bad psychology and worse ethics masquerades as "justice" in courts of law.

England is swarming with the Religious Orders expelled from France. They are picking out nice situations and settling down on them, until the Lord shall enable them to go back in triumph to their own country; for they all look forward to the destruction of the Republic and the restoration of a clerical Monarchy. One of these Religious Orders (the Trappist monks) has settled down at Woodleigh, near Kings-

bridge, Devon; where they have made arrangements for building a large monastery, at a cost of some thirty or forty thousand pounds. The foundation stone was laid a week or so ago by Bishop Grahame, of Plymouth, assisted by the Abbot of Millerace, France, and the Rev. Jean Baptiste, the Father Superior. Forty priests and monks marched in procession from the farmhouse, in which they are temporarily quartered. Altogether it was a strange sight for rural England.

Thirty or forty thousand pounds is a large sum of money. And it is to be laid out on one building. This gives us some idea of the enormous wealth of the French Religious Orders. They are so numerous, so rich, and so dangerous to the Republic, against which they all carry on a surreptitious crusade, that the Government was bound to deal with them in some way or other. When it becomes a sheer question of self-preservation, Republics have as much right to defend themselves as Monarchies.

There are likely to be "ructions" at Bradford. The Watch Committee has instructed the Chief Constable to take steps to put "the Lord's Day Observance Act" into force. It appears that butchers, hairdressers, tobacconists, and newsagents are all to be harried.

A good story is told of how the Mad Mullah, who is at present giving the British so much trouble in Somaliland, worked one of those "miracles" which drew many waverers to his banner. An English man-of-war was sent to demonstrate off the coast, and at night threw a searchlight on to the jungle-covered mountains. Abdullah was in hiding there, and knowing from his visits to Aden what it was which his followers hailed as a new star, had the wit to use the circumstance to his own end. He told them that the light was seeking him, and when the electric rays actually flooded his encampment he cried, in triumph: "Will you deny now that I am under the eye of God?" a claim which was admitted with protestations by the Somali.

This story reminds us of another that is told of an English officer near the same part of the world. He was informed of some wonderful things that could be done by a famous dervish; and, wishing to take the shine out of the holy man, he took out his right eye, threw it up in the air, caught it as it fell, and placed it back again, exclaiming, "There, can your dervish do that?" The natives, who had never seen or heard of glass eyes before, regarded him ever afterwards with the greatest veneration.

A tramp was singing "Lead, Kindly Light," at Halifax, and shouting after it "He that giveth to the poor lendeth unto the Lord." A constable did not approve of his music or his text. He is now in prison for begging.

Dr. Parker did not die a rich man. It was scandalous to hint that he did. According to the *Christian World* he has only left some £25,000. This is a mere fleabite nowadays. There are some Christians who leave millions behind them. Things are altered since the first Salvation Army came along with the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor." The wealthiest men in the world now are Christians. Yes, and the poorest, too. For there is no poverty in "heathen" lands like the poverty in the slums of Christian cities. It is very uncommon for the "heathen" to lack bread. But there are thousands of starving people in London—as well as thousands of people who are dying of gluttony.

What a dream of wealth Dr. Parker's £25,000 would have been to the first Salvation Army! Judas, the cashier of the concern, ratted for thirty shekels—about £3 15s. From this fact we may judge of the state of his exchequer.

Dr. Parker's £25,000 is also a dream of wealth in comparison with what Charles Bradlaugh, the Atheist, left behind him. After forty years of hard fighting for liberty and progress, so that his name was almost a household word, Bradlaugh died worth less than nothing. He left it to Church dignitaries, and popular Christian preachers, to pile up riches. It never occurred to him as a legitimate line of business, to preach the blessings of poverty to others and strive to avoid them oneself.

Jesus Christ said, "Woe unto you rich." Would he have included a man worth £25,000? We fancy he would. In that case it is doubtful if Dr. Parker's coffin-plate tells the truth. It says he "ascended," but he may have descended.

Port Isaac, in Cornwall, is agitated over an act of Sabbath desecration. One fishing boat was launched on Sunday, and nets were cast in the bay. The fishermen who didn't follow suit warmly denounced this wicked deed, and begged that it

should be "put in the paper." Their wish was gratified by *The Cornishman*. We do not hear, though, that there was anything wrong with the fish caught on the Lord's Day. No doubt it is a bad policy to work seven days a week, but farmers have to do Sunday work occasionally in order to save their crops, and fishermen who have had to loaf about for days are fools if they let a superstition stop them from doing a stroke of business when the fish come their way. It is all very well for the parsons to cry out. They don't depend on harvests and catches.

Bishop Gore, of Worcester, is a very kind and condescending gentleman. He has actually given permission to the flock of the faithful in his diocese to eat what they like on the Friday in Christmas week. We do not know what would have happened if they had eaten what they liked *without* his permission. Something dreadful, no doubt. What we should like to know first of all is this. Who gives the Bishop himself permission to eat and drink galore on fast days? Has he to apply to another Bishop or to the Archbishop of Canterbury? Or does he settle the matter "on his own"? This is certainly the most convenient method.

The three parsons of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, St. Anne's, Soho, and St. James's, Piccadilly, have sent a joint letter to the *Daily News* in which they describe themselves as those "to whom has been committed the care of the interests of religion and morality in this neighborhood." They do not say when this took place, or who it was that handed over to them the "morality" of that large and mixed district of London. They have not even to look after its "religion" exclusively. These gentlemen seem to take a very exalted view of their functions. Some people would say they are suffering from "swelled head." Others, more cynical, might say it is no wonder that the "morality" of this district is so bad when it is in the sole care of three parsons.

"Some time ago," the three men of God say, "we formed an association in order to accomplish two objects. The first was to strengthen the hands of the local authorities in their efforts to put the law in force against houses of ill-fame, and to stimulate the police into greater activity." This was their *first* object. But it ought to have been their *last*; or, rather, it should not have been one of their objects at all. What have parsons to do with prosecuting sinners and stirring up the zeal of the police? We thought their functions were *spiritual*. Why should they play the part of jackals to the legal lions? And if they persist in doing so, why are they not registered in accordance with their actual occupation?

United States officers have been investigating the cause of the death of two Indians in a converted tribe at Hoonah. They found that the victims had been starved to death because they were thought to be witches. One of them was tied to a tree in the woods and compelled to stand eight days and nights without food, with heavy rains falling upon him. The object of this treatment is to drive out devils. He died soon after being released at the end of eight days. The other victim was handled less severely. Federal officers placed the entire tribe under arrest while investigating. Four members, found directly responsible, were taken to Juncau, charged with murder. It would be better if the Government had taught the Indians less religion and more humanity.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Rev. M. Paynter, of the Congregational Church, Dartmouth, has been preaching on the difficulties of Atheists. These are not difficulties in which Atheists find themselves, but difficulties in which the reverend gentleman places them. They are therefore not worth much attention. It is just as well, however, to correct his statement that Charles Darwin was a believer in God. Darwin ought not to be coupled with Lord Kelvin in this respect. In his Autobiography he has told the world that he ceased to be a Christian at the age of forty, and that afterwards he became an Agnostic in relation to the doctrine of Deity.

After uttering such absurdities as that Atheists had nothing to love, and were devoid of benevolence, the Rev. M. Paynter wound up by reading a silly anecdote about Ingersoll and Beecher. Probably he did not know that both Ingersoll and Beecher denied the absurd thing, but a little sagacity might have suggested to him that it was too ridiculous to be true. Why are preachers not more careful?

Mr. Alderman Spratt vigorously opposed the placing of the *Freethinker* upon the tables of the West Ham Free Public Libraries. He is an ostentatious friend of religion, and is bitterly hostile to everything of an "advanced" character. He is chairman of the Board of Directors of the Forest Gate Public Hall, which he would not allow to be let to the Stratford Branch of the National Secular Society for a public

meeting. Imagine our astonishment, then—or what would have been our astonishment if we did not understand these traffickers in piety—on hearing that the Forest Gate Public Hall had been opened for skating on Sunday! Alderman Spratt is evidently a business man. He reminds us of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways. His motto should be Iago's advice to Roderigo—"Put money in thy purse." But why, it may be asked, did he refuse the Secularists' money for the use of the Public Hall? Well, that was business too. It was only one letting, and by refusing it he obtained a first-rate cheap advertisement in orthodox circles. We congratulate Alderman Spratt on his smartness. It must have been persons of his ilk who prompted the saying of Jesus that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

Rev. R. Lees, of Holy Trinity Church, Canning Town, wrote to the *Stratford Express*, in reply to the report of a speech by Mr. Jack Jones, in which it was observed that the clergy had a preference for ignorance as it was the nurse of superstition. Mr. Lees declared, on the contrary, that the Church had done more for education than all its enemies. Mr. Jones, who seems to be a Socialist Freethinker, answered the reverend gentleman with crushing effect. He gave facts and figures, and his letter was also better written than his opponent's. We congratulate Mr. Jones. Mr. Lees has our sympathy.

### What Girard Read.

BUT THE CHRISTIANS WHO NOW CONTROL HIS COLLEGE KEEP HIS BOOKS AWAY FROM THE STUDENTS.

"WHAT books did Stephen Girard read, and what has become of the Girard library?"

Thus questions a reader of the *Record*, who became interested in the article on "Girard and Napoleon," recently printed in this paper.

The answer is that Girard read Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu, and that the greater part of his library is now in glazed cases in the main building of Girard College.

The volumes number a little over one hundred. They are kept always under lock and key. Most sumptuous among them is a very magnificent edition of Voltaire in seventy volumes. Voltaire was a favorite writer of Girard's. His clarity of intellect appealed strongly to the Frenchman. Rousseau was another of Girard's favorites, and Montesquieu was another still; but none of the works of Rousseau or of Montesquieu are included in the little library at the college, and where they now are is something of a mystery.

Henry Atlee Ingram, a descendant of Girard, has written the authoritative Girard life. In it he says that in the merchant's office, on North Water-street, one of the features was a safe piled high with well-bound volumes of Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau.

The other books in the Girard library at the college are the voyages, in two volumes, of Vancouver; a treatise in French on the yellow fever, by Deveze; *Neptune Oriental*, a work in two volumes on navigation, and several miscellaneous works of biography and criticism.

Girard was not a learned man, and his library was not extensive; but in the line it took it was excellent. It was also well read. Undoubtedly its influence helped greatly in the founding of the admirable institution that bears Girard's name.

—*Philadelphia Record*.

### The Lord Understood.

At a prayer-meeting the other day, where the worshippers wished for the restoration to health of some friend, one of them prayed: "O God, restore unto us our brother, if it does not interfere with thy perquisites." The situation was saved by the exclamation of an intelligent listener: "Hallelujah! the Lord knows what he means."

There is a certain Chicago man who happens to be the proud parent of a very vigorous boy of five years, who has already acquired the manly habit of swearing whenever he wishes to express his young ideas forcibly. Not long ago his parents sent him to Sunday school and gave him a penny to put in the contribution box. When the deacon came down the aisle, taking up the pennies of the children, he passed by this particular boy, whereupon the youngster arose and horrified the entire Sunday school by shouting: "God damn you, come back here and get my penny!"



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, December 21, Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell, S.E., "The Virgin Birth of Christ: a Secular Sermon on Christmas."

December 28, Athenæum Hall.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

C. D. S.—Thanks for the cuttings. See paragraph. We have less respect, in their particular controversy, for Dr. Clifford than we have for any Catholic or High Churchman. They are naked and unashamed. He claps on a figleaf, and lectures them on their nudity.

C. JEMISON.—Glad to hear you are so pleased with the N.S.S. Education Manifesto, copies of which have been sent you for distribution, as requested. The word "coals" in Proverbs xxvi. 21, has no necessary reference to the mineral fuel which now monopolises the designation. "Coal" meant originally burnt wood. The root meaning still survives in the word charcoal. "Coals" used to be called "sea coals." "Charcoal of roots," Bacon wrote, "coaled into great pieces, lasts longer than ordinary charcoal." Here you have the whole matter in a nutshell; and Bacon was contemporary with the Authorised Version of the Bible.

H. HUHN.—Thanks for the tickets.

J. M. DAX.—Miss Vance has executed your order. It was certainly odd for the lecturer to ask for questions in the chapel and take them in the vestry; but perhaps it was convenient. Thanks for your good wishes.

E. CHAPMAN.—Thanks. The matter has had attention.

C. MOORE (Lexington, Kentucky).—Your *Blue Grass Blade* reaches us very irregularly. We understand from a friend in this country that one number of your journal which has not reached us contains something specially referring to ourselves. Will you be good enough to send it along? We are glad to note that your lively organ is, or appears to be, more flourishing. We mean, of course, from the point of view of its circulation.

A. WEBBER.—We are obliged. See "Acid Drops."

A. G. PIDDING.—We know nothing of the "disgusting" book which your Christian friend says Charles Bradlaugh wrote in conjunction with Mrs. Besant. It is not for us to tell you what he refers to. Ask him to be more explicit. Let him name the book.

R. GRAHAM.—The Free Churches Catechism, referred to in Mr. Foote's *Dropping the Devil*, is published by the Committee at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street, London, E.C. Price one penny.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your welcome batches of cuttings.

AH SIN.—Your letter shall appear in our next. It is too late for the present issue.

J. H. WATERS.—Shall appear.

E. M. CHAPMAN.—Dr Clifford has not noticed the matter you refer to. What special study is it you want to pursue? Let us know, and we will advise you what to read.

J. G. STUART.—While placing a high value on your letters to the local journal, and regretting that the correspondence must cease as far as you are concerned, we hope you will see on second thoughts how impossible it is for us to undertake such things ourselves. We are overworked already. Besides, the chief interest of a correspondence in a local paper is that it is conducted by local controversialists.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Newtownards Chronicle—Torch of Reason—Liberator—New Life—Free Society—Hereford Times—Crescent—Truthseeker (New York)—Searchlight—Freidenker—Halt-whistle Echo—Two Worlds.

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 pays the Camberwell Branch another visit this evening (Dec. 21). He is advertised to deliver a "Secular Sermon" on "The Virgin Birth of Christ." It must be admitted that the subject is seasonable. No such Christmas Sermon will be heard elsewhere in London. The "saints" might therefore spread the news amongst their more orthodox friends and acquaintances, and try to bring some of them along to the Secular Hall, so that Mr. Foote may have an opportunity of preaching to the "heathen."

Frequenter of the Athenæum Hall are requested to note that it is not open for the customary lecture this evening (Dec. 21), this being one of the dates reserved by the proprietor for a private use. Next Sunday evening (Dec. 28) the Hall will be open as usual, and the platform will be occupied by Mr. Foote.

MR. FOOTE lectured in the Secular Hall, Leicester, on Sunday evening; Mr. Sydney A. Gimson occupying the chair, with Mr. F. J. Gould sitting on his right. The audience was a large one, and the lecture on "Freethought in English Literature, from Shakespeare to Meredith" was followed for an hour and a-half with the closest attention. It seemed to be thoroughly enjoyed, and was warmly applauded. The subject was not one that lent itself to the more facile arts of platform rhetoric, and Mr. Foote tried to do justice to it as far as the time permitted. It must therefore be said that the deep interest displayed by the meeting was all the more remarkable. From beginning to end its appreciation never flagged. It was a signal testimony to the intellectual training of so many years of good Sunday work in the Secular Hall. Few audiences, however picked, would have followed such a lecture with so much vital attention to the very close.

MR. FOOTE stayed at Leicester on Monday in order to attend the first "Smoking Concert" under the new order of things in the old Club-room. There was a large and gratifying assembly of members, including a considerable number of ladies, and everything "went off" in the most satisfactory manner. Mr. Sydney Gimson, the president, developed a very pretty talent for reading comic sketches by Jacobs and Barry Pain. The pieces were well-selected, thoroughly enjoyed, and heartily applauded. Mrs. Gimson gave the company an idea of how the Moorish ladies look in Algiers. Having brought away a complete outfit from the place itself, she was able to dress herself as a Moorish lady in both outdoor and indoor costume. Some of the English ladies looked admiringly at the bright silk dress of that sunny clime, and some of the men seemed to share their approval. There was also some good singing, particularly by a young lady, whose name we did not catch, but who appeared to be about eighteen years of age, and has a fine, well-modulated, sympathetic voice. Naturally enough Mr. Foote was called upon to "do something." He gave Tennyson's "Lady Clare" and Mark Anthony's oration over the dead body of Caesar.

LONDON Freethinkers are requested to note that their Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday, January 12. Mr. G. W. Foote will preside.

THE South Shields friends have decided to secure a small hall and open a course of ten Sunday night lectures in the New Year. Any sympathisers who are able to give any assistance should correspond with the local Secretary, Mr. Ed. Chapman, 32 James Mather-terrace.

FREETHINKERS all over England are earnestly invited to circulate the National Secular Society's Manifesto on "The Education Difficulty." Copies will be forwarded post free on application to the Society's secretary, at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C. We may add that the circulation of this Manifesto is not a favor which is requested of Freethinkers; it is a duty which they owe to their own principles. Here is a logical and temperate statement of the case for "Secular Education," and it really ought to be circulated by the myriad.

THE last number of the New York *Truthseeker* to hand, dated November 29, contains an account of the Annual Congress of the American Secular Union, which was rendered remarkable by a striking address from Dr. Moncure D. Conway, who was for many years minister of the South-place Chapel, London, and has for some time been settled down again in his native country, the United States of America. Dr. Conway grows more radical with the advance of age; and, being now free from all congregational restraints, he is (so to speak) entirely unmuzzled. We are giving our

own readers the benefit of his latest address by reproducing it from the columns of our New York contemporary.

The *Truthseeker* editorial "Notes of the Congress" makes a reference to ourselves which may as well be noticed. "Regret is felt," it is said, "that a letter of greeting did not reach the Congress from Mr. G. W. Foote, editor of the London *Freethinker* and President of the National Secular Society of Great Britain, who was asked to address the gathering in that way, since he could not be present in person and speak with the living voice. Mr. Foote has many friends among American Freethinkers who hope that his exacting duties will not keep him always on the other side of the Atlantic."

We should be very sorry to be unkind or uncivil to our American friends, who were far from being unkind or uncivil to us when we were amongst them six years ago. A word of explanation may therefore be offered. Mr. Macdonald did ask us to send a letter of greeting to the American Secular Congress, as we have done on several former occasions; but he did not write until the twelfth hour, probably through stress of other business, and it was his own observation that there was no time to be lost. We were so occupied at the moment that we were quite unable to find time for a letter worth reading to the Congress, and when a relatively free hour did present itself it was too late. Perhaps the editor of the *Truthseeker* will kindly convey this explanation to his readers.

The Twentieth Century Edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, issued by the Secular Society, Limited, chiefly for purposes of propaganda, was the pioneer in sixpenny reprints of Freethought works, and its general get-up has not yet been equalled. For some time this Edition has been re-printing, the first issue of 10,000 copies having been exhausted. The second issue is nearly ready. It will be on sale in a week or so at the outside, Mr. Foote's "masterly" little biography of Paine, as Mr. G. J. Holyoake has called it, still remains a part of this Edition, and also his editorial notes at the end showing how Paine's conclusions have been corroborated by the so-called Higher Criticism.

The *Secular Annual* (formerly the *Secular Almanack*) will be published on Monday (Dec. 22). Besides detailed information concerning the National Secular Society and other Freethought organisations at home and abroad, it contains some forty pages of special articles by G. W. Foote, C. Cohen, "Chilperic," "Mimmermus," Mary Lovell, "Abracadabra," and F. J. Gould. This altered and enlarged publication is well worth the increased price of sixpence, and should promptly find a goodly number of purchasers.

The new penny monthly, of which several preliminary announcements have been made during the last two or three months, will make its first appearance on New Years' day. It will be a popular propagandist organ pure and simple, at least at the outset; though its scope will not be entirely confined to freethought in matters of religion. Of course it is not intended in any way to supersede the *Freethinker*, but rather as an aid to it. Bearing a less "aggressive" title, and costing only a penny instead of twopence, it may stand a better chance of reaching the public through the news-agents. At any rate it will be a trial in this direction. The title of this new monthly will be the *The Pioneer*. We hope our friends will do their best to get it circulated amongst their friends and acquaintances. They will have a whole month to do this in, and those who have a shilling to spare might procure a dozen copies for gratuitous distribution.

Naturally we don't want to see the *Freethinker* neglected for the sake of the new venture or anything else. On the contrary, we venture to ask our friends to push it round wherever they see an opportunity. A great deal can be done in a quiet way. If a thousand of our readers made up their minds to secure us a thousand new subscribers, they could do it without much difficulty. It only means one apiece.

Bjornson, the great Norwegian poet, writer, and politician, has just been celebrating his seventieth birthday. Bjornson has lived the greater part of his life in the country, and shows visitors with interest and pardonable pride his cows and horses, the last new piece of machinery, and the new, excellently-appointed stables. Although Bjornson has now reached threescore years and ten, his figure is as upright as ever, and he is still, as in the past, a great enthusiast in the cause of freedom and probity. Bjornson is a thoroughgoing Freethinker. He has translated Colonel Ingersoll's fine essay on *The Christian Religion* into Norwegian.

## Personal Identity.

(Concluded from page 790.)

BUT an appeal is sure to be made by the objector to every man's own consciousness to rebut my opinions; though I doubt if that appeal will serve the purpose of the theologian. Our consciousness is not infallible; very far indeed from it. It is constantly blundering, it needs educating, and constant watching. Those who trust to it alone, without testing or regulating, will spend a curious life. Sometimes consciousness plays us tricks, and palms off upon us falsehoods for truths. For example, if I am color blind, a blue object may appear to me green, or *vice versa*. What does this mean? Why, that my consciousness is at fault; for it says the object is green, whereas it is really blue. I never should discover this trick, but by comparison with other people's reports. Memory, too, will often play us tricks. Some great readers, for example, are so full of other men's ideas that they have no room for thought of their own; and often quite innocently reproduce as their own what they have borrowed from some author they have read. Here again consciousness is at fault, and the Ego is guilty of deceiving himself. Consciousness alone, then, cannot be depended upon; far from it—it requires constant supervision and correction, even in the best cultivated mind. Who, for example, with no experience to check him, could be convinced, when looking out of a window of a railway train in full speed, that the objects by the side of the line were not in motion? Who could tell, in a dark night, with nothing but bare consciousness to guide him, which way the train he travels in was moving? In going into a tunnel I frequently feel my consciousness reversed; and it requires all my reason to enable me to cling to the fact that the train is not also reversed. What it is I cannot tell; but I know my consciousness frequently tells me the train in such a case is going the wrong way.

In the case of dreams and insanity consciousness seems always in sport, playing wild and fantastic tricks for hours, or even years, on the stretch. All this shows that if the dogma of Personal Identity be grounded upon consciousness merely, as it seems to be, its foundation is but a quicksand.

Turning to another feature of consciousness, it may be remarked that memory plays us pranks in more ways than one. In the first place, our memory is at once too short and too long. None of us can cover the whole of our life by memory. The first two years or more are a blank to all except abnormal infants. Then, too, how many gaps there are in the best of memories. It may cover the most of our lives like a sheet; but how tattered and torn the sheet is. Like the great memory of a nation or of civilised nations in general, while much has been preserved, far more is hopelessly lost. Besides, memory, though strong in texture, is ill-defined around its edges and its farther end. Perhaps one thread of our sheet streams out from the far end into the unknown, the antecedent darkness; and that uncertain thread is the oldest fibre of our personal memory. It is not usually distinct—the boundary between the first facts remembered and those beyond the grasp of recollection is uncertain; the earliest twilight rests upon it—a twilight that never can open into dawn and day.

In later years we read. The history of our nation, of other nations, becomes familiar. Stirring scenes in history thrill us with enthusiasm; our nature glows and fuses as in a furnace, and flows warm and liquid round the events that transpired ages before we were born. They become our own, they blend with our own experience; the actors stand out clear in the background of our consciousness; the old world revives and lives again in the emotions its history awakens in us; and in looking backward over time the remembered events of our own individual life coalesce without break, without incongruity, with the recorded events of all history with which we are familiar; and but for the natural checks to which we

are ever subject, we might easily fancy that our own memory covered the whole range of history, just as it does the events of our short life. This illusion is apt to be strengthened, too, from the fact that national events and things of great importance which happened early in our own career are not remembered by us, but learnt from oral information or from records, like those occurring hundreds of years ago.

All these reflexions lead inevitably to the conclusion that consciousness is not worthy of implicit trust, and that Personal Identity cannot be warranted by so uncertain a witness.

Besides, is consciousness all on that side? I fancy not. We can invoke the testimony of consciousness against this identity. Who has not, in wonder and amazement, compared or contrasted himself at two distant periods of his life, and demanded, Am I the same person? Bare consciousness says, No. We require other assurance to believe the fiction. And we are not the same. We are but continuations of what we were, with radical changes. "The child is father of the man," but with intermediate links. The child produces the youth, the youth the man, the man of prime life the older one to follow; and each ancestor loses himself on the spot in his immediate descendant. We cannot reverse the order; we cannot alter it. The twilight is lost in the dawn, the dawn in the day; but the three are not the same. So with each of us. The infant loses himself in the boy; the boy in the youth; the youth in the man; but they are not all one. Our former being and person are gone, as much as the past moments of our life. The time is gone and all it brought; only remembrances and results remain. Cause and effect here. What we were in the past caused what we now are. But identity of cause and effect is never looked for. They are distinct, and can have but one order. So with ourselves. Ourselves to-day are just what yesterday compelled us to be. Yesterday equally depended upon and sprang out of the day before. And so we may run back to any extent desirable.

We change. No son is an exact reproduction of his father. The likeness may be wonderful; their build, height, complexion, step, bearing, mode of thinking, tastes may be all alike. So it may be with a man all through life. His continuity, the force of inherited habit, may give him a wonderfully compact, self-consistent life. He early develops and suffers little after-change. In other cases the son is almost totally unlike the father. And so it is with an individual man. His life is broken and fragmentary. It is a kaleidoscope with an endless variety of colors. At one period of life he is so totally unlike his former self that his best friends hardly know him. The changes we now refer to may be for the better or the worse, but they do take place. The useless and stupid boy becomes transformed into the great and useful man; the young man of noblest promise is found a complete wreck in premature old age. A man will often do a deed at one time of life that he could not possibly do at another; nor is it easy to persuade himself that he is the same person at two dates. Custom, habit, and language misused, at length impose upon him, and he concludes that he *must* be the same, though it is plain enough to the philosopher that he is not.

Another point may be referred to before concluding, and that is this. Though Butler in his *Analogy* avers that consciousness is indivisible, it is not always so. Double consciousness is a frequent experience amongst people not altogether insane. Those who hear voices speaking to them when alone, or see ghosts, etc., are no doubt in that state. Amusing, as well as distressing, cases of the sort might be related, but it is not necessary.

Suffice it to say that, while consciousness is of inestimable value, it is not infallible—quite the reverse; and cannot be depended upon to establish any dogma whatsoever. And while Personal Identity may be a convenient phrase, and the fiction of the sameness of an animal or man throughout his whole

life may be a useful one when employed merely for every-day purposes; its right to a position in philosophy is open to grave objection. For a fair investigation of the facts of the case establishes the truth that we are not the same physically, mentally, morally at any two stages of our existence; that our personal identity is, in fact, of little more value, philosophically speaking, than the personal identity of a river or a gas-jet.

In conclusion, I may say that it is only by attacking and exploding fictions, no matter how revered and seemingly unassailable, that truth can be established and set out in its proper light.

J. SYMES.

## The Inner Heritage of Secularism.

BY MONCURE D. CONWAY.

[Mr. Conway never spoke more bravely, or more opportunely, than in this address to the recent Congress of the American Secular Union. We have great pleasure in reproducing it for our readers from the pages of the New York *Truthseeker*.]

MINDS emancipated from dogmas are apt to preserve tender memories of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It raised a rainbow of romance above the leaden cloud of sermons. Apollyon and Pope and Pagan showed the same picturesqueness as the ogres and dragons of our Fairy Tales, and Christian was a near relation of the beautiful princes who slew them. For myself, after I had travelled far enough in the Secular direction thirty years ago to travesty that book in *The Earthward Pilgrimage; or, How I Left the World to Come for That Which Is*, I enjoyed Bunyan's vision more than ever, because it did away with the hard "plan of salvation" by transforming it to a pretty dream. George Macdonald, an author who had a sort of cult at one time, used to perform with his wife and family a dramatic version of the *Pilgrim's Progress* in public halls. They wished to perform it in our part of London, and my wife and I sold the tickets among our neighbors. Most of these were English Church ladies, and I was amazed to find some of them were unacquainted with the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

When Christiana had parted with Christian, her husband, and was weeping with her children, a Church lady whispered to me, "Are we expected to admire Christian for leaving his family in the City of Destruction?" This lady was in what Salvationists call a very "unsaved" condition; she was bringing man's human and earthly affairs into competition with heaven and its king. She was an unconscious agent of Apollyon. And when one comes to think of it, the essence of *Pilgrim's Progress* is just that. We sympathise with Christian against a lot of people whom we practically think very highly of. Who is Mr. Worldlywiseman? Just the man we are in want of in place of the much-multiplied Mr. Unworldlyfoolman. And the old giant Pagan? That is Socrates, Confucius, Buddha. And what's the matter with Apollyon? His only struggle is to keep a vigorous fellow like Christian from leaving his family and his actual duty to waste his strength on air-castles. Of course we may translate Apollyon literally—the name means destroyer—and paint him horrible; but I know Apollyon personally. He waylaid me fifty years ago, when I was riding a Methodist circuit on the Potomac, and took from me a pack I had on my back. I struggled, but he got it away. It contained all my brimstone, my Trinity, my whole preaching stock; he took them out, destroyed them, filled my pack with the love of this world, of its science, literature, and art, gave it back to me, and said, "Henceforth your pilgrimage will be earthward!"

Still it had to be a pilgrimage. That was my inner heritage. I had to travel on from Methodism to Unitarianism, from that to Theism, to Pantheism, Transcendentalism, before alighting on my own planet.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes said to me: "You and I have spent many of the best years of our life

merely clearing theological rubbish out of our way." Of course that time was not altogether lost. A man must be stupid not to grow something even out of rubbish. It is a substantial part of this world, and in everybody's way; and we were trained by study of it to give some a lift. But the pain and pains were in the first place often disproportionate to the thing achieved. Why, for instance, should I have disputed so much the Trinity? If there be a deity at all, it doesn't really matter whether he has one or three or three hundred persons. But it was predetermined by my ancestors that I should fight battles with and suffer wounds from beings that never existed. In the next place, my headaches and heartaches were incurred in exchanging one error for another. I have done this so often that if anyone now rehearsed to me as his own the ideas in some thousand of my successive sermons, I should wonder at such examples of his arrested development.

Well, we all have our pilgrimage. It would be different if we were born old and gradually got young, so that we might carry maturity and wisdom into the vigor and enthusiasm of youth. But as things are we are born ignorant and crude, and by the time maturity is reached we must make ready to depart. I found in Paris a letter from a French friend of Dr. Franklin in Philadelphia who says that Franklin's last words were: "A man is not completely born until after his death." Perhaps the dying philosopher had in his mind the thought that just when an intellect is completely born the man has to die. At any rate, the greater part of our spiritual life is passed in the ancestral womb; we have to make our pilgrimage from creed to creed, and consequent doubt to doubt, not one of these creeds being in our nature, all of them imposed on us by our forbears.

And when every dogma is cleared away, has our burden rolled off? Is our secularised soul free to deal at first hand with the world we are in? It appears to me that even in what is called "Agnosticism" there is an inner heritage from theology. When Herbert Spencer, says there is an "Unknowable, from which all things proceed," and demands reverence for it, orthodoxy has a right to claim him, as it does. For among the "all things" there are many atrocious things. An Unknowable developing a nature red in tooth and claw ought not to be spelt with a big "U" but with the smallest in the font. It is not worthy of reverence, even if it exists, and nobody has given the slightest evidence that any unknowable, even with a small "u," does exist. Agnosticism, whatever its eminent adherents intend, means to the average mind that one does not know but what the average mind's God may exist. Now, if that Collectivist deity exists, he or it is either the originator of all the evils and agonies of nature, or else is of no more importance to man than the chimera.

If Secularism is to benefit people it must be by what it knows, and it certainly knows that whatever may be said of the private ideal in an individual mind the Collectivist deity on which the churches and priesthoods are built is a mere phantasm of superstition. Agnosticism, whose beginning I remember, was a transitional philosophic expression. If continued too long it is likely, I fear, to become a "Mr. Facing-both-ways" in the Secularist pilgrimage.

Another inner heritage of Secularism is the belief in human progress as a thing inevitable. We are apt to project into the universe an all-compelling purpose that things shall improve and mankind become more and more civilised. Where did this faith come from? From the ages in which mankind believed that they started out from one paradise and are steadily advancing to another. So we put up with all manner of villainies—war, intolerance, evil laws—as we do with the horrible excavations of New York streets. In the sweet "By and by" we shall have a magnificent subway, perhaps; but will our expanding fleets and armies and murderous invasion of weak tribes lead on to the millenium?

After many years of optimistic enthusiasm, I began to feel like Alice in the looking-glass. She says to her host's fine promises, "Jam yesterday, jam to-morrow, but never jam to-day." I suppose it was while dreaming of a golden age in the past and of a perfected world to come that ancient Greece—far more civilised than America—lost the greatness that to us shines so fair, and made way for the wretched people that now kneel before crosses where the greatest philosophers, artists, and poets once dwelt. I distrust this investment in futures. Evolution may mean moral and intellectual reversion as well as improvement. In the last generation we paid nearly a half million lives, and ran up an enormous debt, to secure for the Southern states the privilege of burning their negroes alive, and keeping them under a reign of terror, the whites being increasingly brutalised. Boasting of American freedom we purchased ten millions of slaves on the other side of the planet, and are now engaged cutting the throats of all of them that struggle for liberty. Where is the progress? Where are even the signs of progress? Shouts about "Old Glory?"

Last week I received a letter from one of the most eminent Englishmen now living—I am not able to name him because his letter is private—in which he says:—

"I am now in my eightieth year. What a change during that time! From peace, philanthropy, retrenchment, emancipation, to megalomania, jingoism, and flag-worship! If the religious conscience fails before science has constructed something to take its place, the next generation will have a lively time.

"How unfortunate that American opinion should have been perverted by the Philippines business just when it was wanted to keep us right about the Transvaal!"

As for what this great English publicist says about the "religious conscience," it has so long meant for the majority a mere providential sanction of whatever their passions incline to, where successful, that it appears to me to have failed long ago. Under the democratic creed that the voice of the people is the voice of God, might is right. That is, no infamy or wrong, no oppression or cruelty, needs any other religious or moral sanction than a majority. Thomas Paine, in his *Rights of Man*, warned the nations that the tyranny of a majority is far worse than that of an individual; for the individual can be dealt with, but not the majority. He urged, therefore, that in every constitution a limit should be set on the power of a majority to prevent its encroachment on the personal liberty of any individual who did not encroach on the liberty of another.

Thomas Jefferson, who was in Paris when our Constitution was adopted, was much troubled that it contained no such charter of personal rights; but, in fact, the unit of this nation was, and is, not the man, but the State. In early New England the unit was never the individual, but the congregation. When the colonies were separated from England by the Revolution, the cry of independence was on their lips, but it was not personal independence. On the contrary, the large personal liberty accorded by England was at once taken away. A man who ventured to argue against going to war was ridden on a rail; judges who, having sworn to support the crown, would not perjure themselves, were tarred and feathered, their estates confiscated; thirty thousand of those brave and really independent people had to find asylum in Canada, just as afterwards the fugitive negroes did when "Old Glory's" stripes were on the slave's back. Meanwhile, the Blue Law Sabbath was restored by the Continental Congress, and laws passed for closing all theatres and punishing every man who entered one.

We were thus nationally shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother country conceive us. There were, however, some large-minded men, lovers of liberty, in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and they secured some provisions for personal, and especially for religious, liberty.

American Secularists have for some time been realising that no constitutional provisions can impede the prejudices and passions of the multitude. In the South, wherever a negro is concerned, the Constitution's guarantees of his equal citizenship, its guarantees against "cruel and unusual punishments," its guarantee to every accused person of "due process of law," are trampled on freely, and the sworn administrators of the Constitution never interfere. The same inutility of constitutional defences of religious liberty is shown in our national government's Sabbatarianism, chaplains, and thanksgiving proclamations. In England there is one church nominally established, but no man is taxed to support it; in this country all churches are really established, for by their exemption from taxation we are all taxed to support them, and we are all paying the salaries of that unconstitutional army of chaplains. Now, the Secularists of this country are sufficiently awake to these religious oppressions, and I hope many of them appreciate the wrongs of the negro. And I will say here in passing that, although the President of the United States has not had the courage to admit his error in repeating exploded slanders of Paine, he did have the courage last Decoration Day to denounce the Southern atrocities against the negro as the great stigma on this nation. The angry responses from the South and dead silence of the North at that extended and unminced utterance, show that it required moral courage, and also that the country is not willing to have its laws administered where only negroes are the sufferers.

I do not know how far the inner heritage of patriotism affects the American Secularists in this manner, but as the churches, which four years ago were eager to murder Spaniards for the fire and the fagot of their mediæval ancestors, are dumb now that the fire and fagot are exclusively American, I believe that the Association I am now addressing should extend its consideration and influence to the inhumanities we are all committing, however indirectly, at home and abroad.

I do not suggest that we should apply to any wrong that revolutionary instinct which is the inner heritage of every American. There was too much of that kind of thing in the old anti-slavery movement. If Abolitionists were sometimes ridden on rails, there was a good deal of another kind of railing by the Radicals, in which I occasionally did my little part—when the crisis became acute—little dreaming, of course, that such words were moulding cannon-balls. Let intemperate Carrie Nation remain sole legatee of John the Baptist's axe, with which she laid very low her own cause, but let the Freethinker take his motto from scriptures inspired by man, from Shakespeare: "Let gentleness my strong enforcement be!"

The anti-slavery cause has resulted, as I think, in placing the negroes in a worse position than before the so-called emancipation, because the sword cannot convert hearts. The people of this country never cast a majority of votes for Abraham Lincoln, nor for any anti-slavery man; and to-day no candidate could get a majority on a platform of justice to the negro at home or the Filipino abroad. It requires a great deal of culture to be just to the weak, especially to those of another race.

(To be continued.)

### King and Bishop.

While at Cabadonga the King of Spain visited the shrine, which is one of the most famous in Europe. After the "Te Deum" Alfonso said he was hungry and wanted something to eat. The Bishop of Cabadonga conducted his Majesty toward the relics and began an explanation of St. Peter's toe nail and St. Paul's hair. The King stopped him with: "Say, Bishop, do you believe that nonsense?" The scandalised bishop affirmed that he did. "Well, I don't," replied Alfonso. "We have seen enough; I'm going to dinner."—*Chicago American.*

### Obituary.

ON Friday last, December 12, it was my melancholy duty to be present at Finchley Cemetery at the burial of the veteran Freethinker, Mr. George E. Lupton, who died on the 7th inst., at the advanced age of 80 years. Mr. Lupton's connection with the Secular movement dates from the time of the Old John-street Institute, and for many years he (as well as his wife, two sons, and daughter) were active and hardworking members of the North-west London Branch (Milton Hall). Mr. Lupton also took an active interest in politics, being one of the staunch supporters of the Liberal Association in West St. Pancras, and for many years he was an elected auditor of the St. Pancras Vestry's accounts, and afterwards a Vestryman. The cemetery chapel, having been placed at the disposal of Mr. Lupton's family, the President of the N. S. S., Mr. G. W. Foote, accompanied by Mrs. Foote, gave a Secular Burial Address from the pulpit in a very impressive manner, and caused many among his audience to regret that some such personal form is not oftener used, instead of the grotesque Church of England service which, used over all alike, is really applicable to scarcely any. Among the mourners were many old Freethinkers, notably Mrs. Larkin, Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Pottage, and many of Mr. Lupton's friends and employées.—EDITH M. VANCE.

### Correspondence.

#### "HELPING FORWARD."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of the 23rd ult. there is a letter under above heading.

Now, Sir, I should like to point out another way of "helping forward" by instancing my own case. I was led to become an active Freethinker about three years ago by an old reader and, I believe, occasional subscriber of yours, "G. D. B." who spoke, and sent me your paper for several consecutive weeks. Had I only seen one paper there is no doubt I should have remained neither a Freethinker or an ardent Theist. I did not trouble one way or the other.

This brings me to the idea I want to sketch out roughly. There are in several villages a known Freethinker or two who, like myself, are no orators, or who cannot hold meetings on account of holding public positions, but who would gladly lodge and board a lecturer from the N. S. S. who would lecture in the villages where they live. This could be done, especially in the summer time, on a Sunday evening in the open air, or in a building if wet, after the churches and chapels have closed; and, if a few handbills were judiciously distributed, good audiences might be got together and the cause advanced.

The lecturer would have to be someone well up in his subject, as villagers, if slow, are very critical, and would be down on any exaggerations or wrong statements.

I think if we, as Freethinkers, were to cast our bread on the waters in this manner it would return a hundredfold, as village people would ponder the arguments and illustrations used for a long time after, where a townsman, having other attractions, would let them be effaced.

It may be asked, why don't I guarantee the lecturer's expenses? I reply: My small salary don't run to it.

Then, think what a nice little country week-end holiday it would be for a jaded city man.

Should you think the idea of any use, kindly insert in your paper or reply in "To Correspondents." VILLAGER.!

#### THE PROPOSED SECULAR SCHOOL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Please accept my warmest thanks for your kindness in helping me to announce my idea of establishing a school on a Secular basis. The response has not been encouraging enough; but perhaps I may be more successful later.

MAGISTER.

#### The Junior Curate.

In a West-end church on a recent Sunday, the *British Weekly* tells, the junior curate was preaching on reasons for coming to church. Some people, he remarked, come to church for no better reason than to show off their best clothes. Then he paused, and glanced thoughtfully over his audience. "I am thankful to see, dear friends," he added, "that none of you have come here for that reason."

A Sunday school teacher told his infants to ask any questions they had in their minds, and a little one asked, "When is the circus coming?"

"Now, boys, you know there are ten commandments, and if you should break even one of them do you know what would happen?" "Sure! Don dere'd be nine left."—*Chicago American.*

**SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.****LONDON.**

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.). Closed this evening, December 21, reopen December 28.

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

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7, G. W. Foote, "The Virgin Birth of Christ: a Secular Sermon on Christmas."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, G. Spiller, "What of the New Year?"

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, A lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Miss MacMillan, "Social Function of the School."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Oakesmith, "The Virtue of Scepticism."

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): J. McCabe; 3, "Religion without Theology"; 7, "The Unknown God."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): Charles Watts; 3, "Why I am not a Christian"; 7, "Why be Moral? A Secularist Answer."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Afternoon (2.45) and evening (6.30), Debate between H. Percy Ward and H. B. Hudson. Subject, "Individualism or Socialism: which is Better Adapted to Meet Human Needs?" Admission 3d. and sixpence. Tea at five.

PUDSEY—near Leeds—(Victoria Hall): Thursday, December 18, at 7.30, "Debate between Rev. W. Harold Davies and H. Percy Ward on "Was Christ a Wise and Moral Teacher?"

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7. Committee Report, and Arrangements for New Lecture Scheme.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Music—vocal and instrumental—Recitations, etc.

**LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.**

H. PERCY WARD, 15 George-street, Great Driffeld.—December 18, Pudsey: Debate with Rev. W. Harold Davies; 21, Manchester, Debate.

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