

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Things unknowne are the true scope of imposture and subject of legerdemaine ; forasmuch as strangeness it selfe doth first give credit unto matters, and not being subject to our ordinarie discourses, they deprive us of means to withstand them. Whence it follows that nothing is so firmly believed as that which a man knoweth least.

—MONTAIGNE.

Current Christianity.

IN the history of every religion there is a stage when, although it may make the angels weep, it can only rouse mortals to laughter. While a religion is believed in wholly and sincerely, no matter how great the inherent absurdity, there is a certain simplicity about it that commands respect. One can always admire profound conviction or disinterested devotion to a set of ideas, even while we set about destroying them. Our quarrel in this is not with the man, but with his beliefs. We respect the one even while we despise the other ; and in such a conflict both victor and vanquished are the better for the struggle.

The religious history of earlier generations had at least this note of sincerity. There was uncompromising bigotry, there was torture for heresy, and the sacrifice of much that might have made life brighter for all concerned. But there was at least the redeeming feature of sincerity. Even the Puritanism of the seventeenth century, as deadly a blight as ever overtook the better life of the nation, could plead intense conviction as some little justification for its presence. The religious history of the past is bad enough, but when we look around at the clergy of the present, apologising, prevaricating, their professed liberalism, and their surreptitious intolerance ; when we note how they accept a teaching on a public platform or in the public press, and quietly ignore it in the pulpit or the schoolroom, one feels inclined to ask for the intolerant but intellectually honest bigots of a few centuries back, in preference to the cowardly incompetents of our own day.

Christianity is now a next to impossible creed for an educated man with honest inclinations. I am, of course, referring to Christianity proper, and not to any refined ethico-sociological article made to do duty under the old name. Before modern science had reached maturity, it was possible for an educated man to preach and believe Christian doctrines. If the chain of reasoning in its support was not always as strong as he might wish it to be, yet, at all events, there was not the presence of actual knowledge to give his beliefs the lie. This is no longer the case to-day. Every one of the supports upon which Christianity, as a specific religion, rested, has crumbled away. Its teachings concerning the nature and structure of the universe have been traversed by the whole course of modern science. There is not a scientific doctrine against which Christianity, in some form or other, has not protested, and there is not a single instance in which it has not suffered ignominious defeat. Its doctrine of a crucified man-god has been shown to be a mere variant of a world-wide savage superstition. Its orthodox teaching of the hereafter is so repugnant

to modern notions of decency and humanity, that if a Freethinker ventures to cite it as part of the Christianity, he is told that he is insulting Christians and caricaturing their creed. The divine authorship of the Bible is given up on all hands ; the belief in prayers and miracles only obtains nowadays with the more ignorant of the Christian communities.

How can an educated man, with any right appreciation of intellectual integrity, and with ability to boot, enter the Christian ministry? He cannot, and does not. The complaint on all sides is that men of ability shun the Church. Or, if they join, they give some new meaning to the creed quite at variance with all its historical and logical implications. For consider the position such a one is in. He must offer up prayers and profess to believe in their being answered. But he knows full well that such an answer is a sheer impossibility. When he prays for a good harvest, or returns thanks for a plentiful one, he knows quite well that, whether he prayed or cursed, the harvest would be exactly the same. I do not say that the clergy *ought* to know this ; I say deliberately that they *do* know that the causes that produce a plentiful harvest or destroy the crops are absolutely unaffected by all the prayers that are offered up, and that their performance is a mere piece of senseless mummery.

How does he excuse himself for the offering of prayers? Prayer, he will tell you, is not offered up in the belief that it will effect any alteration in the course of nature, but in the belief that it has an elevating influence upon the mind. If one is in trouble, prayer soothes ; if one is in difficulty it comforts—if we believe in it. Quite so ; if we believe in it. There is much virtue in the "if." So does many a quack's medicine help people from the sheer fact of their believing beforehand that it will. Put this form of self-deception alongside the formulas for prayers in the official creeds, or contrast it with the beliefs of earlier generations, and see what it is worth. Does anyone believe that people would ever have prayed at all unless they believed that they would get something by the prayer they could not have got without it? And does anyone believe they will keep on praying once they realise that it is a species of spiritual dram-drinking, without any possible influence on the course of events. It is not honest conviction that one has to fight here ; it is more in the nature of a huge, informal conspiracy of humbug.

Take, again, the "inspired" literature of Christianity. Every clergyman nowadays *must* know something of the truth concerning the documents of the Old and New Testaments. Grant that he is not bound to subscribe to all that the critics have to say on this matter ; still he is compelled to admit the grave doubts concerning the trustworthiness of certain books and the absolute anonymity of others, as well as the unsoundness of much of their teaching. Yet we find them in their sermons referring to the various Biblical characters as though no doubt had ever been thrown upon the existence of many of them, and as though we were as certain of what Paul, or Jesus, or Moses said as we are of the last reported speech in *Hansard*. Is it possible for men to so continue admitting a truth in their study, and ignoring it in their teaching, and still have an un-

questionable right to the description of honest? So, too, with scientific matters. Read many of the sermons delivered—the majority—and, for any indication therein, the doctrine of evolution might be still unborn and modern science still undreamed of. How is it possible, when we think of all these and kindred things, to avoid the conclusion that modern Christianity is for the most part a huge system of hypocrisy and self-delusion? Good men among the clergy! Yes; but the best of men will become corrupted when caught in the meshes of such a system.

In ordinary life current Christianity makes no appeal to conviction, but only to self-interest. It appeals to one class for support on the grounds that it helps to conserve vested interests, to keep the lower classes in order, and to act as a curb on revolutionary tendencies. It appeals to another as holding out the promise of a competency to mental mediocrity, to a third as helping them to get on in life, and to a fourth as a means of relieving miseries which it in no small measure helps to perpetuate. Rich and poor are thus bribed into giving support; and behind all is the sheer apathy and conservatism of people which induce them to regard everything established as inevitable.

How many parents are there who support Church or Chapel because they have a family and wish to get their sons and daughters on in life? How many business men—particularly shopkeepers—are there who *invest* in religion as they would in company shares, and pay subscriptions to Church and Chapel in the same spirit that they pay out cheques to advertising agents? The early Christians *may* have believed in Jesus because of the prophets that went before him, the modern Christian certainly believes because of the *profits* that come after him. It may be a matter of dispute whether we run our business on Christian lines, or our Christianity on business lines; it is certain, however, that with a large number Christianity is well summed up by Ruskin in the sentence, "If engineers could build a tunnel to hell, Christians would invest their money in it, and stop building churches for fear of lowering the dividends." Let us take away from Christianity all that it gains from the power of custom, of social prestige, and rich endowments, let it depend for support upon simple conviction, and how great would its influence be, how long would its power endure? Only so long as the indifference of the people permitted it to exist. As it is, people take Christianity because it is here, because they find it, in a narrow sense, profitable, and because they are not sufficiently in love with truth to face social ostracism and discomfort to obtain it.

It is these two things—vested interests and indifference—that makes the work of reformers, and Freethought reformers in particular, more difficult than it would otherwise be. If we had to fight sincere conviction only the work, while hard, would yet be comparatively easy. But what amount of argument can appeal to people whose ears are stopped by self-interest, and who, in every sovereign that Christianity brings them, and in every advantage it is supposed to secure them, find a fresh reason for professing a belief in it. What we have to do is to get rid of the delusion that, in dealing with the professors of Christianity, we are dealing with thoroughly upright men, who have adopted religion because of an intense conviction of its genuineness. Some may come under this category, but the majority have adopted it as a professional career; and, once having adopted it, class prejudice blinds their eyes and stops their ears to everything against its pretensions.

And they are helped most powerfully by the sheer indifference of the many, and the studied ignoring of religious questions by others. The majority of people are, as I have said, simply indifferent. They have no particular convictions either way; although, if occasion demanded, force of habit would induce them to describe themselves as Christians. It is this class that constitute the real danger—people with no opinions worth talking of, or opinions to which they attach no value. And their very indifference to

real and much-needed reforms makes them a valuable ally to the enemy. For in this work there is no standing on one side, no such thing as neutrality. The man who does not do something to remedy a wrong or redress a superstition, is giving a passive support to their existence.

And next to this class come those who, in their anxiety for social work, stand on one side from the Freethought fight altogether. The sociologist of the future will find something to be amazed at in the fact that, with a religion maintaining an army of some 50,000 men commanding huge revenues, enjoying positions of social distinction and privilege, people who style themselves scientific students of social questions can yet leave theology severely alone. The existing trouble over the vital matter of religious education *ought* to be enough to convince such that religious beliefs and religious organisations have to be dealt with sooner or later. The enervating influence of Church and Chapel, the steady drain upon the national intelligence and the national energy by religious beliefs, is not to be set on one side as of no consequence. We must decide one way or the other. Either they are of immense value, and deserve far more support than they get, or they are a great danger, and ought to be swept away.

To my mind, the balance of evidence lies in the latter direction. No useful purpose is served by the current religious organisations that would not be better served by purely secular organisations. No teaching of any consequence is enforced by the current creed. In all matters touching physical science it has long been reduced to silence, although it once posed as a law giver. In social matters it has nothing to teach, nothing to add to the knowledge that has grown up outside religion altogether. And in morals it can only go on repeating the stalest of platitudes, while studiously ignoring the fact that man's morality is not born of memorised texts, but is the inevitable expression of the interaction of organism and environment. Religion is always in arrear of the age, and orthodox Christianity is now so far behind the times that its very professors are ashamed. And its revised, up-to-date form is but the gloss of civilisation which self-interest puts upon outworn savagery.

C. COHEN.

Cities in Heaven.

RELIGIOUS people are fond of talking about the heavenly Jerusalem, and they fancy that the idea of a golden city somewhere up in the skies is a peculiarly Christian conception. So far from this being the case, however, it would seem that any faith which is connected with a city tends to elevate that city into the regions of the upper atmosphere. Islamism is chiefly concerned with Mecca; and Mecca originated as an appanage of the "Caaba"—the prehistoric temple which was so greatly venerated in that part of Arabia, that Muhammad was compelled to adopt it in the new religion he promulgated. According to Islamic tradition, therefore, the Caaba is situated immediately under a celestial Caaba, standing in the midst of Paradise as the Caaba stands in the midst of Mecca; and, as pious Moslems compass the terrestrial Caaba once a year, so the angels compass its celestial prototype every day.

Many ages before Muhammad, however, there was another city in western Asia, far more celebrated than Mecca—namely, the city of Babylon. Babylon was the seat of an ancient religion which spread its influence far and wide, and it contained several noted temples. It is therefore not surprising that its enthusiastic inhabitants believed it to be something more than other cities. But Babylonia contained other cities of coeval antiquity, which occasionally disputed the claim for sanctity with the metropolis. There were especially Niffer, Erech, and Eridu. The Akkadian story of the Creation, discovered by Mr. Pinches a few years ago, attempted

to reconcile the claims of these competing cities. According to this authority, there was once a time when nothing existed except the God Merodach. Feeling lonely—or looking for something to pass eternity—Merodach suddenly developed a constructive fit. First of all he prepared his models. He constructed a district with a river running through it, and built four cities. There was Niffer, with its central temple, E Kura; Erech, with its central temple, E Ana; Eridu, with E Eli; and Babylon, with E Sagila. And all the gods and all the demons were called forth by Merodach, and they dwelt in these four divine cities with great joy. Merodach then descended to more material labors. He made dust, and mixed it with water, and formed an immense cake—very like a currant bun, if we may trust the small clay tablets which preserve the geographical ideas of the Babylonians. This cake was the earth, according to Babylonian notions. Merodach furnished the earth with seeds and trees and grasses, and then supplied it with animals. Furthermore, he founded four cities exactly like the celestial models he had just constructed. Terrestrial Niffer was placed immediately under the heavenly Niffer. Erech under Erech, and Eridu under Eridu, and Babylon under the celestial Babylon. In short, the country of Babylonia was situated immediately under its celestial counterpart, and reproduced on earth the geography of heaven. Babylonia was the holy land for its inhabitants, and they were quite satisfied that all its features were reproduced in the abode of the Gods. But the Babylonians were not the only people who had holy cities. The Phenicians had their towns, which a patriotic piety imagined to be of divine foundation. We have not such detailed information regarding these cities as we have of the Babylonian, so we cannot say that the Phenicians imagined that their cities were situated directly under their heavenly counterparts; but Monsieur Philippe Berger has lately described to the Academie des Inscriptions at Paris a text recently discovered near Sidon, which shows pretty clearly that the Sidonians believed in a glorified copy of their city somewhere up in the skies. The inscription in question was set up by Bodastart, king of the Sidonians, a monarch of the same dynasty as Eshmunazar, whose inscribed coffin is one of the treasures of the Louvre, and who seems to have reigned about 800 B.C., though he may have been earlier. In this inscription Bodastart compares his own realm, "Sidon of the sea" (*Sidon-sur-mer* as one of the French savants expresses it) with the Sidon of the "lofty heavens—the land of gems." The mention of the celestial Sidon as the *eres reshaphim*, or "land of gems," indicates that St. John the Divine was a plagiarist when he distributed his sardius and topaz and chrysolite and other things so lavishly in the foundations of his new Jerusalem. Furthermore, the new text reminds one very strongly of Ezekiel xxviii., 11-16, which puts the city of Tyre in a very mythological setting. It is true the passage speaks literally of "the King of Tyre," but in view of what we have just seen in Babylonia and Sidon, it must be evident that the prophet is alluding—not to an earthly monarch, or a terrestrial city; but to a glorified and ideal locality. Ezekiel describes the sovereign of Tyre as supernaturally perfect, full of wisdom, completely beautiful, and radiantly glorious. He walked in Eden, the garden of the Gods; and he was covered with the twelve sacred precious gems which figured in the breastplate of the high priest of Yahveh (Exod. xxviii., 17-20). In our version, it is true, only *nine* of these gems are mentioned as pertaining to Tyre; but in the Septuagint translation, the whole twelve are there, showing that later Hebrew scribes recognised the likeness between the decoration of the heathen personage and the ornaments of Yahveh's high-priest. Furthermore, the prophet says to this personification of Tyre, "Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth: and I set thee so that thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down *in the midst of*

the stones of fire." That is to say, Ezekiel attributes to the paradisaical Tyre a setting of "stones of fire," as the Sidonian king considers his celestial Sidon as being a "land of gems."

When, therefore, the Moslems speak of the Caaba and its celestial counterpart, they are only applying the ancient Semitic myths to a fresh object. Adam, having seen the divine Caaba in Paradise, desired to build a copy on earth, to be the centre of similar ceremonies; the building having been destroyed by the Flood, Abraham was vouchsafed a vision of its heavenly prototype so that he could construct a copy immediately beneath the latter, etc., etc. All this is obviously a re-statement of the story that Merodach laid out Babylonia upon the model of a celestial Babylonia which had been prepared for the habitation of the Gods.

In like manner early Christian thought imagined that the Palestinian Jerusalem had a celestial city suspended over it; and St. John, therefore, considered it quite natural that, after he had got aid of the sky and the earth, the New Jerusalem should descend out of heaven like a transformation scene in a pantomime, and occupy the exact place of the old Jerusalem. The leading feature of the Bible is its utter want of originality.

CHILPERIC,

Vivisection.

ACCORDING to *Nuttall's Dictionary*, Vivisection is "experimentation on animals whilst alive, for the purpose of making some physiological discovery." This is the sense in which the word is commonly used by Anti-vivisectionists. Properly speaking, vivisection (from *vivus*, living, and *sectio*, cutting) is the *cutting* of living beings, so that Anti-vivisectionists take a decided liberty in extending the meaning of the term to include experiments which do not involve cutting, such as experiments with drugs and diseases, while at the same time they arbitrarily narrow the meaning of the word by restricting it to experimentation for scientific purposes. To my mind the cutting of living animals is equally vivisection when no scientific experiment is intended, as when animals are cut or wounded or killed for sport or profit or convenience, or in sheer recklessness or cruelty. I am strongly of opinion that the humanitarian crusade should be directed against the infliction of suffering in general, and should not be vitiated by any special animus against scientific research, especially when the animals experimented upon are rendered insensible to pain by the use of anæsthetics.

That Anti-vivisectionists should, indeed, demand the total suppression of vivisection under anæsthetics, as in Deputy Surgeon-General Thornton's article in the *Freethinker*, is a sign that their objection to experiments on living beings is partly one of sentiment and prejudice. For the humanitarian or kindly portion of their motives I have very great respect and sympathy; for the prejudice against *painless* experimentation I can feel no respect whatever. It is true that the shedding of blood and the cutting of living tissues excite horror and disgust in many minds; but when an animal is unable to feel pain our reason should save us from being carried away by feelings as irrational as those which condemned the dissection of human bodies and caused the Church to prohibit such necessary and now customary means of obtaining accurate knowledge of the human anatomy.

Scientific vivisection is already prohibited by law except under anæsthetics or when permitted by special certificate. In considering whether any further restriction is necessary we ought to note that vivisection, or its equivalent so far as the infliction of pain is concerned, is carried out on an almost infinitely larger scale for unscientific purposes without any interference on the part of the law. Many millions, probably thousands of millions, of lobsters, crabs, mussels, cockles, whelks, shrimps, periwinkles, etc., are boiled alive every year, in order to serve as luxuries or delicacies rather than as neces-

sary food for mankind. Many millions of oysters are chewed alive. Small fishes, frogs, etc., are impaled on hooks as live-bait to catch large fish. Millions of worms, etc., are similarly threaded on hooks by anglers and by sea-fishermen. Millions of flies are subjected to lingering deaths by being caught on sticky papers, or are poisoned by strychnine. Bees are suffocated by burning brimstone to enable us to rob them of their honey with impunity. Worms, and many other small creatures of various kinds, are torn asunder in vast numbers in ploughing and digging. Of course, the sufferings of insects and other lowly organisms may be ridiculed as beneath our consideration, though to the wide sympathies of a Shakespeare the crushed beetle feels a pang as great as when a giant dies, and the sensitively humane poet Cowper rightly condemns the man who needlessly sets foot upon a worm. If the Anti-vivisectionist cares more especially for vertebrates, he may observe that rats, mice, foxes, rabbits, and many other animals are caught in traps which often break their limbs or otherwise cause them excruciating agony. Horses and other animals are branded with red-hot irons. Enormous numbers of large and small wild beasts are shot or poisoned or otherwise subjected to violent deaths for food, for sport, for their skins, for their ivory tusks, for their antlers, or merely to get rid of them, as with the "rabbit plague" in Australia. Thousands of millions of fishes entangled in the meshes of nets are suffocated either while being dragged through the sea or by being removed from the water. Whales, seals, and other animals are harpooned to death. Tortoises are put on fires to make the shell scale off for tortoise-shell ornaments, and are then allowed to crawl back into the sea. Birds are shot by the million for sport, for food, for the sake of their beautiful feathers, and millions more which escape for the moment die painful and lingering deaths through the wounds inflicted or by slow starvation through being deprived of their parents while young and helpless nestlings. Innumerable wild birds are also captured and imprisoned for life; and the sufferings and deaths attending their capture and their confinement deserve consideration, although not inflicted for scientific purposes. Of the vast numbers of inferior organisms systematically destroyed by man it is needless to specify particulars. The fact is that human existence involves the destruction—and almost necessarily the *painful* destruction—of innumerable living beings as a matter of necessity, independently of the multitudes which are exterminated for amusement or to minister to human luxury or vanity.

Will the Anti-vivisectionist stop these ordinary cases where cruel sufferings are inflicted for unscientific purposes? Will he suppress the castration of horses, the spaying of sows, the ringing of pigs' noses, the blistering of horses' legs, the slow bleeding to death of calves and other animals to satisfy religious requirements or to whiten the flesh? Will he undertake to prevent the circumcision of Jewish infants and Mohammedan children? Will he demand penal laws against the impalement of beetles, butterflies, etc., on pins by entomologists, and against the hooking of fish by anglers? Will he stop the skinning and cutting up of live eels, the crimping of live cod, the catching of live mice by cats, the destruction of all kinds of vermin? Will he prohibit the shooting, and the useless wounding, of game and of wild animals in general, or will he say that while cruel sport without anaesthetics is fully licensed, painless research under anaesthetics must be absolutely forbidden? Will he maintain that the pursuit of knowledge is of less importance than the amusement of the idle classes, and that food for the body is of higher value than food for the mind? Has he, moreover, observed that some of the most highly civilised nations in Christendom train their whole male populations in the art of vivisectioning each other with bullet and bayonet, with sword and lance, and with ydippe shells or other terrible explosives?

I think that Anti-vivisectionists would spend their time more profitably—by which I mean they

would do more to lessen the infliction of agonies on living beings—if they endeavoured to mitigate some of the above-mentioned evils, instead of wasting their efforts in the vain attempt to procure the total suppression of scientific experimentation upon living beings. For example, they might appeal to the feelings of women until they gave up the use of the plumage of humming-birds, egrets, and all other birds which are obtained only by cruel and otherwise unnecessary processes of destruction. For my own part, too, I think that time and money would be well spent in ascertaining the most humane methods of killing animals used for food or destroyed for other reasons. If, for instance, the millions of crustacea which are annually killed by being plunged into boiling water could be instantaneously and painlessly killed by electric shock, or if sheep and cattle could similarly be struck down by the equivalent of a flash of lightning, the amount of pain thus prevented (and also the diminution or abolition of the brutalising or demoralising effects involved in the ordinary modes of butchery in slaughter-houses) would be unspeakably greater than the amount of pain and "moral evil" which would be avoided by the absolute prohibition of such scientific experimentation as is now permitted. The attempt to save pain to this enormous extent would, however, be effectually barred by the Anti-vivisectionists if their proposed law could be carried out, since the necessary experiments would be prohibited. Such a law would paralyse scientific humanity in this and other directions, while it would leave unscientific ignorance still carrying out painful and clumsy methods of destruction on the most stupendous scale. To such a *reductio ad absurdum*, as well as to other inconsistencies, does the ordinary Anti-vivisectionist commit himself.

The conclusion I arrive at is that I would not entirely suppress scientific vivisection, either in its milder or its severer forms. To penalise painless vivisection is mere fanaticism. To penalise the infliction of pain for scientific purposes without equally penalising the infliction of pain for non-scientific purposes is a special restraint upon scientific research. I would, however, endeavor to restrict the infliction of pain in this as in all other cases of human interference with animals. I would only allow vivisection under defined conditions, as required by the present law, or such as would furnish reasonable excuse for the pain inflicted. This excuse or justification, I think, should be judged by the standard afforded by the current morals or ordinary practices of the age, rather than by some "moral" (or ultra-moral) ideal not attained or attainable in human affairs generally.

W. P. BALL.

A New Shilling Month.

SHILLING MONTH is a popular institution. It may be a profitable one—in a narrow sense, but as giving an opportunity to all, rich and poor, to contribute to the carrying on of Freethought work. The readers of this journal are requested to send me during January at least one shilling, and as many more shillings as they can spare, for "the good old cause." Every subscription will be publicly acknowledged in these columns, so that subscribers who do not wish to have their names published should indicate some other form of acknowledgment.

All the money I receive in this way will be divided into two equal portions. One half will be handed over to the National Secular Society—whose funds I never touch, not even to the extent of the cost of postage stamps. The other half will be devoted to the maintenance of the Sunday evening Freethought platform at the Athenæum Hall.

First, as to the National Secular Society. This Society is much in need of funds at the present

moment. A dead set has been made at one or two of its wealthier supporters, in the interest of other enterprises; with results, in one case, that have already had sufficient publicity. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the "rank and file" of the party will do their best to make good such losses. There is a power in numbers. The poor men's twenty shillings are equal to the rich man's pound. Besides, the work of the N.S.S. has always been a popular work, and it is fitting that the "rank and file" should rally to its support. Preparations, for instance, will soon have to be made for the outdoor propaganda during the summer, which, for this purpose, begins the first Sunday in May. This propaganda is chiefly carried on in London, but if funds permit it will be extended to the provinces. Everything, of course, depends ultimately upon financial resources. And I beg to remark, in reference to certain dishonest and malicious criticisms, that the N.S.S. has always relied very greatly upon *special* funds. Owing to its peculiar constitution it has never been able to trust to members' subscriptions as a serious source of income; for the Branches up and down the country have too much of a struggle to find funds for their own local work to be in a position to contribute any important sums to the Central Executive.

Next, as to the Athenæum Hall. Since the autumn of 1896—that is, for nearly six years and a half—I have borne the whole responsibility of the lectures there; and, with the exception of the Camberwell Secular Hall, for which I lately raised the sum of £50, this Athenæum Hall is the only one in London regularly open for Sunday Freethought meetings. It has always been my practice to pay the lecturers who occupy the platform in my absence a reasonable fee for their services; in fact, they have nearly all done better there than elsewhere in London. Generally this has entailed a loss, and sometimes a considerable loss—that is to say, I have had to supplement the takings at the door out of my own pocket—in other words, out of my own earnings. Miss Vance and one or two others know that this has been no joke to me. Still, I have never solicited assistance until now. The Secular Society, Limited, once voted me £10 towards this enterprise, but that was unasked, and it was all I ever received. I am of opinion, however, that the Athenæum Hall platform does not deserve support the less because I have assumed its full responsibility. I did so because a platform was necessary, and no one else was ready to undertake it.

Owing to certain circumstances, only too well known to my readers, I have had to ask my wife to take charge of the Athenæum Hall part of the fund. It must be distinctly understood, therefore, that every subscription for this half of the new Shilling Month fund will go to her absolutely.

I do not mean, however, to do anything arbitrarily. The Shilling Month fund will be divided as aforesaid unless I receive other instructions. Subscribers who wish their shillings to go preferentially to either the National Secular Society or the Athenæum Hall enterprise (per Mrs. Foote) will please say so, and their wishes shall be respected.

I now leave the matter with my readers. I do not know whether they will yield a generous response to this appeal, but I am sure they should. There must be a crowd of them who have given nothing in the shape of money to Freethought for a good while; and this is their opportunity.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Chinaman's Fourth Letter. THE WAY OUT OF THE TROUBLE.

BY A CHINAMAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SOME few days ago I had the good fortune to meet a very pious English gentleman who had for years given large sums to keep up the Missionary Propaganda in China. I asked him what his object was in attempting to force his religion upon us. I called his attention to the fact that we had been a civilised nation for many thousands of years, and that before our country was invaded by missionaries we were a law abiding people. Many European writers had shown that there was less crime amongst us than amongst any other people. Moreover, twice as many of us could live in comfort off a square mile of land as was possible in Europe or America.

As our morality and conduct was of the highest order, and as we were contented and happy, what did he wish to change? What could be changed that would make it better for us? He admitted all this, but said our religion was all wrong. The missionaries that he was helping to support wished us to become a Christian people. They wished us to believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved. But I said countless millions of good and virtuous Chinamen have lived blameless lives and died thousands of years before Christ is said to have been born, and many millions have died since that never even heard of him. Certainly they got on very well for a long time without being saved. He said we were heathens, and the Bible held out no hope for us. "Jesus Christ was the only name given under heaven whereby one could be saved." But certainly no one would believe for a moment that all the good people of the greatest empire on earth would be lost or burnt in fire and brimstone to all eternity because they did not believe something that they had never heard of. He could only say "God's will be done." Why should we accept Christianity? We have three fairly good religions already, which will compare favorably with any three kinds of Christianity. If we changed our religion it would not put better coats on our backs. It certainly would not give us more to eat. Where could one find a Christian that could get as much out of soil as we do? Would our morals be improved? If so, where could we find an example of a higher morality amongst Christians than that possessed by us before we had ever seen a missionary. Would we be made happier? If so, where could we find a nation where peace and happiness would be more secure than in China before our country was invaded by foreigners? No. What then was the advantage to be gained? Why do you send missionaries to our country to stir up strife and cause an infinite amount of bloodshed and suffering if there is nothing to be gained by it.

We certainly do not want them, we will never accept their religion, that is absolutely impossible. We would not have it at any price, and all attempts to force it upon us is vain and hopeless. Therefore why not keep the missionaries at home and save your own money and our lives?

But, says he, our Lord has commanded and we must obey, "Go thou and preach the gospel to every living thing."

This to my mind is a wicked and mischievous doctrine, and I have no hesitation in saying it ought to be abandoned at once, and before another life is added to the long list that have already perished. This supposed command contains ten words, every one of which has cost the Chinese nation a million and a half of human lives. I think it will be admitted by all, that it would be a good thing for all parties concerned if this doctrine could be disregarded or abandoned. There is plenty of precedent for doing so. Other mischievous doctrines have been abandoned with good results. Why not this, the worst of all? For instance, less than 800 years ago, innocent old women were hunted all over Europe and burnt at the stake for the impossible crime of witchcraft, a crime which every child knows to be impossible at the present moment. It was believed in those dreadful days that these old women had supernatural powers. Some of them were burnt for causing storms at sea by stirring up soap-suds with their stockings. The Pope of Rome, who is infallible, commanded his priest to use more vigilance in searching out witches and putting them to death, especially those that caused the bad weather, while the Protestants, not to be outdone by the Catholics, pursued and burnt supposed witches by the thousand because they found these words in their Bible: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." It is admitted by Christian historians that some hundreds of thousands of poor old women suffered a painful and ignominious death because the teachers of a debased theology found in their so called Holy Book this dreadful command. But the number of lives which has been lost by this mischievous doctrine is nothing to be compared with the still more terrible doctrine, "Go thou and preach the gospel to every living creature." For instance, it has been

estimated that about two hundred thousand innocent people lost their lives in Europe in 200 years on account of supposed witchcraft before this villainous doctrine was abandoned.

But in China during the last sixty years rather more than fifteen millions of our people have lost their lives on account of the attempt to force Christianity upon us; or, say, about seventy five times as many of my countrymen have perished on account of having the gospel preached to them during the last sixty years as perished in Europe in 200 years on account of the twin doctrine of witchcraft, Confucius. In fact, all our great sages have taught us over and over again to have nothing whatsoever to do with anyone who pretends to have dealings with the supernatural. They have told us if we allow supernaturalism to enter our country it can only result in the most awful calamity, and having all the horrors of the Middle Ages in Europe before us. We naturally believe that our great philosophers were quite right, and we have been attempting to keep all kinds of foreign superstition out of the country, while Christian nations have been equally determined to force their own particular kind of superstition upon us. We do not believe any of the supernatural doctrines brought to our country. They all appear extremely foolish and absurd to us, and I feel sure that no new form of supernaturalism can ever hope to find a foothold in our country.

May I, therefore, pray you to abandon the wicked doctrine of the ten mischievous words, and withdraw your missionaries and devil dodgers from our country. We do not want them.—
Yours sincerely,
A. H. SIN.

Shakespeare's Philosophy.

SOME have set themselves to evolve a *perfect* man, a great exemplar, a universal pattern or ideal. Such a conception betrays benighted ignorance of the conditions of the task. No human being can embrace perfection in *every* part; for the *complete* development of one organ naturally implies the subordination of the others. The utmost that can be attained is a *well-balanced* man—a man having nothing in extreme and nothing in excess. And the well-balanced man will only maintain his equilibrium in a well-balanced environment, which puts no excessive strain upon any one faculty, but bears with equal tension upon all. So that, even here, we see that an ideal man requires an ideal world to live in; otherwise he is bound to be distorted from the true ideal. Such a well-balanced individual would be an insipid creature. He would be devoid of light and shade, and would never arouse either interest or enthusiasm. Shakespeare's sound Anglo-Saxon sense saved him from the error of attempting to portray ideal perfection, and his greatest plays, like *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, and *Julius Caesar*, are all presentments of what has been called "the infirmity of noble minds." The leading characters in all these dramas possess exalted natures; but they also exhibit fatal flaws, which eventually work their ruin. Shallow sentimentalists deplore the fact that these great dramas are tragedies, and inquire why they could not have a "happy ending." But Shakespeare soared above the invertebrate optimism which imagines that.

By going wrong all things come right. He realised that in the sphere of human action, as in the whole domain of the universe, the laws of cause and effect are irrefragable, and that a wrong entails the same consequences whether it be originated by criminal design or caused by innocent error. His was the virile mind that boldly faces the facts of nature, not the craven spirit that veils the unpleasant truth.

Shakespeare's impartiality demonstrates his inborn sagacity. Unfettered and unhampered by any paltry theory of ethics, politics, religion, or philosophy, he steers his course through all the rocks and storms and shallows of human life. He charms all schools, and satisfies none. They are often at the surface; he is always at the heart. They seek to stretch all things upon their procrustean bed, while he airily points out that there is more in heaven and earth than is dreamed of in *their* philosophy; and that human nature cannot be gauged by their yardstick, or measured in their bushol. And if he searches deeper into fact, he rises superior to fable. His healthy intellect throws off all the phantoms of superstition. Although he appreciates the failings of his auditory, and can play even upon their infirmities to produce a given effect, he himself remains fancy free. He brings elves and witches and deities and ghosts upon the stage, but is never himself deceived by the tales which

The superstitious idle-headed eld
Received, and did deliver to our age.

Directly after Hamlet has met a denizen of the other world, and has had a full description of Purgatory given him, he speaks of death as

The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns.

He saw through the ecclesiastics who professed to know all things about *post-mortem* existence; and nearly all the ecclesiastical persons who tread his stage are drawn either as self-seeking hypocrites or brainless idiots. Shakespeare's knowledge of man in life rendered him suspicious of what he was told regarding man in death.

—From "*Shakespeare the Sempiternal*" by Chilperic in the *Secular Annual*.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Perks, M.P., has been giving his fellow Methodists a piece of advice. He advises them not to accept any State aid for the schools, now that the Education Bill is passed. "If the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans choose to do so, let them. They will only make clericalism stink in the nostrils of the British people." Good advice, but we doubt much if they will follow it. The Dissenter will, of course, continue to protest against the State subsidising Episcopalianism, and grab all he can for his own organisation. It has never yet, apparently, struck the "Nonconformist Conscience" that to protest against the State patronising religion, while at the same time taking all the State aid that can be given, and, like *Oliver Twist*, asking for more, is enough to make outsiders treat the protest as dictated by jealousy rather than principle. It is, indeed, a nice problem to decide just the amount of pressure needed to make Dissenters act up to their much vaunted principle of "A Free Church in a Free State."

Even Mr. Perks' advice is dictated as a mere matter of dishing the enemy. If it is wrong and against the principles of dissent to accept State aid for voluntary schools—which are really religious schools—in the future, it was equally wrong for them to accept it in the past. Yet so long as Nonconformists felt that they were getting the best of the arrangement no complaint was made. It is only when matters are re-arranged and they feel that the rival religious body will get the best of the bargain, that it is desired that State aid for voluntary schools is contrary to the principles of Dissent, and it will be best to leave those unprincipled—but Christian—Anglicans and Roman Catholics to take State aid alone. A very peculiar product, this "Nonconformist Conscience!"

But why should Mr. Perks' advice stop at State aid for schools? Why not extend it in all other directions in which Dissenters receive State aid? Why not advise Methodists and Baptists and the rest of the delightful conglomerate that makes up Dissenting England to refuse relief from chapel rates, paving rates, and all matters on which Dissenters do receive the assistance of the State? And further still, why not removal of all religious disabilities whatsoever? Make opinion absolutely equal before the law. Advocate that the State shall be absolutely impartial, and let every opinion sink or swim upon its own merits. If Mr. Perks will advocate this, he will show that there is at least one Dissenter in the country who understands the meaning of the principles he professes, and who is honest enough to carry them out.

Apropos of the above we see that the *British Weekly* is advocating that a Government pension be given to the Rev. Thomas Shankland, who has been appointed editor of the publications of the Welsh Baptist Historical Society. Mr. Shankland has, it appears, thrown much light on "the early history of Nonconformity in Wales," and a Government pension would place him in a position of independence to devote the whole of his time to the work. Well, we have nothing to say against the Government assisting historical research, only the question suggests itself whether if Mr. Shankland had been a Church of England minister studying the records of Episcopalianism, or a Freethought advocate studying the development of Freethought, whether, in either of those cases the *British Weekly* would have felt inclined to recommend a pension. We have our doubts.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell, Dr. Parker's partial successor at the City Temple, believes there is a value in mystery. So do we; and its value varies from the eighty-pounds-a-year preacher right up to the £15,000 a-year Archbishop.

The Rev. G. W. R. Mackenzie, curate-in-charge of Winford, Somerset, officiated in the parish church on Sunday, and on Monday shot himself through the head, owing, it is supposed, to his "money embarrassments." The case is one of many which show the falsity of Talmage's assertion that only Atheists commit suicide. It also shows how little the boasted moral power of Christianity supports its adherents through times of trouble.

Professor Sornagni, of Pavia University, has discovered the microbe which causes hydrophobia. The cure of this terrible and formerly incurable disease will now be greatly facilitated. According to Christian theory, God purposely designed and created the innumerable disease microbes which inflict so much misery and destruction among mankind. Science is thwarting God's plans by discovering and killing his microbes, thus preventing or curing the diseases which he sends for our benefit or for his own pleasure.

More curiosities of the workings of Providence! A gigantic crucifix, says the *Malay Mail*, has been erected on the highest mountain peak in the province of Castellon, and a mighty pilgrimage had been organised to the spot. Nearly ten thousand people had assembled, and the procession, with the Bishop of Tortosa at its head, was making its way up the mountain side, when the alarm was given that the forest adjoining was on fire. The flames spread with fearful rapidity, several miles of forest being soon ablaze, and among the pilgrims menaced with such danger a desperate panic ensued. The whole of what had been an orderly mass was at once turned into a shrieking, swooning, distracted mob; many fainted, and others in their flight fell down the rocky slopes of the hill. The number of accidents was considerable.

There seems a deal of perturbation just now as to the cause of Why people stay away from Church. The *Morning Leader* is the last to throw its columns open for the discussion of the topic. There is the usual amount of nonsense in the letters printed; indeed, we doubt whether any newspaper editor would admit on any other topic the kind of drivel they publish on this. Some of the letters do manage, however, to say something passable. One correspondent thinks it is because "The fool of the family is sent to college as an investment, and can no more make a sermon than an airship." Another very pertinently asks, "Can you imagine a thinker and a reader wasting his time going to church or chapel to listen to a man stuck upon a platform or in a pulpit, talking to him without the slightest chance of his asking the preacher to prove what he is talking about?" Well, it *does* need imagination for the picture.

Old Bishop Porteous wisely prepared for this dropping off in Church attendance. The church at Hunton, Kent, is kept full by reason of a legacy left by him, now amounting to one shilling and ninepence per Sunday, to the six most regular attendants at Church. We commend this idea to others. Just now any church could be filled at a fee of tenpence halfpenny a service. And in many cases there is really as much to be said in favor of compensating people for listening to sermons as there is for paying parsons to preach them.

One of the little wonders chronicled by the daily press is the fact that a certain clergyman has done a hard day's work. The Rev. W. B. Soole, curate of St. Mary's Church, went to the Doncaster Gas Works and invited the men to attend a special service in the evening. They replied that they were too tired after their day's work, and that if he worked, which they said he never did, he would not go to evening services. In answer to this the curate, clad in his flannel cricketing suit, did an actual day's work at the gas works, the rector bringing him his dinner. But we are not told that he went to any evening service afterwards, so that the chief point at issue is left undecided after all. He played dominoes in public on Wednesday evening, it is true, but this is a very different thing from listening to tedious sermons and foolish prayers by the hour together in a church. Anyhow, this clerical worker has benefited somebody, for there was considerable betting over the affair among the men, and much money changed hands.

The press paragraphs on the subject are headed "Curate as Gas-man." The latter term, by the way, is not altogether an inappropriate one for preachers in general, though the kind of gas they manufacture is not usually adapted for giving light, but rather for producing an atmosphere of mental fog and darkness.

Mr. Wm. R. Fox was discoursing to a meeting in the Shoreditch Tabernacle on Saturday, Jan. 10, when he suddenly fell forward and expired before medical aid could be summoned. Had this happened to a Freethought lecturer whilst speaking from the platform of a Secular Hall, it would have been described by the pious as a judgment of God. How do they account for the present case?

The Rev. J. J. E. Robinson was charged with disorderly conduct in Burlington Arcade, which is private property. He persisted in soliciting subscriptions from the shopkeepers, in spite of regulations which prohibit this kind of thing. He consequently had to be ejected. When outside he refused

to go away, and flourished his umbrella, causing a crowd of two hundred people to collect. He was then taken into custody. The magistrate discharged the reverend offender. We doubt whether a Secularist under similar circumstances would have been let off so easily.

In August last the Rev. Sidney Beauchamp rector of Little Lavers, in Essex, was summoned by a young girl named Alice Pavitt for the maintenance of her illegitimate child, of whom she alleged the parson was the father. The summons was dismissed, principally on the strength of a document put in by the defendant, and which read as follows: "I, Alice Pavitt, solemnly declare that the accusation against the Rev. S. Beauchamp is untrue, and I withdraw any imputation of any improper conduct with him, and also declare that I have never received any pecuniary or other compensation from him on signing this document." This, the defendant alleged, had been written in the presence of the girl—who had provided him with pen and ink for the purpose—and her mother, who also signed the paper. The girl, on the other hand, swore that it was a blank sheet of paper upon which she wrote her name and her mother put her mark, and that the defendant wrote nothing whatever while in their cottage. The sequel to the case has just begun by the prosecution of the rev. defendant on a charge of perjury. At the hearing of the case at Ongar Petty Sessions, on Saturday, Jan. 10, two public analysts deposed that the words "Alice Pavitt" in the first line, the signature "Alice Pavitt," and the words, "Eliza Pavitt, her mark," and the x were written with one kind of ink, and the remainder of the document was written with ink of a distinctly different composition. After further evidence the case was adjourned.

The Lord remembers us in our affliction. London is now blessed (?) with the presence of a couple of musical soul-savers from the other side of the Atlantic. Dr. Torrey, successor to Mr. Moody, and Mr. Alexander, described as Dr. Torrey's "singing colleague," arrived in London on Friday last, with the object of singing the people of Great Britain into the arms of Jesus. Both these gentlemen expect a wonderful spiritual awakening as the result of their entertainment. We shall see what we shall see. For ourselves, we prefer a Queen's Hall concert.

One thing, at least, is certain—they are no half-measure men. Dr. Torrey assured an Exeter Hall gathering that they "would hear no new doctrine from him, but the Bible again and again and again. He believed that Book from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse in Revelation." What a man! What an appetite! What a rebuke to the milk-and-water believers who, merely because the Bible is shown to be wrong in certain parts, throw those parts overboard! Again, we say, What an appetite!

After this we can appreciate Dr. Torrey's confession that he "came with no philosophy." Q.E.D. But the Gospel can do more than philosophy. Here is one of Dr. Torrey's proofs:—"At Christchurch, New Zealand, there was an Atheist leader at the meeting, and he went home and read the Bible, which he had not opened for years, and said to his wife, who had aided him in spreading Atheism: 'I have got converted to Jesus Christ.' She replied: 'I went to the meeting and did the same.'" Wonderful! It has all the marks of veracity about it. Observe them. Firstly, it was told in Exeter Hall, a place devoted to the Gospel. Secondly, it was told by Dr. Torrey, who converted the Atheist leader. Thirdly, it is well known that Atheist leaders never do open the Bible for years at a stretch. Fourthly, the conversion took place after attending a single meeting—as all these conversions do. Fifthly, both husband and wife were converted together—a clear proof of supernatural agency. And, lastly, Dr. Torrey is prepared to give the name of the Atheist leader on receipt of stamped and addressed envelope—at least, we presume so.

The *Christian World* is suffering from a severe attack of religious ophthalmia. Commenting on Mr. Frederic Harrison's New Year address, it quotes his reference to the education fight—carefully omitting his description of the Nonconformists as having been as great offenders against the principle of religious equality as the Anglicans—and asserts that the attitude of Nonconformists throughout has been as free from "ecclesiastical and polemical prejudice as anything could well be. They have not fought for their own hand, and they have no ends of their own to serve." Bearing in mind the spread-eagle journalism of Dr. Clifford and those with him, their repudiation of a system of complete secular education, and their advocacy of religious instruction in State schools, so long as it was of a kind they agreed with, the assertion is, as they say down East, a trifle thick. The advocacy of the Nonconformist party is quite as sectarian as that of the Anglicans and Roman Catholics, with a great

deal more empty talk about the rights of citizenship and religious equality. We have said this often before, but repetition is often necessary to drive home a simple truth.

A useful letter appears in the *Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury* of Tuesday, Jan. 6, on the education controversy, in which the writer goes to the root of the question by urging the necessity for purely secular education in State-supported schools. It is necessary, now that interest has been aroused on this important subject of the education of the rising generation, that this phase of the question should be kept well to the fore, and we trust that our readers will neglect no opportunity of advocating in the press and elsewhere the only just and permanent solution of the education difficulty—the adoption of the principle of free, compulsory, and secular education.

Among the devices for popularising Christianity, "Bethlehem Tableaux" have been presented with suitable staging and scenery at St. Clement's Church, City-road. Baby Jesus was a doll or model, which, of course, got over various difficulties that might have attended the introduction of a real, live infant. The Virgin Mary and her visitant, the male angel Gabriel, were represented by two young ladies. The parts of St. Joseph, St. Elizabeth, the "Three Angels," the Wise Men of the East, etc., were taken by other ladies and gentlemen of the congregation. A "property donkey" also joined the troupe to depict the Flight into Egypt. This partial revival of the old miracle plays, which had to be stopped owing to the scandals to which they gave rise, is intended especially to capture the children, for whom, indeed, such scenes are best adapted. Adult spectators might easily be led to ask themselves awkward questions concerning the possibility of a virgin mother, the predicament of St. Joseph as the husband of a virgin mother, the authority of dreams, the feasibility of a baby-god, and such other features of the Christian mythology as may be brought before their eyes in a tangible or realistic form.

Mary Ellen Ely was, the other day, convicted at Hull Quarter Sessions of fraudulent practices. She said that she had given her last shilling to the poor, visited the sick, and "lived according to the precepts of the Almighty." Part of these precepts were to engage halls for concerts that never came off, and vanish with the proceeds from sale of tickets. She was also, she said, "the virtuous mother of a large and scattered family." The sentence was nine months' imprisonment. The prisoner left the dock exclaiming, "Lord, thou hast abandoned me." Mrs. Ely may take heart; she will not be the only one of the Lord's faithful ones in His Majesty's prisons.

A case was heard at Warrington Police-court last week involving a charge of neglect of children against a man named Cullen and his sister. According to the evidence the man's wife died leaving a baby a month old, which for some months was taken care of by a friend named Mrs. Rylatt. Subsequently, however, the man had the child returned to his home, and it came into the custody of himself and his sister, by whom it was, as well as his other children, shockingly neglected. The interesting point in the case is the fact that the man asserted in his defence that a Roman Catholic priest insisted on the child being brought back, as Mrs. Rylatt was not a Roman Catholic. The chairman of the bench rightly said that this was a species of priestly intolerance which ought to be stopped. Perhaps the most effective way to stop it would have been to have charged the priest in question with being an accessory to the offence. We commend this case to the notice of the Rev. Edgar Waugh and the Bishop of Chester, by whom it was asserted that only Secularists ill-treated and assaulted children.

In glaring contrast with the punishment awarded to Mrs. Penruddocke for a similar offence, the man Cullen was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. But an even greater disparity was displayed in another case at Altrincham, reported in the same paper, and immediately below the case referred to above. In this case, which appears to have been of a far worse character than the other, one of the children having died through the neglect of the parents, the Shallows on the bench actually considered that justice would be done by the infliction of a fine of five shillings, including costs, upon the male prisoner, and dismissing the case against the female defendant! But this is a Christian country.

Mr. Piggot, the Clapton Messiah, has a serious rival, who resides in India. In a circular just to hand, and marked "For Circulation in Europe and America," this gentleman, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, issues a solemn warning to all and sundry. This gentleman with the many-jointed name is, it seems, "the true Messiah, come in the spirit and character of Jesus Christ." He has more than a hundred thousand

followers, his mission has been testified to by "signs and wonders," and he solemnly warns Mr. Piggot of the fate in store for him. The death of Mr. Piggot during Ahmad's lifetime is to be a sign of the latter's genuineness. This is to be brought about by prayer. But "If I die before Mr. Piggot I am not the true Messiah, nor am I from God." A fair challenge. Pity the Aquarium is not now available. An engagement of these rival Messiahs, praying each other out of existence, would be a splendid "draw," and in the long run the efficacy of prayer, on one side or the other, would be certain to be demonstrated.

Lord Justice Cozens-Hardy opened on Saturday, Jan. 10, the New Sunday schools at Providence Congregational Church, Uxbridge. After alluding to the small attention paid to what he might call the metaphysics of theology, he expressed the idea that it should be the part of each generation to decline to be bound by the stereotyped forms which were good enough for the preceding; we must alter the methods to suit the changing circumstances of the time. Just so. As the American candidate for Congress declared, "Them's my sentiments, and if you don't like them, they can be altered."

According to the Rev. Wm. Burgess, Superintendent of Wesleyan Missions in Italy, there is trouble brewing in that country owing to the spread of Protestantism there. Mr. Burgess asserts that the Pope has even called a meeting of Cardinals to take the matter into serious consideration, the outcome being the appointment of a committee to carry out well-devised plans to meet the emergency. He says further that it is hardly possible for an outsider to gauge the ferment of feeling throughout Italy, especially in the villages around Maggiore and in the Abruzzi, where the success of Methodist missions is rousing the bitterest opposition on the part of the priests; and now that the Pope and the Cardinals are aroused lively times may be expected. Very likely; the clashing war of sects and creeds has ever been a fruitful source of turmoil and strife, and will continue to be so, so long as sects and creeds exist.

The Rev. Wm. Carlile discoursed on "The Black List" at his church near the Monument on Sunday evening last. But don't be alarmed, he did not "give the show away." It was the list of habitual drunkards to be published under the new Act that he alluded to, *not* a list of parsons who have made themselves amenable to the laws.

The Government must beware! The Rev. J. M. Cumming has announced his intention to resist the operation of the new Education Act. He is a man of faith, and will not obey "the King, because God's will is first." And "they who would get behind men of faith (the Rev. Dr. Cumming, to wit) have to deal with God." That settles it. The Act is a dead letter.

In the United States the Southerners bitterly resent President Roosevelt's appointment of Dr. Crum, a negro gentleman, as collector at Charleston. They threaten a general uprising against negro office-holders in general. This, and the terrible lynchings of negroes which occasionally disgrace the Southern States, show how little effect Christianity has in restraining the passions and prejudices of a Christian people. Christian whites will not ride in the same car or worship in the same church as their black brothers, whom they profess to love as the children of one common Father in heaven. Loving their neighbor as themselves evidently does not include colored members of the race.

Questions.

By the sea, by the desert midnight sea,
Stands a youth,
His heart full of anguish, his head full of doubt,
And with sullen lips he questions the waves:—

"Oh, solve me the Riddle of Life,
The painful primordial riddle,
Which already has racked so many heads,
Heads in hieroglyphic caps,
Heads in turbans and black berrets,
Heads in wigs, and myriad other
Poor perspiring human heads.
What is the meaning of Man?
Whence comes he? Whither goes he?
Who dwells there above in the golden stars?"

The waves murmur their everlasting murmur,
The wind sweeps, the clouds scud,
The stars glitter indifferent and cold,
And a fool awaits an answer.

From *Heine*.

James Thomson ("B. V.")

To Correspondents.

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

Sunday, January 18, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road: 7.30, "Why Are the Churches Empty? The New Version of the Spider and the Fly."

W. CROMACK.—Pleased to receive your congratulations on the first number of the *Pioneer*. Ordering six copies of each issue is an unmistakable evidence of your sincerity. To others we feel inclined to say, "Go thou and do likewise." It is selling well, and a little extra effort on the part of our friends will make it one of the successes of Freethought journalism.

D. LANGSTON.—Thanks for cuttings. Always welcome and of use.

W. MANN.—Received with thanks. Will appear.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your sympathetic letter. We are sorry to learn that you, too, have been unwell, which makes your ready help the more appreciable. We shall bear your advice in mind.

W. PRATT.—Remittance to hand, with thanks. We are pleased to hear from one of our far-away, but valued, vice-presidents. It helps to at least minimise the sense of distance.

W. G. GILES.—Mr. Foote, as you will see, is unable to deal with your communication at present.

G. B., C. R., AND OTHERS.—The N. S. S. Education Manifesto is reprinting. Orders will be executed as speedily as possible.

A. LIDDLE.—MS. received. Glad you like the "get up" of the *Pioneer*. We are not surprised you found J. M. Wheeler's articles helpful. Thousands of others would agree with you on that point.

N. D.—Manifesto is out of print, but will be sent as soon as reprinted. Copies of *Pioneer* sent. Thanks for trouble in reference to the *Freethinker*. There is always plenty of latent bigotry, and it often takes all the best energies of advocates of fair play to prevent it breaking out.

G. WELBY.—Glad you like the *Pioneer*. The annual subscription is 1s. 6d.

WELL WISHER.—Yes, we do receive the paper. We do not feel quite warranted in thanking you for it, although our waste paper merchant might.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.

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.

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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.

Special.

I AM only able to send a word from a sick room to my readers this week. I told an enquiring correspondent in last week's *Freethinker* that I had been very well of late, but had caught a cold in the treacherous weather. It was a heavy task, as it proved, to get through my Tuesday's work on this journal, and I have been in my bedroom, and most of the time in bed, ever since. Fortunately I am getting better, but it is a painfully slow process, and I feel I shall have to be much more cautious as to my health and strength in future. As soon as possible I shall go off for a few days at the seaside. Some recuperation will be absolutely necessary, my doctor says, before I can take the platform again. Meanwhile I am obliged to cancel my engagement at Manchester on January 25.

Mr. Cohen kindly took my place at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. It was my birthday—a birthday in bed. He also presided in my stead at the Annual Dinner on Monday, which I was bitterly

disappointed to be unable to attend, though I rejoice to hear it was a great success.

Some subscriptions have reached me for "Shilling Month." But as they are not as numerous as they should be, and I don't feel able to cope with the correspondence just now, I propose to let the acknowledgments stand over till next week, when I trust the "saints" will have put me into a position to print a long, worthy, and even striking list. It will be headed by the subscription of one who understands, by nature, the full force of the proverb that he gives twice who gives quickly. Before the *Freethinker* ink was dry, as early as Thursday afternoon in last week, I received a cheque for one hundred shillings from a gallant veteran friend of the movement, Major John C. Harris, R.E. I mention it because he happens to be the very first subscriber, and because I think a good example is apt to be more inspiring than the best exhortation.

It will be remembered that one half the "Shilling Month" subscriptions will go to the funds of the National Secular Society, and the other half will be devoted to the maintenance of the Sunday evening Freethought platform at the Athenæum Hall. Those who wish their money to go to one or the other object by preference, instead of being divided, will please say so.

I really ought to hear from a thousand "saints" by next Tuesday morning. Don't hang about till the end of the month, those of you who mean to give at all; but say at once "How many shillings can I afford to send?" and then—SEND THEM.

G. W. FOOTE.

P.S.—I see that "A. E. F." of *Reynolds'*, whose bubble of Shelley nonsense I pricked, turns out to be Mr. A. E. Fletcher, formerly editor of the *Daily Chronicle*. He writes a strange letter to *Reynolds'* on the subject. It shall be printed in the *Freethinker* next week; with my answer. Mr. Fletcher evidently wants "the cheek taken out of him," and I will try to do it.

Sugar Plums.

THE "Special" contained at the head of these notes will be read with much regret by all. Mr. Foote's illness, we imagine, is not quite unconnected with the worries and anxieties of the past two or three years, and even with his imprisonment of now nearly twenty years ago. One cannot pass through these experiences without their having some effect, although their effects are not always directly apparent. He will have, we are sure, the sympathy and best wishes of all readers of the *Freethinker*. For the time being Mr. Cohen is responsible for the literary work of this journal.

In the absence of Mr. Foote, the Athenæum platform was filled by Mr. Cohen. There was a good attendance, and his lecture on "Lucian" gave evident satisfaction to all present. Mr. Cohen again occupies the same platform this evening (Jan. 18), taking for his subject "Why are the Churches Empty? The New Version of the Spider and the Fly." Several of the papers are filling their columns with this subject, and a *Freethinker's* view of the matter may not be uninteresting. At any rate, it will not be that offered by the parsons; and that, at least, is something. A little variety is always pleasant.

Mr. Cohen also presided at the *Freethinkers'* annual dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday last. There was a fine gathering, better than there has been for several years, in fact, which was in its way a silent but conclusive reply to the lamentations one hears concerning the future of the N.S.S. The toasts were limited to two, "The National Secular Society" and "Our Speakers and Writers," which, with the Chairman's address, provided sufficient oratorical "trimmings" for the occasion. Mr. E. B. Rose, an old member of the N.S.S., and late of South Africa, proposed the first toast, which was responded to by Mr. Victor Roger, who, as usual, with his eye

to business, took occasion to make a very earnest appeal for our new Shilling Fund. Mr. W. Hardacre proposed the toast of "Our Speakers and Writers" in a short but interesting speech, and Mr. Chilperic Edwards was instructively sarcastic in his reply.

Brief speeches, with plenty of first-class vocal and musical entertainment, was the order of the day—or night. Madame Saunders presided, as usual, at the piano. Madame Lovenez and Miss Edith Appleyard were the two lady vocalists of the evening. The last-mentioned lady made her first appearance at our gathering, but all hope that it will not be her last. Of Madame Lovenez all that need be said is that she was—Madame Lovenez, and to those who have heard her before that is sufficient. Her part in the duet, "The Still Lagoon," was much appreciated, and she was ably seconded by Mr. R. Stanley, who also sang with much effect two other songs. The lighter portion of the entertainment was provided by Mr. Harry Hudson and Mr. Will Edwards, who sang seven songs between them. In one sense it is a mercy they did not sing more. As it was, sore sides seemed to afflict nearly all who were listening to—and watching—their excruciatingly funny entertainment. The proceedings terminated with a few words from the Chairman and the singing of "Auld Lang Syne." The general verdict was "A most enjoyable evening." With which we heartily concur.

A new consignment of the Dresden Edition of Colonel Ingersoll's works is expected in the course of a few days. We received quite a number of applications, as is usual in such cases, directly the consignment was disposed of. We hope that all who think of purchasing, on the instalment plan or otherwise, will do so at once. This is a good opportunity of becoming possessed of the works of America's greatest Freethinker, and, in the nature of the case, the number of copies on sale must be of a limited character. Prospectus on application.

The *Secular Annual*, formerly the *Secular Almanack*, and the new monthly, the *Pioneer*, are both going well. The monthly, in fact, holds out promise of being anything but a *weakly*. We do not, however, wish our friends to relax their efforts on this account. A propagandist journal cannot have too large a circulation. We would impress upon everyone that it can be obtained of any newsagent. We do this because we continue to receive questions as to where it can be bought. There is no greater difficulty in getting the *Pioneer* than in getting any other paper, and Freethinkers should insist upon their ordinary newsagents meeting their wishes in this matter.

The South Shields Branch of the N. S. S. is inaugurating a special propagandist effort, on which we wish them success. The Victoria Hall, Fowler-street, has been engaged for a special course of four Sunday evening lectures, and, if successful, we believe they are to be continued throughout the season. South Shields Freethinkers have been much hampered in their work of late years owing to the impossibility of securing a suitable meeting-place. Now that one has been obtained, we hope that all the Freethinkers in the district will do their best to make the effort a complete success. There are enough Freethinkers in the neighborhood to fill the hall ten times over, if all were to attend. Mr. Percy Ward opens the course to-day (Jan. 18) with a lecture on "From Wesleyan Pulpit to Secular Platform."

The new number of the *Hibbert Journal* contains a brief criticism by Mr. C. Cohen of the articles written by Messrs. R. F. Horton and R. Armstrong in the first issue. Bearing in mind the character of the magazine, and that its editorial board includes such men as Canon Choyno, Professor Gardner, Sir Claude Montefiore, Dr. Sutherland Black, and Sir Oliver Lodge, a rejoinder by an avowed Atheist in such a place is decidedly pleasant.

Took No Newspaper.

A preacher tells that he was in Appanoose County, Iowa, preaching on one occasion, when he stopped at a farmhouse to get dinner. While eating, the lady inquired his business, and he replied: "I am hunting the lost sheep of the house of Israel." She left the house, and in a few minutes returned with her husband, and said: "This man is hunting lost sheep, and I'll bet that old long-wool ram that's been around is his'n." "No, sister; you don't understand me. I'm hunting sinners; those for whom Christ died." "And is he dead?" she queried. "Yes," replied the minister, astonished at her ignorance. "And buried, too, I reckon?" "Oh, yes; long ago." "There, now, old man; I told you we'd die in ignorance for not takin' a newspaper."

Ingersoll and His Times.

THE CRY CAME, "LET THERE BE LIGHT," AND THERE WAS
—INGERSOLL.

BY DR. J. E. ROBERTS

(Of the Church of This World, Kansas).

(Continued from page 29.)

VI.

Nothing seemed equal to the task of illuminating that darkness. Against those ramparts, legion guarded, every attack had been futile.

The people were infatuated with their slavery. They thought their chains sacred. They fought to defend those who put fetters on their brains. They called him an enemy who sought to shatter superstition. They turned upon those who would make them free. With the old cry, "Crucify him!" they gathered in mobs around every man found facing toward the dawn.

It was said that the gates of hell should not prevail against the church. It was true; they did not. The gates of hell were inside the church. The church was the guardian of the gates of hell.

There had been great men—men with reason that revolted and consciences that abhorred the mental bondage of their fellow-men. Some, seeing the hopeless odds, remained silent. Such were Jefferson and Franklin. Others, like Thomas Paine, went up alone to do battle for humanity, and fell pierced by a thousand shafts of slander, malice, and Christian hatred.

Upon the altars of the church were forged and fashioned falsehoods, and to lie about the dead became one of the regular functions of the men of God.

A new sect arose, senseless enough to remain substantially orthodox, but good enough to deny the doctrine of an endless hell. All other sects were against them. They were denounced. They made no headway, thus proving that, as the ancient Jew preferred Jerusalem, so the modern Christian preferred hell above his chief joy. He was wedded to the worm. Later came the gentle Channing, the amiable Freeman Clarke, and the mild-mannered Unitarians. Orthodoxy had put on evening dress, but the devils had not been cast out. The Unitarians made no impression. While they read essays and indited poetry, the devils laughed and applauded.

Theodore Parker went out from the ice palace of the Unitarians, and, clothed as with garments of fire, went up against the citadel of superstition. But the time was not yet. Then he went abroad for his health. The Young Men's Christian Association of Boston met daily and prayed that Theodore Parker might never return. In Florence, Italy, he fell sick and died. Then the Young Men's Christian Assassins thanked God that he had heard and answered their prayer.

The situation could not have been more hopeless. Arrogant with wealth, proud with respectability, defended by authority, pandered to by the press, advocated by the intelligent, declaimed for by the ignorant, and feared by all, the Church seemed passing to universal dominion, and humanity to universal night. Reason was in eclipse. The shadows of midnight filled the sky. But the unslumbering forces were hidden in that shadow.

The time was hastening. On the dial of the ages the index was approaching the fateful hour. The darkness was a womb from which a genius was to be born. Destiny had not forgotten the world. The earth in her orbit was swimming toward the morning.

Above that chaos and from out that night came the primal ancient mandate, "Let there be light," and there was—Ingersoll.

VII.

There is no accounting for genius. Before its coming no prophetic vision can discern its approach. After its arrival its having come cannot be explained. It seems to have no ancestors, just as it has no

successors or descendants. It is as though Destiny were jealous of her chosen ones—preparing them in obscurity, fashioning them in secret, to dower the world with sudden and unexpected riches. Thus came Shakespeare, Lincoln, Ingersoll. One thing Destiny was particular about: one thing she insists upon. It is that immortals shall issue from the lowly, from real folks, from the genuine, from natural people. She likes wood with the bark on. She hates varnish and holds vaneer in utter abhorrence. She conspires with men and women who have struggled with the storm, bowed to the tempest, felt the sting of winter's cold, the ardor of summer's heat—who have known the cling and clasp of rain, the joyous wind, the thousand-throated dawn and the solemn hush of dusk—men and women who live much out of doors, who are acquainted with the mysterious night, with forest paths and springs and winding streams—above all, with men and women who work and love together. Out from the city's streets of eternal day—past the mansion and the palace—she goes to the humble home, where night brings rest and the morning toil and both are glorified by love. There Destiny keeps her vigils and leads forth the advent of genius.

We are informed by most holy writ that a long while after God had made man he came back to the earth and took an inventory. He found the business in such bad shape that it "repented him that he had made man." To atone for his mistake he sent a flood and drowned all but eight persons. How do we know but the Lord came back the second time to see how things were going on, and finding the world so full of bad theology "raised up" Ingersoll to overwhelm it as with a flood? This view has at least two strong presumptions in its favor. In the first place, it shows that the Lord has become more humane, more civilised. He employs the reasoning faculties, and uses persuasion instead of force and fear; and, in the second place, it shows that he has become more effective in accomplishing his purposes, for while the flood left eight of the old stock to carry on the wickedness of the world, Ingersoll did not leave a vestige of the old theology.

VIII.

Genius has the quality of being universal. It extends and amplifies its possessor. He transcends. He becomes inclusive. With a few notes the composer utters all the sounds that echo in the heart of man; all sobs of grief and sighs of longing, all cries of terror and wailings of despair; all shouts of victory, all curses of defeat, and discordant mutterings of malice foiled and baffled hate. He gives a tongue to every passion, repeats the laughter of every joy, and tells again to raptured hearts the tender story of whispered love. Such music is not provincial, nor national. It knows no race, no clime. It is elemental that is, universal. In any field—of music, painting, sculpture, or speech—he is the genius who interprets us to ourselves. He is voice for the dumb, eyes for the blind. He hears for the deaf. He is strength for the weak, and for the timid and fearful he is courage and high resolve. He justifies men to themselves. It is in this sense that Mr. Ingersoll was a universal man. He belongs exclusively to none, because he belongs to all. Not to Peoria, or Washington, or New York, but to all the cities, to the towns, to the hamlets and wayside homes—to all the states beneath the flag and to the states beyond the seas. He worked with parties, but he was ampler than they. He was the pride and glory of Freethinkers, but he was also more. He was a citizen of the Republic of mind—of the democracy of intellect. In the empire of reason he wore the purple robe of power.

In order to fittingly judge of the magnitude of his task, to understand the vehemence of his motive, and to justly measure the vastness of his achievement, we must look less closely at the man and more directly at the genius. We must, for the moment, disenchant ourselves of the charm of his personality and the fascination of his intimacies. We must see

him not as related to us, but as related to all. It is not our cause, but humanity's, that he championed. It is not we, but the world, that he enriched.

The man of talent may choose his work. Taking account of his abilities, he may estimate their probable worth in possible vocations. He may compare and calculate. He may consult his tastes and take counsel of his ambitions and desires. He then, after due deliberation, and in accordance with his best judgment, makes an investment of himself in the market of the world.

The genius has no choice. He, too, may have desires. They must be put away. He may have ambitions. They must be nailed to the cross. Genius is mandatory and inexorable. Before it all ways are closed, all ways but one. All paths, save one alone, are guarded by the angel with the sword of fire. In that must he go. He is impelled by a force resistless and austere. Genius is compulsion. It is the fateful mandate. It is the omnific "Thou shalt."

Mr. Ingersoll did not choose; he could not. His work was made ready for him; his task prepared. Destiny had dowered him above all of his generation, fanned to fiercest flame within his breast the fires of indignation, and laden him with "that most fearful of all responsibilities, a conscience informed and illuminated."

He looked and saw fetters on the brain of men, the fiends of fear within their heart. He saw horror crouched upon the coffin of the dead, the serpent of superstition coiled in the cradle of the babe. He saw the priest putting out the eyes of reason, and putting poison in the heart of joy. He saw the smoke curl from the cruel pit, and heard the laughter of the saints in the heartless heaven of the saved. He saw hypocrisy at the altar making merchandise of grief and fear. He saw a monster in the skies called God, and the multitude in terror upon their knees. "Then he cried out. That cry will emancipate mankind."

The Church was an arsenal supplying ignorance with weapons to wound the living, and falsehoods with which to slander the dead.

Our religion had come to us cumbered with the mistakes and follies of the past, stained with its superstitions, brutalised with its bigotry, envenomed with its hatreds, and the avowed and open foe of reason and common sense. Science had enlightened the world. The Church by choice remained in intellectual darkness. Civilisation had made conspicuous progress. Theology remained barbaric. The earth's word was amelioration; the word of the Church was hell and damnation. Human society was facing towards the east; the glow of dawn was on its face. The Church was facing towards the past. The Church suspected science. The altar feared the light. The bat was in the belfry. The lark was in the sky.

Then this genius with divine audacity—this genius standing alone, standing "erect in the midst of a kneeling universe"—arraigned the priest in the name of justice, religion in the name of reason, and in the name of a civilised humanity demanded the abdication of an uncivilised God.

In that attitude of indignation and defiance the man was more than man. He was the heart, the brain, the conscience of the age, the heart that had been betrayed and bereft, the brain that had been terrorised and enslaved, the conscience that had been outraged and polluted. That cry that startled the world, that shook every church upon its foundations, that filled all the timid with terror, and every hypocrite with rage; that cry was the voice of humanity. It was not Ingersoll the man. It was mankind as Ingersoll. He was the voice of one, but that one was universal man.

Upon him, as upon a great and perfect instrument, tuned to the best and tenderest the heart can hope or feel, to the noblest the soul can dare or dream, to the sunest the reason can comprehend, Destiny struck the anthem of the future. He was the challenge of civilisation to savagery, of reason to superstition, of the coming morning to envious night.

IX.

It was not for one moment supposed that superstition would die without a struggle. The Church had always been able to silence her assailants. With serene confidence she expected to dispose of this latest one.

In those earlier years when first this "lustrous western star" appeared, the Church resorted to the weapons of slander. It had long taught that any man who denied the inspiration of the Bible and the divinity of Christ, must be an immoral man. By this logic the Church triumphantly proved Mr. Ingersoll's depravity.

From that logic the Church has for generations distilled the poison lies with which to destroy men for the glory of God. Such a belief is an invitation to the assassin. It puts the dagger in the hand of fanaticism. It puts a penalty on truth and a reward on falsehood. The Church was in travail. Falsehoods were brought forth. The mother of lies blessed her children and bade them god-speed. We do not know that the pulpit originated slanders, but we do know that its logic made slanders inevitable, and that the pulpit listened to them with eager and believing ears.

But the method of defence failed. Let it be gratefully recorded that the time had come when the chosen weapon of the Church had broken in her hand. Defamation of character reacted upon the defamers. Epithets were no longer regarded as arguments. Vituperation did not convince. There was not robes enough on all the priests nor piety enough in all the pulpits, nor holy water enough in all baptismal fonts, to give credibility to a lie about Mr. Ingersoll.

The Church had an awakening. For the first time in all its history it found out that it had to play fair. So it called the slanderers off the field. It told the liars they need not lie any more, but are not to be discouraged—the Lord would provide some other means of defence, he would care for his own.

Then the ministers began to get chips in the game—thousands of underlings and preacherettes talked back—and got themselves reported as "answering Ingersoll." But the answers were like the whirlwind the prophet saw when he was looking for the Lord—quite a blow but nothing in it. I once answered Mr. Ingersoll myself. I was then in a Baptist pulpit seeing that the Lord ran this world properly.

Something had to be done. Superstition, that is to say the Church, was losing ground as never before; while Infidelity, that is to say reason and common sense, as never before, was making progress.

There were but two things left for the Church to do—one was to appeal to the emotions, the other was to appeal to argument. A celebrated pulpit acrobat of Brooklyn took up the first. He was a master of declamation. With a cyclone of words he sought to paralyze the intelligence and stampede the emotions. He carried pulpit hysteria to an exact science. He knew the art of vehement assertion. He was florid, voluble, and frantic. He was an ecclesiastical Fourth of July. Unhappily for him and his cause his zeal carried him away, the reins of control slipped from his hands. He ran away with himself. He resorted to epithet, insult, and vituperation. Unwittingly he weakened the position he was trying to defend and betrayed the cause of which he had appointed himself the advocate. When that series of sermons was ended the judicious in the Church were grieved—the best and wisest were in despair.

Mr. Ingersoll's interviews analysing and commenting upon these sermons put the Brooklyn preacher absolutely out of the reckoning.

There remained but one thing more to do—the appeal to argument. The Christian system must be defended and the Bible vindicated. Surely somewhere among the crudite and mighty in Israel could be found a man equal to the task of confounding this

audacious genius. The Church selected its representatives. Its choice was not limited. It took from any profession or from any land. Jurists, supposed to know the value of evidence. Publicists, familiar with modern life. Scholars, acquainted with Hebrew, Greek, and ancient lore. Statesmen, who were students of history and human tendencies. Churchmen, who knew the rise and growth of devotions. Prelates, eminent and honored in the councils of the Church. All men of prestige and power in their respective callings, and some of them renowned throughout the earth. Then began the most gigantic duel this world has ever seen. On one side the champions of the Church, chosen from different sects, chosen from two continents—a picked company of defenders—the best and ablest that Christendom could produce. On the other side one man. The public press was the arena, and nations were the spectators of that titanic struggle.

One by one the defenders of the faith came on the field, "strong in the Lord and the power of his might." One by one they went down in the humiliation of defeat. One by one they were carried from the arena, thrust with the spear of reason, pierced with the arrows of logic, or impaled upon the glittering shafts of wit and ridicule. Like poor old Priam and Hecuba, who, watching from the walls of ancient Troy, saw Achilles destroy the Trojan chief, so the old Church watched and saw her proud Hector slain.

From that immortal combat Mr. Ingersoll bore away the laurels of deathless renown. It was more than the triumph of a man. Here again he was the instrument by which humanity broke the chains that bound it to the past, compelled tradition to yield the sceptre to reason, drove superstition from the brain, made fact more sacred than faith, and consecrated truth forever to the service of progress.

X.

It cannot be denied that Mr. Ingersoll was an iconoclast. Probably no man ever lived who destroyed so much as he. But what was it that he destroyed? Let me tell you. The walls and barricades which ignorance had built across the path of progress; the jungles in which lurk and leer the devils of fear, where crawl and hiss the snakes of superstition, and where disease and poison brew and breed; toll gates upon the highway of reason, where avarice and hypocrisy enrich themselves at the expense of mental travellers; the altars from behind which "the ignorant past bullies the enlightened present;" the pirates upon the intellectual sea that prey upon the commerce of honest thought; the dogmas of insanity and fear that foul the fountains of joy and rob life of its one meaning and its only good; the doctrines that made God a being in whose presence pity, turned to stone, must laugh at pain, and love forget its own.

To these infamies he was the besom of destruction, a consuming fire, a divine devastation, a day of doom, a final judgment, an inexorable judge who said to them one and all, "Depart, ye cursed!"

XI.

And yet they see but the smaller part of Mr. Ingersoll's work who see only its destructive side. "Felling forests is not the end of agriculture. Driving pirates from the sea is not all there is of commerce." He neither destroyed nor attempted to destroy any good, any truth, any beauty, or any hope. He knew that facts were sacred. He knew that they did not lie or cheat, and that faith might do both. He knew that inspiration was not necessary to truth, and that it was utterly unable to help a falsehood.

If he demolished the citadel of superstition, he cleared away the ruins and laid broad and deep the foundation of the temple of reason, the temple in which no slave lifts shackled hands in useless prayer, no pallid face of fear imploringly turns to brutal priests or heartless gods.

By the sacredness of fact and the sovereignty of law he made the miraculous a synonym for the absurd. He held the Bible up to nature, turned upon

it the light of reason, put it on the witness stand in its own defence, examined and cross-questioned it, and brought its real character to light. Mr. Ingersoll revealed revelation. He did not destroy the Bible. He was honest enough to take it as it read. He assumed that if God wrote it he must have been intelligent enough to say what he meant and honest enough to mean what he said.

He was not enough of a theologian to know that God says one thing and means another. Being honest himself, incapable of evasion or double meaning, he supposed God was and commentators ought to be. In this spirit he took up the Bible. He showed it exactly as it is. He did not add or invent one absurdity. He did not interpolate one atrocity. He did not augment its errors by the addition of one mistake. He simply introduced a practically unknown book to the reading public. The book itself shocked the morals, offended the reason, and excited the derision of the intelligent. Mr. Ingersoll did not destroy the Bible. He destroyed the unreasoning belief that it was written by infinite wisdom to reveal infinite love and justice.

To attack that belief was to defend God. He rescued the character of the infinite from the ancient libel called the Holy Scriptures. He saved God from the calumnies recorded in sacred writ. He removed God from the criminal class.

Mr. Ingersoll was never sure what God is, nor entirely persuaded that he is. But one thing he did assert, of one thing he never had the slightest doubt. It was this: If God is, he is not what they say he is. If God was God, he had to act like one. He could not act like the Devil and still be God.

Thousands of the less intelligent thought that Mr. Ingersoll destroyed the moral sanction, weakened virtue, and robbed wrong-doing of its terrors. They are the people who regard God as the chief of police, preachers as patrolmen, creeds as clubs, churches as hold-overs, every man as a "suspect," hell as the penitentiary, and heaven as the quarters of the warden and guards.

Men may still be found who say they agree with Mr. Ingersoll, but do not consider his teachings safe. Can it be possible that this world has swept so far from sanity that virtue depends on superstition, honesty is sustained by dishonesty, honor encouraged by hypocrisy, morality inspired by deceit, goodness nursed by ignorance, fidelity buttressed by falsehood, truth sceptered by lies? Can it be that belief in a barbaric Bible is the source of civilisation? Must there be an infamous God in the heavens in order that there may be gentleness and justice on the earth?

These fallacies, devised by the Church to perpetuate its power, Mr. Ingersoll swept aside with magnificent scorn. He knew that men could not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. He knew that worshippers were never better than the divinities to which they bowed. He knew that the doctrine of an angry God had filled the world with hatred. He knew that the belief that God would torture in another world made men burn and kill their fellow-men in this. He saw that civilisation could not prevail unless common sense prevailed; that reason was the eternal safeguard of morality. Upon intelligence and truth he based virtue. He said science was the savior of mankind, reason the only guide. He despised the religion of bribes and threats. He counted repentance without restitution the refuge of the coward. He counted a heaven unearned, purchased by the righteousness of someone else, as an eternal almshouse, where infinite injustice gave harps and crowns to moral bankrupts in order that they might praise him for having damned the noblest and best. He did not believe the prospect of such a heaven could make anyone really generous and good.

(To be concluded.)

"Loe, how a man ought to take heed, lest he overweeningly follow vulgar opinions, which should be measured by the rule of reason and not by common report."—Montaigne.

South Shields and District.

I BEG to draw the attention of the *Freethinker* readers to the enterprise of a North-Eastern band of Freethinkers. As one result of Mr. G. W. Foote's visit, the South Shields Branch has been offered exceptional facilities for holding a course of Sunday evening meetings in the Victoria Hall (small hall), Fowler-street; and, with a view to make the most of it, ten weeks' lectures and debates are being arranged. The intention is to provide a free and open platform, and here our special views upon all subjects may be expounded, literature distributed, etc., thus spreading rationalist views. We open on January 18 and 25 with lectures by Mr. H. Percy Ward, to be followed by others, chiefly local speakers, and possibly, we hope, concluding with another visit from our President, Mr. Foote. It is proposed to raise the necessary financial support mainly by donations from friends in the borough and district. Subscriptions from those in sympathy are earnestly requested, sixpenny tickets being provided for the convenience of those desiring to give by instalments or to distribute for advertising purposes. Communications may be addressed to the Treasurer, Mr. J. Fothergill, 3 South View Terrace, Green Lane; or the Secretary, Mr. E. Chapman, 32 James Mather Terrace, South Shields. R. C.

Appropriate.

"In connizance ob de fac' dat to-morrow an washday wid a great many ob de sistern ob dis congregashun," said Parson Henrust at the camp-meeting, "de congregashun will now please arise in dey seats an' jine in singin' dat ol' hymn, 'Bringin' in de Sheets!' Lot de orchestra perceed!"—*Baltimore News*.

Correspondence.

"REYNOLDS" AND SHELLEY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your leading article in this week's *Freethinker*, under the above heading, I have read with much interest. I hope you will forgive me, however, when I say that the verse at the top of the page is not correctly quoted.

In the first line "will" is used instead of "shall," and in the second—most glaring of all—"evil" instead of "bloody." (I hope the milder word was not substituted for the correct one by you out of regard to the feeling of the bigots.) In the third "raging" instead of "mighty," and in the last line "on" instead of "in."

Trusting you will accept these corrections in the friendly spirit in which they are offered, I am, with kind regards, and wishing you many happy returns of the day, F. S.

[I strain a point in favor of this letter, and give it at least first attention at once, instead of letting it wait altogether till next week. Unfortunately I am not yet able to leave my bedroom, and cannot, therefore, go into my library and look the matter up. But this I am sure of that the verse from Shelley's "To William," forming last week's *Freethinker* motto, was printed with strict verbal and literal accuracy from the little old one-volume edition of Shelley's *Lyrical Poems* issued by Moxon and based upon the text of the Mrs. Shelley editions. I have seen (and used) various readings of the verse "F. S." deals with, but I did not feel at liberty to depart from one of the "standard" texts at the top of the *Freethinker*; not out of respect for the feelings of the bigots, but because the milder reading seemed to be the more authoritative. But more of this, perhaps, next week.—G. W. FOOTE.]

Obituary.

ON the evening of Wednesday, the 7th inst., at his house at Oxford, there died of heart failure, at the age of seventy-two, William Ogden, a well-known member of the Freethought movement. His wide and varied reading, his extensive knowledge of men and matters, enabled him to do much excellent work for the cause which he had so much at heart. The friend of William Morris, and of many other well-known advocates of Freethought, in religious as well as in social reform, his death will leave a gap in the ranks which cannot be filled. He fought long and well, but though he hated the principles which he had so strenuously combated during a long life, he had no hatred for those who professed them. A representative gathering of local Freethinkers were present at the graveside to pay him the last and only tribute which was in their power.

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

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Why Are the Churches Empty? The New Version of the Spider and the Fly."

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

CAMBERWELL SECULAR HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7, F. A. Davies, "The Jesus Legend Up to Date."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Joseph McCabe, "The Future of Catholicism."

STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Carlton Hall, Tunstall-road, Brixton): 7, Basil Crump, "Wagner's *Lohengrin*."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.30, Bernard Bosanquet, LL.D., "Germany and England."

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY: 7, R. P. Edwards, "How to Read and Understand the Bible."

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, An Edinburgh Gentleman will lecture. Subject, "Persecution." Music at 6.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class. Open Discussion. "Socialism." 6.30, Social Meeting in Commemoration of Burns and Pain. Committee meets at 6 p.m.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A Lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, W. Sanders, "Thou Shalt Not Kill—Except for Profit."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Annual and Quarterly Meeting. Tea at 5. 7, Willie Dyson, "Herbert Spencer, Man and Philosopher."

LECTURER'S ENGAGEMENTS.

H. PERCY WARD, 15 George-street, Great Driffield.—January 18 and 25, South Shields. February 1, Sheffield.

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