

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Shelley's Christianity.

MY *Freethinker* article of a fortnight ago on "Reynolds' and Shelley" did not pass unnoticed. The writer of the article I criticised turned out to be Mr. A. E. Fletcher, formerly editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, afterwards editor of the *New Age*, and now apparently a Christian Socialist free-lance. Mr. Fletcher's reply to my strictures took the form of a letter to the editor of the journal in which his article was published. It seems to me a very stupid reply from one who used to be capable of much better things; but, as I know by long and sad experience how easily a *Freethinker* is misrepresented by his Christian opponents, I prefer to reproduce Mr. Fletcher's letter *in extenso* rather than subject it to the slightest abbreviation. Here then it is:—

MR. FOOTE AND MR. FLETCHER.

SIR,—I see that Mr. G. W. Foote, editor of the *Freethinker*, has been rolling in a fine frenzy because, in an article in *Reynolds's*, I ventured to express the opinion that Shelley had a good deal of Christianity in him. As I distinctly dissociated him from its superstitious aspect, I do not see why Mr. Foote should fly into a fury, charge me with impudence, and liken me to a body snatcher. I have as much right to call any man a Christian who, whatever his faith may be, squares his conduct with the ethical teaching attributed to the Communist of Nazareth, as Mr. Foote has to call him a pagan, or an Atheist. It is a pity that Mr. Foote does not assume that philosophical attitude which Shelley himself took, and urged that every man should take, in discussing Christ's doctrines. Considering that the only truly great living man of letters—I refer, of course, to Tolstoy—has devoted his genius to the exposition of Christianity, I do not see why Mr. Foote should be so scared at the mention of that word. Mr. Foote himself has occasionally dropped into Christianity, as, for instance, when he wrote his admirable pamphlet, *The Shadow of the Sword*, exposing the folly and criminality of war. But why should I take an editor seriously who, apparently, does not see that two halves make a whole, and that if one half weighs 7lb. the other half must also weigh 7lb., and who, in the same number of his paper, in which he criticises me, expresses a doubt, in an editorial note, whether any human being has yet arisen with brains enough to solve the venerable problem, "if a fish weighs 7lb. plus half its own weight, how much does the fish weigh?" We shall have Mr. Foote doubting next, like the late Archdeacon Denison, whether two and two make four. Well, they do, sometimes make one and sometimes twenty-two. It all depends upon how you arrange the figures; the moral of which is that even *Freethinkers* should learn to be tolerant.—Faithfully yours,
A. E. FLETCHER.

Now I will deal with the last part of this amazing letter first. Mr. Fletcher devotes nearly half his space to a fish conundrum which he saw referred to in a *Freethinker* paragraph. It was started by the *Westminster Gazette*, and all I did was to marvel at such arithmetical problems being put forward, and puzzling persons educated in Church and Chapel schools. Mr. Fletcher, however, with almost miraculous perversity, assumes that the problem puzzled me; which is about the last idea that should have occurred to any sane and honest reader of the paragraph in question. On the whole, therefore, if Mr. Fletcher reads Shelley as he reads me, it is not so very astonishing that he finds the poet was a true-blue Christian.

Mr. Fletcher I find, recurring to his opening sentence, reads (or recollects) Shakespeare in the same fashion. Shakespeare wrote of "the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling"—which is a noble and striking image. Mr. Fletcher drops out the *poet's eye*, retains the *rolling*, and applies it to me bodily; just as though I were one of the more orthodox species of journalists who are sometimes to be seen about Fleet-street as if they had recently been attending a new edition of the old marriage-feast at Cana in Galilee. Presently my "fine frenzy" becomes a "fury." The wonder is it was not carried up to a delirium. But enough was said to show that Mr. Fletcher was very much annoyed; indeed, he was so much annoyed, that he quite forgot to let his readers know what I had been saying about Shelley; in other words, he omitted to state what he had to reply to, and thus left himself free to answer what had never been said.

Now let us come definitely to Shelley. Mr. Fletcher simply explains away all he said about the poet. It is not true that he merely said that "Shelley had a good deal of Christianity in him." He called him one of "Christ's modern apostles"—which is a positive outrage. Mr. Fletcher appears to hold that he may call any man he pleases a Christian, though the man himself repudiates the appellation with disgust. This is a point, of course, which is hardly worth debating. After all, the important point is not what Mr. Fletcher chooses to call Shelley, but what Shelley chose to call himself; and, as a matter of fact, Shelley *did not* call himself a Christian, and he *did* call himself an Atheist. Mr. Fletcher is, indeed, good enough to say that, in claiming Shelley for Christianity, he "dissociated him from its superstitious aspect." But he does not say what this superstitious aspect is. Probably it means all that the vast majority of Christians, both clerics and laymen, regard as the very essence of their faith. If this is what Mr. Fletcher is driving at, he is only sentimentalising. Nothing is more absurd than the notion that you can retain a great historic religion after abandoning all its fundamental ideas. It is the ideas that are really sovereign. This is true of every religious system, as it is equally true of the lowest savage superstitions. The start in every case is made with certain conceptions of man's relation to the universe; and it is these conceptions that constitute the distinctive character of all the religions in the world.

Mr. Fletcher does not reply to a single point of my former criticism. He quoted, for instance, from *Hellas* a passage which he called a "prophecy" of Shelley's. I pointed out that the passage occurred in a Chorus of Greek Captive Women, and that Shelley expressly guarded himself against the misconception into which Mr. Fletcher fell. And what is his reply to this? Simply nothing at all, Mum's the word. I also pointed out that Shelley, only a few months before his untimely death, wrote to Horatio Smith that he did not think "Christianity useful to the world," and that "no man of sense could think it true." And what is Mr. Fletcher's reply to this? Simply nothing at all, Mum's the word again. I further pointed out that Shelley, in his great *Ode to Liberty*, referred to Christ or Christianity as "the Galilean serpent," which I thought a strange expression for one of "Christ's modern apostles." Once more Mr. Fletcher plays the part

of the controversial ostrich. And I suppose he will go on calling Shelley a Christian to the end of the chapter. Shelley called Christianity "the bloody faith." But what does that matter? He did not know his own mind. Mr. Fletcher knows it ever so much better than he did.

Mr. Fletcher is good enough to devote a few words to me after settling with Shelley. He says that I "dropped into Christianity" when I wrote the *Shadow of the Sword*. Whenever I write a pamphlet that Mr. Fletcher approves, I am a Christian; whenever I write one he disapproves, I am a Freethinker. Such, apparently, is Mr. Fletcher's canon of criticism; and it is about as organic as a rice-pudding. My own opinion is that I am a Freethinker all the time. And I have something more than a dim recollection that many who have since applauded my *Shadow of the Sword* were, when I first published it, helping on, or at least not opposing, the warlike adventures of Mr. Gladstone in foreign parts. Such a difference does it make whether your own or the opposite party is the culprit in these affairs!

I am not aware that I am "scared at the mention" of Christianity, as Mr. Fletcher supposes. Fear of Christianity is not my predominant feeling towards it. I sometimes despise it, and sometimes hate it, but I have never paid it the tribute of fear. I have always faced it with a bold front, whether on the right or the wrong side of a prison door; and I hope to do so to the end. Mr. Fletcher really does not "scare" me by claiming men like Shelley as Christ's apostles. I assure him I was not frightened. I simply called upon him, in the name of common honesty, to show a little respect to his betters; and particularly not to put brands upon them which they always indignantly repudiated while they were able to defend their own reputations. And I have this word in conclusion to Mr. Fletcher. Let him stick to Tolstoy and let Shelley alone. He does not understand that glorious spirit, and he never will. Shelley is not the poet of timid souls, intellectual temporisers, and moral sentimentalists. He is the poet of the brave, the clear-sighted, the bold assertors of the truth against all the world's superstitions and conventions. His name will often be taken in vain, because his greatness as a poet is glimpsed by many who are incapable of understanding his message or assimilating his ideas. But to the few in every generation he will be, as the Atheist Swinburne calls him, *divine*; or, as the Atheist Thomson called him, *poet of poets and purest of men*.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Latest from America.

AMERICA is a go-a-head country. Americans pride themselves upon it, and the rest of the world seems willing to concede the truth of the boast. It is a large country, geographically, and its organisations are often upon a corresponding scale of vastness. It has sent us a number of "notions" in the commercial line, some of which have been declined with thanks, others have been imitated with more or less success. It has also supplied us with various illustrations of how to run the soul-saving business on a large scale. Although the itinerant evangelist is an English institution originally, it has been wrought to a great development on the other side of the Atlantic. There the evangelist—sometimes a troupe travels together—is accompanied by all the trappings of a second or third-rate travelling theatrical company. He, or they, wander from place to place, preceded by "advance agents," who engage the services of their principals for either a sum down, or a percentage on the number of "souls" brought to Christ. It is a method that seems to pay well; it rouses a little enthusiasm among the softer sort, for a time, and the evangelist is tolerably sure that by the time he comes round again, the same people will be ready for re-conversion.

Quite a number of these evangelistic showmen have visited this country of recent years. The latest importation is Messrs. Alexander and Torrey, to whom reference was made in last week's *Freethinker*. Their first entertainment was given in Exeter Hall, where the last-named gentleman told a wonderful story as to how he converted an Atheist leader and his wife in New Zealand. The story is, doubtless, as true—as gospel. Still, New Zealand is a long way off, and we confess to a little curiosity to see the experiment repeated here. Dr. Torrey says that it is not himself that does these things, but God; and what God can do in New Zealand he *ought* to be able to do in London. Whether he *will* or not remains to be seen.

On Sunday (January 11), Dr. Torrey commenced a three weeks' mission in the north of London. The text of his first sermon was "There is a God"—a text selected, he said, by God himself. We have no quarrel with the wisdom shown in this selection, only it is a pity the same discrimination was not shown with reference to the preacher. A great many people have very genuine doubts as to whether there is a God or no, and a decisive proof one way or the other would do no end of good. Unfortunately proof, as ordinary mortals understand it, was not forthcoming. What this evangelist takes to be reasoning is something like the following:—

"The Psalmist tells us 'the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' Please note where he says it—'in his heart.' That is, he says, there is no God, simply because he does not wish to believe there is a God. Now there is a God.....Therefore the man who says there is no God is a fool; for any man who denies a fact is a fool; and he who denies a supreme fact is a supreme fool."

The chain of reasoning is complete. We defy anyone to detect a flaw. It is a perfect syllogism in fact. Only a fool denies a fact, God is a fact, therefore to deny God is to prove oneself a fool. The minor premiss, it is true, might give rise to a *little* discussion, but that would only add to one's final discomfiture. For Dr. Torrey does not *think* there is a God, he does not believe there is, he does not believe the balance of evidence is on his side, he *knows* there is, and that settles it. One can quite understand why the *Daily News* gave over a column of its space recording an interview with a man who knows so much. And one can quite appreciate Dr. Torrey's own statement that he had brought no philosophy with him, only the Bible. This much at least is self-evident.

Dr. Torrey is, however, merciful in his great strength. He is conscious that there may be people who will not find his bare assertion that there is a God, enough. And so out of sheer pity for such, he presents a quite new and original argument. "Suppose I show you my watch, and ask"—Hold! It is enough. We have *never* heard the argument before, but we can perceive that unless we admit that the watch came by itself, the universe *must* have been manufactured. It is surely worth while for a man to come over 3,000 miles to bring home to the English people this new and unanswerable argument against Atheism. There is a complete analogy in the two cases. A man finds a watch, compares it with other watches, refers it to the knowledge he already possesses that watches are made, and upon these grounds concludes that this particular watch is made. A man doesn't need to *find* the universe, it finds him. He need not trouble to compare it with other universes—although he could if he tried—nor need he search back for any knowledge that universes are made; the analogy is so complete that, as Dr. Torrey piously and courteously remarks, the man who doesn't admit it is "a supreme fool."

Some people, says Dr. Torrey in a tone of pitying contempt for such addlepates as Herbert Spencer, believe the doctrine of evolution does away with design. He has much pity for this benighted class, because "I formerly believed the doctrine of evolution was true, but gave up the belief, not from theological but from scientific reasons, because it was abso-

lutely unprovable; there is not a single proof of the hypothesis of evolution. People talk about the missing link; there is not a single link." Poor Spencer! To find himself thus deserted in his old age by such a brilliant American believer. Perhaps, however, Spencer does not know of Dr. Torrey's desertion! Let us hope so. Perhaps he does not even know of Dr. Torrey's existence! Who can tell!

And as a mere sample of how he could, if he would, pulverise the Atheistic evolutionist, Dr. Torrey puts this one direct, comprehensive, and shattering question: "Who put into the primordial protoplasm the power of developing into the universe we see to-day?" Aye, who? Answer this if ye can, ye poor benighted followers of Spencer and Darwin. Tell us, if you can, who gave protoplasm the power to develop into all the varieties and wonders of the mineral world? Who gave to protoplasm the faculty of developing into the countless suns and systems about which the science of astronomy tell us so much? Can they answer the question? If they cannot, then away with this system of evolution which cannot explain how protoplasm "developed into the world we live in."

But we can hardly expect a man who has his texts selected by God himself to spend much time in *proving* statements. It is enough that he delivers his message. We are thankful, however, for such cogent reasoning as the following:—

"If Jesus lived as this Gospel says He did, if He wrought as this Gospel says He wrought, healed the sick, cleansed the leper, raised the dead, fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two small fishes, and if, above all, having been put to death, He was raised from the dead, it proves to demonstration that back of the work, back of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is God."

Why, certainly! If all these things happened, then it may be taken to prove that there is a God. And these things did happen, Dr. Torrey is quite certain. Once more we have a complete syllogism, thus: If the Gospel miracles are genuine, they prove the existence of God. The Gospel miracles are genuine; therefore, etc. Thus does Dr. Torrey sweep the agencies of unbelief into unbelief. The good and pious *Daily News* may well feel proud at having helped to introduce such a power as Dr. Torrey to the British public.

But our evangelist does not depend, he tells us, upon the argument from history, from Christ, or from design. He once did, but that was obviously in his more ignorant days, while he still believed in evolution, and had not yet discovered that Spencer and Darwin couldn't explain how protoplasm developed into a planetary system. His supreme proof is: "I know there is a God because I have personal dealings with him every day of my life." Well, once more, that settles it. What can we say against a man who has personal dealings with God, and for whom the Deity plays the part of a travelling concordance by selecting texts for sermons? There is only one resource left for the unfortunate unbeliever, and that is silence.

Years ago, he says, he set out with the belief in God, and "If there had not been a God, or if there had been a God different from what the Bible tells us, I should have made a shipwreck of everything years ago." The man is armed at all points. He is invulnerable. He not only knows, from personal dealings, that there is a God, but he knows that he agrees in all points with the Bible description of him. Prodigious! as Dominic Sampson would say. And note; if we cannot contradict the truth of the first portion of the statement, we certainly cannot controvert the latter. If there had not been a God Dr. Torrey would have been as bad as the worst of us. He would have seen no earthly reason for the practice of truth, honesty, sobriety, or any of the other virtues. But he *knew* there was a God; he knew that he kept a watchful eye upon him, dotting down his errors and chronicling his virtues, and therefore he became as a light set upon a hill, the hope of Evangelical Christianity, and a paragon

fit to be enshrined in the spotless and pious columns of our only Christian newspaper. We should be pleased, indeed, that Dr. Torrey discovered there was a God—pleased, too, that God knew he would have to keep an eye upon his servant, Torrey, unless he wished him to "make a shipwreck of everything," and better pleased still that he did it.

Dr. Torrey has reached London at a critical juncture. The Church census shows what a very small proportion of the people attend Church, and general observation proves that a decreasing number interest themselves in religion. His advocacy can hardly fail to put new life into English Christianity, and create dismay in the ranks of unbelief. His scientific knowledge and power of reasoning is shown by the specimens given, and there is much more of the same kind left. The believer may rest assured that, so long as there exist men of Dr. Torrey's type, the future of Christianity is secure. Philosophy is powerless against them; the arguments drawn from scientific conclusions are dismissed with that tremendous but fascinating question of "What gave protoplasm the power to develop planets?" His very texts are selected by God, Who the devil selected the preacher is, perhaps, another question.

We in London may well rejoice that this brilliant exponent of the Gospel is to spend some of the time he is in England in the provinces. Just as he gladdens the hearts of English people with the stories of the conversions he has made in far-away New Zealand, and just as he doubtless will please the Americans with the tale of the thousands of converts he has made in England, so he will be able to tell the provincial people of the outpouring of the spirit at his meetings in London. Modesty alone prevents Dr. Torrey from retailing the account of the people he brings to Christ in the place where the conversions are actually made. True, this modesty and self-effacement is apt to be misunderstood, but those who read him aright will only recognise his complete fitness for preaching the Gospel.

C. COHEN,

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 45.)

XII.

THE most that Mr. Ingersoll said was waiting to be said.

Science had digged the golden treasures from the mines of knowledge. Light had fallen upon the conscience of men. The moral sense had outgrown its childhood. Reason was rejoicing like a strong man to run a race. But no one dared. Thousands of men feared that if they told God what they really thought about him he would strike them dead. So they worshipped him with their lips, and abhorred him in their hearts. Thousands had already become too generous, too noble, too pure to believe the Bible, but they dared not say so out loud. They knew too well the character of its author. Then came Ingersoll, the soul, the incarnation of courage, who feared nor flattered neither gods nor men. Millions at once took heart. Men stood up and brushed the dust from their knees. Women went out from the bondage of the priest. Slaves defied their masters, sanity soothed the frenzied, light filled the sky. The day was come.

The Church will probably endure, but it will change. It will be remodelled and renovated. It has already changed. It is not what it was when Mr. Ingersoll first introduced it to the god it was worshipping. It has lost its command. The stream of progress has lifted it at last, and is bearing it along. The older people are frantically throwing

ropes to the shore, and imploring someone to haul in the line and help them tie up. The younger ones are saying, "Let it drift. The river is God's, and so is the sea."

It used to be necessary to belong to a church in order to have standing in a community. The pew was the door to respectability. It is now quite as often the hiding-place of hypocrisy. If an intelligent man now belongs to a real orthodox church, he doesn't, as a rule, say much about it in public. He would rather you wouldn't talk to him about it in the presence of his associates. He is like the man who was asked what part of the Union he was born in. Reaching his hand towards his pistol-pocket, he replied: "Arkansas; but don't you laugh, damn you."

Every dogma is on the defensive. Creeds are trying to become fit for decent people to associate with. A company of divines duly appointed for the fervent task has recently conducted an exploration of the Presbyterian hell. They returned and assured the mothers that there were no infants in hell.

The Church is trying to keep within shouting distance of civilisation. The revisers have the Bible in the laundry, trying to cleanse some of the stains from its pages. The preachers are throwing flowers at their congregation instead of chunks of brimstone. The pulpit thunders have sunk to silence, and threats of impending doom disturb no more the sleeper in the pew. Above all others, Mr. Ingersoll forced these changes upon the reluctant Church. He made every preacher utter excuses for his Bible, and apologies for his God. He made every preacher convict himself either of a lack of honesty or a lack of intelligence. He marked out three roads for the preacher—that of the hypocrite, that of the fool, and that of reason. The preachers are in an agony to know which road to take. If they take the fool road the Church will laugh at them; if they take the hypocrite road they are liable to be found out; if they take the reason road the Church will call another pastor to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. The preachers are having their troubles now. The world is getting even.

Mr. Ingersoll turned every church into a hospital, where nurses called priests attend patients called creeds. He kept the coroner busy. He enriched the undertaker. He dedicated the past to the cemetery, the future to life and progress. He wrested the sceptre from the hand of bigotry and ignorance, and passed it to intelligence and reason. He made it respectable and safe to speak your honest thought. For generations it was considered a pious duty to malign Freethinkers. Until this day the name of Voltaire or Paine opens the fountain of falsehood in the Church. Priests have loved to dig open graves and insult the dust of the noble dead. Priests grow bold when death has silenced those who silenced them.

But when Mr. Ingersoll died, when the mighty had fallen, when the conqueror could do battle no more, when "great Achilles was dead and no one left in Ithaca could bend his bow," when the curtained eyes flashed defiance no longer nor gleamed with triumphant fire, when death's coronation robes were round the king, the great heart throbbless, the divine lips dumb—safe and secure he slept. Into that chaste presence the obscene prowler dared not come. No pulpit, no priest of the slightest consequence slandered the heroic dead. If Mr. Ingersoll had not civilised the Church, he had at least forced it to assume the virtue of decency, though it had it not. He had frightened the unclean birds from the twilight of death, and driven the robed hyenas from the tomb. Safe and secure he slept.

XIII.

Mr. Ingersoll regarded this world as his home so long as he was here. He was not a pilgrim, not a traveller. He was a resident. He did not call this world a "vale of tears" or a "desert drear." He did not esteem it necessary to heap abuse upon this world in order to enhance the attractiveness of some

other one of which he knew nothing. He loved life. He believed in the sacredness of joy, and he endeavored to make others happy. With matchless skill, he pictured the blessedness and content of humble homes filled with the light and music of love. He pleaded for the equality of the household, the republic of the fireside, the liberty of man, woman, and child. He was interested in every subject that concerned modern life. He touched every theme and irradiated every theme he touched. His reason was unerring, his logic direct, his candor convincing, and his illustration rich and varied as sunset skies.

As masters of the art of expression, Ingersoll and Shakspeare constitute a class by themselves. They are the only facts in this world that seem to require for their explanation a theory of supernatural inspiration.

He touched every emotion at will. In the arraignment of oppression, injustice, and crimes against liberty he was the tempest, indignation's lightning flashed, fierce thunders rolled, and every traitor to liberty betrayed his guilt by pallid fear.

When he spoke of loves that makes "kings and queens of common clay," or of the babe "dowered with the wealth of two united hearts," he was vine and flower.

Borne on imagination's wings, he matched the eagle in his flight; or, changed to tenderness, his speech was sweet and cadenced as the nightingale's song.

He knew how to discuss religion without getting mad about it. Being right he could afford to be good-natured. He introduced good manners into religious controversy and demonstrated the fact that it is better to be a gentleman than to be born again.

He diffused an atmosphere within which chains rust, creeds disintegrate, and superstition's altars turn to dust.

He created an intellectual climate, hospitable to the flower and fruitage of all virtues and every good.

He put the robe of honor upon industry and toil and made the shop and field more sacred than the cloister.

He exalted the home above the Church, the fireside above the altar, the mother above the nun, and honest labor above idle prayer.

He opened the eyes of men and turned their faces toward the light.

He civilised the heart, freed the brain, and enriched the language of love and hope.

He felt all passions, knew all joys and griefs that lie "between the morn of laughter and death's sad night."

He was loved and hated, crowned and smitten, scorned and glorified.

He did not swerve, he kept his way. Lustrous as the herald-star, he led forth "the ever-coming morning of the ever-better day."

He turned the furrow in every field of thought and in the subtle soil cast the mysterious seed. He conspired with the elemental forces, and the omnipotence of nature. He trusted the harvest to the future, to the years that are on the way, to the time that is to be, when science shall save, when reason shall redeem, and when love and liberty shall fill the world with light and joy.

Peril and Piety.

The two principal sources of superstition are ignorance and danger; ignorance keeping man unacquainted with natural causes, and danger making them recur to supernatural ones. Or, to express the same proposition in other words, the feeling of veneration, which, under one of its aspects, takes the form of superstition is a product of wonder and of fear; and it is obvious that wonder is connected with ignorance, and that fear is connected with danger. Hence it is, that whatever in any country increases the total amount of amazement, or whatever in any country increases the total amount of peril, has a direct tendency to increase the total amount of superstition, and therefore to strengthen the hands of the priesthood.—*Buckle.*

The Primitive Christian Martyrs.

"Steadfastness under persecution says much for the sincerity, and still more for the tenacity, of the believer, but very little for the objective truth of that which he believes. No martyrs have sealed their faith with their blood more steadfastly than the Anabaptists."—HUXLEY, *Controverted Questions* (p. 9).

"Criticism has put a lens to our eyes, and disclosed to us on the shining, remote face of primitive Christianity rents and craters undreamt of in our old simplicity.

"That there was, in the breast of the new-born Church, an element of antimonianism, not latent, but in virulent activity, is a fact as capable of demonstration as any conclusion in a science which is not exact."—REV. BARING-GOULD, *The Lost and Hostile Gospels* (p. vii.).

"What of the barbarous
Nazarene fury,
Fed by the base rites
Of secret feastings."

—GIOSUE CARDUCCI, *Hymn to Satan*.

"The ink of science is more precious than the blood of martyrs."—*Arabian Proverb*.

WHEN the ordinary Christian hears mention of the "Christian martyrs" he conjures up a vision of an old man with a Father Christmas beard, surrounded by a group of young men and maidens, in the centre of a Roman arena, into which various wild beasts are being introduced, to the intense satisfaction of an immense audience of Roman citizens. This picture is the outcome of the popular, flashy, and shallow works of Archdeacon Farrar, to whom also, no doubt, Wilson Barrett is also indebted for much of the material for his trashy play, *The Sign of the Cross*.

It is not our present intention to enter into the question as to the extent to which the early Christians were persecuted by the Romans; our present object is to inquire why they were persecuted at all. Incidentally we may mention one little fact with regard to this precious play, *The Sign of the Cross*. The scene is laid at Rome, during the persecution of the Emperor Nero. This persecution is said to have occurred during the year A.D. 64. Now, according to our "Holy Bible, book divine," St. Paul was to our "preaching in Rome at this very time. We read: "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, *no man forbidding him*."* In the marginal bibles this is dated A.D. 63 to A.D. 65, so that Paul was preaching for nearly a year before the event and nearly a year after it, and yet, instead of being converted into a torch to illuminate the chariot driving of Nero, he was not so much as forbidden to preach, although he was the greatest Apostle and the acknowledged leader of the Christians at that time. More than this, he does not so much as mention that there was a persecution at this time! It has always seemed to me that the only passage in the New Testament which at all represents the attitude of the Roman government towards the Christians, is that where the Jews bring Paul before the Roman Governor Gallio, accusing him of "persuading men to worship God contrary to the law," and when Paul would have argued the matter before him, "Gallio said unto the Jews, if it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment seat."† The Roman judge treated the matter much as an English judge would treat a religious dispute between a party of Muhammedans and a Buddhist, he dismissed them with contempt.

The popular Christian view of the matter may be found epitomised in the following passage from the work of the evangelical Milner:—

"They lay exposed to the rage of the whole world around them, incited by its natural enmity against God and by the love of sin, and exasperated on finding itself condemned by these upstarts as deservedly

obnoxious to the Divine displeasure. The whole Roman world comprehended thousands of discordant sects and parties, which all tolerated one another, because all agreed to treat sin with lenity, and to allow one another's religion to be right, one the whole. It was impossible for Christians to do this, hence the spirit of persecution was excited; and, whoever at this day lives in the same sincere hostility against all sin, and in the exercise of the same charity, patience, and heavenly-mindedness as they did, will undesignedly, yet assuredly, excite, in a similar manner the displeasure of the rest of mankind." (Milner, *Church History*, chap. xx., p. 184).

The Romans are painted all black; the Christians all white; we are gravely told that the Romans tolerated one another's religions because they all loved sin! Those acquainted with Roman literature and ethics can only smile at this grotesque libel. Let us see the true reason why the primitive Christians were punished.

It is a fact, and it is admitted on both sides by historians secular and ecclesiastical, that the Romans granted perfect liberty of worship to all their subjects. Mosheim says:—

"A very natural curiosity calls us to inquire how it happened that the Romans, who were troublesome to no nation on account of their religion, and who suffered even the Jew to live under their own laws and follow their own method of worship, treated the Christians alone with such severity."*

Dr. Lardner, in his *Credibility of the Gospel History*, bears the same testimony:—

"The Roman Government protected the many rites of all their provinces. They protected Jews and heathens in one and the same city."†

Lardner points out the Egyptian rites were prohibited because they "had promoted acts of debauchery which were ruinous of the peace of families, and that in the very temple itself which she had at Rome," the Bacchanalian rites being forbidden for a similar reason.

Gibbon says of the nations conquered by the Romans that—

"In the exercise of the religion which they derived from their ancestors, they uniformly experienced the indulgence, and even protection, of the Roman conquerors," and "Rome gradually became the common temple of her subjects; and the freedom of the city was bestowed on all the gods of mankind."‡

Renon declares:—

"The liberty of thought was absolute. From Nero to Constantine, not a thinker, not a scholar, was disturbed in his researches."§

Every man could worship in his own manner, providing that his religion did not lead to immorality; that it did not attack the government; that it did not constitute a secret society, and that it tolerated all the other religions. Now the primitive Christians contravened all these clauses; St. Paul himself upbraids his converts for their immorality, and roundly accuses them of "such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles;|| and again of greediness and drunkenness."¶ We have no need to go to the works of sceptics and unbelievers for the facts, it is fully admitted by some of the best scholars in the Church. Principal Donaldson, the learned and able editor of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, after stating that "the orthodox invariably accuse the heterodox of licentiousness," adds:—

"But there was no class of people who ought to have been more careful in their assertions than the orthodox, as they themselves were accused of the vilest crimes. It is one of the most striking facts in all history that in the second century the Christians were universally believed by Pagans to be secret conspirators combined for immoral purposes, and at their trials it was sufficient for a man to confess that he was a Christian to be condemned as a licentious villain."***

* Mosheim. *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i., p. 36.

† *Works*, vol. i., p. 107.

‡ *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 2, p. 13. 1830 Edition.

§ *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 34

|| 1 Corinthians, v., 1.

¶ 1 Corinthians, xl., 21.

** *Contemporary Review*, September, 1889; pp. 411-2.

* Acts xxviii., 30-31.

† Acts xviii., 14, 15, 16.

They were accused of meeting in secret, slaughtering an infant, and drinking his blood. "Then the lights were extinguished, and the men and women proceeded to indiscriminate licentiousness. Principal Donaldson asks, "How could such ideas have arisen?" And he explains.

"They were in the habit of assembling before dawn, or at night, men and women together, in private houses, to conduct their worship. The assembly consisted of a strange assortment of characters and grades. The apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Church, says to them: 'Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor effeminate, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor cheats, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor plunderers, shall inherit the kingdom of God: and these things were some of you.' And there were in the assembly the bond and the free, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, but with a preponderance of the low. It was natural for a heathen to suppose that an assembly composed, as he would consider it, of the dregs of society, and meeting in hours of darkness, had no good object in view..... These dinners were not always scenes of perfect propriety, as St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthian shows, and on some occasions intoxication and riotousness prevailed. These feasts went by the name of Loves, or Love-feasts, as we now translate the word. We need not wonder that Pagans should suspect that the Loves were not of the purest."^{*}

The Rev. Baring-Gould bears similar testimony; he says:—

"The converts of Paul in their eagerness to manifest their emancipation from the Law, rolled ceremonial and moral restrictions in one bundle, and flung both clean away. The Corinthians, to show their freedom under the Gospel, boasted their licence to commit incest, 'such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles.' (1 Cor. v. 1). Nicolas, a hot Pauline, and his followers, 'rushed headlong into fornication without shame' (*Euseb., Hist. Eccl., iii., 29*) he had the effrontery to produce his wife and offer her for promiscuous insult before the assembled apostles; the later Pauline Christians went further.....even in the first age the disorders were terrible. St. Paul's Epistles give glimpses of the wild outbreak of antinomianism that everywhere followed his preaching—the drunkenness which desecrated the Eucharists, the backbitings, quarrellings, fornication, lasciviousness, which called forth such indignant denunciation from the great apostle."[†]

WALTER MANN.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

The Bishop of London is beginning to feel a little uneasy about the results of the approaching church census in East London. He hopes that it will be greater than he expects, but "the clergy have to fight against a tradition of no church going, a condition of Paganism that seemed to absorb even those who came up fresh from the country." We are not aware that there are any greater difficulties in the way of church going in East London than elsewhere, nor do we believe there is. The fact is that the Bishop has been bragging, and encouraging others to brag, so loudly about his influence in the East End, and has drawn so liberally upon his episcopal imagination in retailing the results of his snip-snappy speeches upon unbelief, that he is just a trifle nervous of the census permitting people to place a right value upon his gasconades. It is hard for the imaginative eloquence of a right reverend Bishop to be threatened by a few vulgar figures, and we sympathise with him in his distress.

Bishop Ingram goes on to say that the small church attendance is not the fault of the clergy, for "they were splendid fellows, every one of them, and were doing a great, noble, and self-sacrificing work." "Every one of them"! And Bishop Ingram says so! There is no room for doubt on the matter.

The case of Solomon Barmash, one of the persons recently convicted of forging bank-notes, who committed suicide directly after receiving his sentence of fifteen years' penal servitude, has been met by a monstrous regulation on the part of the authorities. Officialdom usually acts in panic-stricken haste or with culpable slowness, and it has now decreed that prisoners awaiting trial are not to be seen by

any but their legal advisers. That is, a man who is presumably innocent—and every man is innocent at law until he is convicted—is deprived of a right that can injure no one, and to which he seems plainly entitled, because one prisoner has managed to elude the vigilance of the officials. Personally, we see nothing to regret in Barmash's suicide. It is the least criminal act he appears to have done for some time. At any rate, the vigilance of the officials ought to be enough to prevent its repetition, and, if it is not, we imagine that a prisoner who really means to commit suicide will find a way sooner or later. The new regulation has nothing in the shape of reason to commend it, and we suppose there is not enough popularity to be gained by the advocacy to tempt any member of Parliament to take the matter up.

Cardinal Vaughan has blessed the great bell of the new Westminster Cathedral. Some of the sick people who will hereafter be kept awake by its noise will hardly be inclined to follow suit. They may even give vent to the theological term which is the opposite of blessing.

The bells of the new Roman Catholic Church of the English Martyrs, Walworth, have also been solemnly blessed by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark. According to the account in the *Daily Chronicle*, the ceremonial of blessing the bells was of a somewhat quaint and mediæval character. After the recitation of the Misericord and other Psalms, salt and water were brought to the Bishop, who first solemnly exorcised from them all that was evil, and then blessed them, putting the salt in the water in the form of a cross. The bells were then washed with the holy water, and afterwards crossed seven times outside and four times inside with holy oil, and finally censed with incense. And all this religious tomfoolery still goes on in the twentieth century.

One of the causes of the severe defeat experienced by the Sultan of Morocco was that his army piously observed the fast of Ramazan, which lasts for a whole month, during which period good Mohammedans must not eat or drink, or even smoke, between sunrise and sunset. The Sultan's men were consequently unable to stand much fatigue. As they were constantly harassed by skirmishing on the part of the enemy, they were completely worn out, so that when the final attack took place by the enemy in full force an utter rout ensued. At one time the Jews suffered similarly from the strict observance of religious customs, for they piously refused to fight on the Sabbath, and allowed themselves to be cut to pieces by the Romans without resistance rather than break the fourth commandment.

The American evangelist, Dr. Torrey, has as many "infidel leaders" in his train as converts as the proverbial Red Indian has scalps in his wigwam. Last week we narrated the story of the conversion of an Atheist leader and his wife in New Zealand. Here is another—this time in Melbourne. Messrs. Torrey and Alexander were singing "Where is my wandering boy to-night?" A man sprang up in the audience, and cried: "'I am here, and am coming home to-night.' He was one of the infidel lecturers in Melbourne." Of course, we are far from doubting the story; only we should like to hear his name? Could it have been Joseph Symes?

Here is another wonderful conversion. A lady placed one of their hymn-sheets in a parcel of boots sent to a cobbler for repair. The cobbler was, of course, an unbeliever. When the lady saw the cobbler soon after, he was in tears. He had gone to the meeting, and had been converted on the spot. Really, Munchausen is quite a milk-and-water character at the side of Dr. Torrey.

Finally, here is a story, this time about a friend of Dr. Torrey's, a Colonel Clarke. "A notoriously hard man" came to their meeting. After the meeting, Colonel Clarke said to the hard one: "George, I believe if you don't quit your sin and turn to Christ, God will take away your wife and daughter and lock you up." A cheerful kind of a prophecy, and a pleasant kind of a God. "One month from that night George's wife lay in the cemetery, his daughter had been taken away and placed in better hands than his, and George woke up on the hard, cold floor of Rochester gaol. But then and there he accepted Christ, and is now a preacher of the Gospel." Really, we thought better of George.

Such stories set one wondering how much drivel and falsehood a Christian congregation will stand before it revolts. Fancy asking people to worship a Deity who murders a woman in order to convert the husband into a preacher! Fancy the kind of man George must have been to rant about the love of a God who had just murdered his wife! Fancy what a colossal—ahem! evangelist—Dr.

* *Ibid.*, p. 443.

† *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, p. 26.

Torrey must be to reel off stories of this character! And, lastly, fancy people with a claim to rationality passively swallowing them and greedily asking for more!

The judgment summons against the Rev. J. N. Vanstone, pastor of Catford Hill Baptist Chapel, for £107 taxed law costs, is postponed *sine die*, as he is apparently unable to pay. The amount represents the costs incurred by Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, against whom he failed to obtain a verdict when he brought an action for libel concerning certain allegations they made against him with respect to their daughter who attended his chapel.

C. J. de Druydt, of Burma-road, Stoke Newington, being disappointed at not receiving a legacy, committed suicide by shooting himself in four places. He leaves a letter in which he says: "I hope God will bless you both, and keep you in His safe keeping all your lives." Evidently an Atheist.

How Christianity does breed love and brotherhood. The introduction of a colored girl in a Sunday-school class in Brooklyn caused a number of the white girls to threaten to leave unless she were expelled. "Suffer little children to come unto me" is one of the reported sayings of Jesus the Christian professes to believe; but in the States, at least, he wants them to come in batches of a single color.

In a new religious novel called *The Long Vigil*, a City clerk has frequent interviews with St. John the Divine. The author assumes that this beloved apostle is still alive, because Jesus promised him that he should not die before Jesus came to judge the world, which obviously has not happened yet. It is a pity that St. John does not take the opportunity of clearing up the contradictions and difficulties which render the Gospel narrative incredible to ever-increasing numbers of thoughtful people.

It was almost immediately after he had read from the Bible a chapter including the words, "Let not your heart be troubled," that Mr. W. R. Fox fell dead from heart failure while addressing a meeting at Shoreditch Tabernacle. If a believer recovered from disease after reciting an appropriate text, many Christians would hold that there was a causal connection between the two events. But when an evil happens to the believer, they of course make no such claim.

A French priest, the Abbé Jaquetin, has been shot by a young lady named Burloz. It is said that he promised to abandon the ecclesiastical calling and marry her, but he failed to keep his promise.

At Oxford City Court on Jan. 16, the Rev. Vincent William Lucas was fined 10s. and costs for being drunk and incapable on the last night of the Old Year. The defendant ascribed the helpless condition in which he was found to an attack of giddiness. He was formerly one of the city lecturers.

The Berlin correspondent to the *Times* is no very brilliant exception to the rule that correct thinking is hardly ever associated with a mass of miscellaneous information. It appears that the German Emperor has been making platonic overtures to the "Higher Criticism" in the person of Professor Delitzsch, the Assyriologist. This has, of course, annoyed the many good Roman Catholic patriots, who think that if the Emperor wishes to philander at all it should be on the side of orthodoxy. They forget that this would be about as exciting as making love to your mother-in-law. William's temperament is more romantic than they think. However, the *Times* gentleman, not contented with telling us what the German papers say of this erratic behavior on the part of their lord and master, gives us a notable specimen of his own wisdom and understanding: "There are many eminent theologians in modern Germany who are prepared to give the widest scope to the Higher Criticism in the firm conviction that its result can no more derogate from the moral sublimity and unique inspiration of the Bible than literary, historical, and biographical research can explain away the genius of Shakespeare." He cannot see that the Bible, in so far as its supporters claim for it a unique inspiration, is altogether on a different footing from the work of Shakespeare. No one looks upon Shakespeare's plays as the sacred ground, which must be kept clear of trespassers in the shape of historical critics.

The *Times* of Wednesday, January 14, gave an interesting account of Professor Delitzsch's lecture before the Kaiser and other dignitaries. He told his audience that there could be no "greater mistake of the human mind than the belief that the Bible is a personal revelation of God. The contents of the book really controvert this view. Scientific theology long ago recognised and demonstrated that by constant

reconstruction and adaptation of entirely heterogeneous literary elements the Bible has become the canon of scripture we now possess." The Professor traced the Ten Commandments to a Babylonian origin, and Jewish Monotheism to the Babylonian worship of Jah-veh as a national duty. The resurrection of the dead he found common to Assyrian and Biblical systems. Finally, as the *Times* says, with pointed reference to the New Testament, he spoke of the love of mystery and of the recital of fanciful stories which still characterised Orientals, especially Bedouins." Commenting upon this, the *Spectator* tells us "it has every sympathy with the higher criticism when it is reverently and sincerely as well as fearlessly pursued, for the search after truth can never hurt true religion." "We are," it goes on, "not sure that we care for the higher criticism in a court suit." The fallacies here are gross and palpable. The *Spectator* cannot separate religion from theology, and Christianity, which is a theological system, must fall down when the foundations are undermined. Again, there is no reason why the "higher criticism" should be any less sincere with a court dress than orthodox Christianity. It is unnecessary to say more. The *Spectator* was always celebrated for its skill in tying itself into a knot.

According to the *New York Herald*, three negro clergymen, representative of Southern colored men, have waited on the President to demand pensions for all former slaves on pain of withdrawal of the negro vote from the Republican party. It is to be hoped that the negroes are not so foolish as to insist on so absurd a claim, or so ungrateful as to turn against President Roosevelt after the odium he has already incurred in championing the right of negroes to official positions. Clergymen who lead their ignorant followers to expect Government pensions are blind leaders of the blind, to say nothing of the shameful ingratitude they display to a President who has shown himself a good friend to their race at the cost of much unpopularity among the whites.

What are alleged to be the bones of Buddha have recently been removed from Siam to Japan, and the conveyance of them to the latter country appears to have given rise to one of those edifying squabbles so characteristic of most religious enterprises. According to the *Japan Weekly Mail*, Yokohama, the bones of the saint have not yet found a resting place, it would seem. Arriving in Japan, they have become involved in the stream of speculation and speculation that engulfs so many projects and reputations in these refined times. It is not to be supposed that reverence for these holy relics has paramount influence in such matters. There is another side, which found vivid illustration at Nagoya, for from the moment of the bones' arrival there, worshippers began to flock to the city, so that hotel keepers, petty tradesmen and "diligent" priests found themselves basking in the sun of prosperity. The Nagoya folks had agreed to pay a sum of 136,000 yen, which is what the journey of the relics to the Owari city is alleged to have cost.

Having obtained the bones, however, the main result appeared to have been accomplished, and there did not seem to be any necessity for hurry in the matter of reimbursing their carriers. Then the Kyoto committee, becoming exasperated, undertook to examine the Nagoya committee's books, which ungraceful proceeding disclosed the fact that tens of thousands of yen had been "muddled away" on eating, drinking, and other carnal amusements. Very likely the 136,000 yen of travelling expenses included many items of a similar character. Kyoto then got mad, and announced its intention of reannexing the bones; so, unless some compromise can be effected, they are likely to resume their travels, and be the means of running up another bill of costs. Yes; matters connected with religion, of whatsoever nature, generally resolve themselves into a question of £ s. d.—or "yen," as the case may be.

A recent public speech in London, wherein the speaker took occasion to dwell upon what he said were the two peculiarities about Scotch Highlanders—their great devotion to the national drink and their power of absorbing whiskey without apparently getting the worse for it—recalls the old story of how the laird of Garscadden took his last draught. A considerable number of lairds had congregated for the ostensible purpose of talking over some parish business. They talked well and drank still better, and one of them, about the dawn of the morning, fixing his eye on Garscadden, remarked that he was "looking unco gash" (very ghastly). Upon which the laird of Kilmardenny coolly replied: "Na wonder, since he has been wi' his Maker these twa hours! I saw him step awa', but I didna like to disturb guid company!"

A circular recently issued by Commissioner W. A. Jones, of the Indian bureau, forbids "unseemly discussion of

sectarian matters, proselytising, or other conduct which would tend to create strife among religious denominations." Another illustration of the "love," "peace," "goodwill" and "brotherhood" engendered by religion.

The American Spiritist organ, *The Progressive Thinker*, reviews Professor Wm. James' recently published book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience—A Study in Human Nature*, under the heading, "Are there many Gods, or only one God?" Why not extend the query and add, "or none at all?"

A Baptist minister at the Baptist Congress recently held in Boston says that a man can get the Baptist religion without being baptised. Christianity is being made easier with every year. Perhaps some day a man can be a Christian and be an honest man.

When Rev. Dr. Parkhurst said, "There is more to be commended in a rational scepticism than in an irrational faith," he not only threw up the orthodox sponge, but he wrung all the blood of Jesus out of it.—*Boston Investigator*.

"Why are the churches empty?" is a problem which appears to be requiring solution in America as well as in this country. Says the American *Evangelical Messenger*: "There is a general lament over empty pews. We seem to be experiencing a decline in church attendance, especially in the cities. We build large and beautiful churches, equip them with every convenience and comfort; we have fine music, and there are many able preachers in our pulpits—men who keep abreast of the times, who read and think, who have something to say and know how to say it. Yet the pews are sparsely filled. The people are elsewhere—on the street, in the parks, or at home reading the newspapers and novels. What is the matter?" Commenting on the above, the *Boston Investigator* hits the nail on the head when it says: "The 'matter' is that religion is a humbug, and the people are finding it out, and treating it accordingly."

A parson on parsons is generally entertaining, and sometimes instructive. The Rev. Dr. J. E. Sawyer, of Syracuse, N.Y., says: "The average preacher goes along year after year preaching mainly to women, leading prayer-meetings mainly attended by women, devoting most of his hours of pastoral labor to calling on women, and seemingly not greatly troubled because the overwhelming majority of the church-membership consists of women. There are millions of men in this Republic who have no personal relation to Christian Churches, and no interest in them." Well, why should the "average preacher" complain of such a state of things? The "average preacher," if the newspapers report him fairly, is pretty well satisfied with women, and his motto seems to be "More the better."

The man who introduced Christianity into Japan—"Paul of the Holy Faith," a Jesuit historian calls him—subsequently became a pirate, and was slain while following that business. The pious historian, however, notes with some satisfaction that "it is not said that he ever abandoned the Christian faith."

Alice Tapley, evidently under the influence of the spirit, clutched Mrs. Marshall by the arm, and asked: "Are you saved?" When shaken off, she returned and cried: "Come to Jesus," finally scratching the victim of her pious, but undesired, attentions on the face. She is now charged with drunkenness and assault, and is remanded.

Many curiosities of old parish churches were described by the Rev. Walter Marshall in a lecture at the London Institution the other day. He cited an instance in which churchwardens employed a man to whip two people for having smallpox!

The Rev. J. T. Cox, of Blackburn, has discovered that "all reform, all progress, has been the result of men who have seen a vision of life to come"—a statement that is either untrue or dishonest. Untrue, because if the speaker means a life beyond the grave, some of the greatest workers in all departments of life have been without any belief in a future life. Garibaldi, Gambetta, Spencer, Darwin, and scores of others had no such belief. And the statement is dishonest, because if Mr. Cox means the vision of a better life to come here on earth, what he wishes his audience to understand is an entirely different thing. There is nothing in which dishonesty of speech is carried to greater lengths than in religious advocacy.

An American preacher, the Rev. Minot J. Savage, says "there are certainly not four hundred men in New York who

do any downright religious thinking." Probably he is about right. He also declares that there are "thousands of ladies in New York to-day who, if they can get into society in this world, are quite willing to take their chances as to where they shall go in the next." The ladies, of course, are not unbelievers. They consider themselves good Christians. They simply expect to make the best of both worlds.

A new book on "The Heresy of Teetotalism," proposes to treat the subject in the light of "Scripture, science, and religion." Three-fourths of the volume deals with Biblical arguments. The author's knowledge of science is so defective, that he imagines a pump can yield water at a temperature of 10 degrees to 20 degrees below zero. He evidently forgets that long before water could become as cold as this, it would be solid ice, the freezing-point of water being, of course, 32 degrees above zero.

Over 7,000 persons have lost their lives through recent earthquakes in Turkestan, and the homeless and destitute survivors are suffering intensely from the severe cold. To the Christian all this destruction is the work of a God who doeth all things well.

Providence is also causing "terrible distress" among French fishermen by sending away the sardines on which their livelihood depends. Including the fishermen's families, more than 100,000 people are said to be starving, through this little freak of the Deity, who doeth all things well. In Northern Norway, too, the fisheries are almost completely destroyed, Providence having this year sent an enormous number of seals, which devour the fish or chase them out to sea.

We appear to have been misled by newspaper reports as to the "bigotry" of the Wombwell School Board. Mr. Moses Sanger, the teacher asked to send in his resignation, was not under a cloud because he could not conscientiously give religious instruction in his school, but because he absented himself without asking leave to attend a Jewish festival. This, at any rate, is the account of the case printed in the *Hoyland and Wombwell Advertiser* as part of the report of the last School Board meeting. Of course we regret having been misled in the matter.

The Chard Corporation have seized a Baptist Chapel, a pastor's house, and an adjoining orchard, which was once a burial ground, under peculiar circumstances. The chapel was built in 1803, and has ever since been known as the Broad Lake Baptist Chapel. The founder willed it "to those who from time to time officiate, or are members of the second Baptist Church." The Corporation have seized the property because the late pastor, the Rev. Wm. Elliott, having died, the chapel has not been opened for some time.

Edgar Allan Poe.

WEIRD fancies spur their wave athwart the moon
Of thy imagination, that sped on—
Like fairy skiff upon a dreamland river
Amid the enfolding billow fleeing ever—
To the ocean of thy most perplexing sun;
Nearing the living radiance,
Fearing the awful variance,
Of the multi-jewelled cauldron of the Maelstrom of
the sun.

If thy crescent fell a-loving,
How ethereal was thy moving
Where no seraph could o'ertake thee,
Nor did Psyche e'er forsake thee.
Though the stars like flowers were fading and falling
to some sun
Through the solemn silent heavens;
For thy love was in the heavens,
And thy creed was in the rolling of a sun.

But now beneath the dispetalled lily
White is thy stone of death; and chilly
Under the starlight fallen—from the lash of Nature—
dimly.
And thy Muse smiles now so grimly
In the shadow of a shade;
Where the lightest echoes fade
As the music flowers dream
Melts into the enchanted stream,
Whose opal-tinted odours droop and amorously run
'Neath thy moon, methinks awaning,
Evermore in potency gaining
To the glorious magic pulsing of the sun.

GEORGE WOODWARD.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.
Sunday, January 25, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road: 7.30, "Sir Oliver Lodge on Science and Faith." Feb. 1, Athenæum Hall; 8, Birmingham.
- ROBERT GREEN.—See acknowledgment in general list. Thanks for your good wishes. We shall want the moral support of all our friends in the new year.
- GEORGE JACOB.—Your kindness is appreciated. We fear we could not get Ah Sin, the writer of "A Chinaman's Letters" in our columns, to step out on the Athenæum Hall platform. That would disclose his identity, which he has political as well as other reasons for concealing.
- A. RUSHTON.—Balance acknowledged as desired. Thanks for your good wishes.
- W. WAYMARK.—We cannot decide the special application of subscriptions. The subscribers must do that. We have therefore placed your donation in the General List.
- GEORGE TAYLOR.—We did not keep the writer's address, and consequently have to regret that we cannot send it you.
- W. M. (Plymouth).—Yes, there must be piety enough and to spare in your part of the world.
- R. H. SIDE.—Sorry to hear you found it too cold to attend the Annual Dinner, but the age of seventy-nine is naturally not one of superfluous vigor. It was a happy thought to send on ten shillings "instead" to Shilling Month. Many thanks also for your distribution of six dozen copies of the *Pioneer*.
- J. T. E.—We hope the acknowledgment is as you desired. We are not quite certain.
- W. C. MIDDLETON.—Thanks for the family subscription to Shilling Month, and for your wish that it may prove a great success. It would prove so, if Freethinkers up and down the country showed a little financial zeal.
- S. EDMONDS.—The special allotment of the shillings must be left to the subscribers.
- ONE OF THE CROWD.—Thanks for the birthday copy of Maeterlinck's *Aglavaine et Sélysette*. We note with some satisfaction the Latin motto in your inscription.
- A. J. YOUNG.—Pleased to hear you got two dozen copies of the *Pioneer* through your newsagent for distribution. Thanks for your personal good wishes. Mr. Foote's visit to Manchester had to be postponed, but a fresh date will be fixed as soon as possible.
- S. J. W. encloses ten shillings for the Athenæum Hall platform, which "deserves wide support." He hopes that a thousand "saints" will send a similar sum during Shilling Month, and believes they could do it without much inconvenience. This correspondent trusts Mr. Foote will soon be himself again.
- A. ROWLEY, sending five shillings to Shilling Month, regrets that he cannot make them pounds.
- J. BARRY wishes he could send more than five shillings to Shilling Month, but thinks there would be no lack of funds if all who could afford it did the same.
- W. H. MORRISH, the Bristol veteran, writes: "I am much pleased with the *Pioneer*. It is a bright and sparkling little paper. As a bookseller all my life, I well know the difficulty of making a new paper known.....I ordered a dozen copies of No. 1 of my bookseller, and have been giving them away. I will do the same with No. 2. All these things help to attain publicity." Our old friend sends his mite to Shilling Month, and hopes to collect something from others.
- F. S.—We have solved the riddle for you. Beguiling a weary hour in our sick room by turning over the pages of the copy of Shelley we had with us for some time in our old prison-cell at Holloway in 1883—a copy marked all over with a surreptitious pencil—we found the bolder version of the lines we printed a fortnight ago as a motto to the *Freethinker*. The verse as we quoted it was one of those written to "William Shelley," the baby boy of Mary, after the Chancery Court had decided that the poet was not a proper person to have the custody of his own children by the dead Harriet; and we repeat that we quoted the verse with strict fidelity, according to our invariable custom. The bolder version of the same lines appears in *Rosalind and Helen*. It is cited by Helen as Lionel's last prophetic words to her when he was dragged to prison as a blasphemer, and is printed within quotation marks:—

"Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
 Or the priests of the bloody faith;
 They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
 Whose waves they have tainted with death:
 It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
 Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
 And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
 Like wrecks in the surge of eternity."

Of course the boldness of this version consists in the substitution of "bloody" for "evil" in the second line. The other variations are literary, and perhaps open to question.—Since the foregoing was written we have received another letter from F. S., admitting the accuracy of our quotation, and stating that he did not know of any other version of the stanza in question than the one in *Rosalind and Helen*.

T. J. THOMAS.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. Mr. Foote is improving, but is still confined to the house. Unfortunately the weather is very unfavorable.

DAVID WATT (Paisley) hopes all Freethinkers up and down the country will respond to our Shilling Month appeal.

JOHN BLAND.—May your good wishes be realised.

JOHN HINDLE.—We hope the appeal is not as confusing as you fancy it. The two objects seem to us sufficiently clear and distinct; and, as both require support, it was not easy to say which should give place to the other for the present. Thanks, all the same, for your kind suggestion.

C. CROOKSON.—You will see that you were mistaken on one point. We have honorably corrected the mistake into which the newspaper reports led us in regard to the Wombwell School Board. Thanks for your good wishes. Yes, we are on the road to recovery. Thanks also for your promise to see what can be done for Shilling Month.

J. YOUNG.—We have no doubt of the sincerity of your wish that you could send a much larger subscription to Shilling Month. But if all who could afford it sent as much there would be a gratifying result.

T. HIBBOTT.—Mr. Foote is taking care of himself. He hopes to be all right again after a short recuperative interval in healthy conditions.

E. R. WOODWARD.—Very glad to have your post card. January 19 is rather late for you to have just seen the *Pioneer* for the first time, but we are much pleased to hear that you are greatly struck with it, and we are happy to receive your felicitations and promises of literary assistance by and by. Your charming little note in French would have been better than our English paraphrase, if only our readers could all understand it.

A. C. L.—Acknowledged as desired. Thanks.

C. A. W.—Thanks. Mr. Foote will get out of the miserable London atmosphere for a few days as soon as possible.

R. JOHNSON.—Your kind, encouraging letter is better than medicine. Accept our warmest thanks.

A. G. LYE.—The worst of the trouble now is the insomnia and the horrid nights. A change may set this right.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad to hear you hope to send more for Shilling Month from Birmingham.

C. HEATON hopes Shilling Month will be a great success.

J. JONES.—We have put it to the general subscription, not caring to take the responsibility of allotting.

F. EDWARDS.—Pleased you think the "Ingersoll Gems are rightly named." They well deserve framing, and giving a prominent position in anyone's home. Our stock is running low, and there are no more available on present terms. Your opinion of the *Pioneer* coincides with all that we have heard concerning it.

E. SELF.—Literature sent as desired. The huge consignment of "Facts" is withering away in quite a pleasant manner. Thanks for wishes for Mr. Foote's recovery.

F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks for sympathy. Your previous letter will have attention as soon as Mr. Foote is well enough.

TWO CLIFTON ADMIRERS.—Always pleased to hear from you. Letters like yours are a real encouragement.

J. CHICK.—May all your good wishes be realised!

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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Special.

READERS of the *Freethinker* have from time to time been warned that a systematic campaign of misrepresentation is being carried on against the National Secular Society. Its sympathisers have been visited, written to, and circularised, all with the one object of diverting funds and assistance from the N. S. S. into other channels. The last move in this game was played a week ago. When I reached the Athenæum Hall on Sunday last my attention was called

to the following passage in *Reynolds's Newspaper* of January 18:—

"Mr. Charles Watts, the well-known Secularist writer and lecturer, has issued a circular stating that he has ceased to write for the *Freethinker* and has resigned his position as vice-president of the National Secularist Society. In his circular he publishes letters from Mr. G. W. Foote, the president and editor of the *Freethinker*, so incredibly vulgar in tone, that were it not for Mr. Watts's well-known character for probity, it would be almost inconceivable that any gentleman would pen them."

Now I have not the slightest reason for supposing that the editor of *Reynolds's* allowed this paragraph to appear with any desire to injure the N. S. S. or to misrepresent the real facts of the case. But those who supplied the information could have had but one object in view, and that is to injure as far as possible the N. S. S. propaganda, by placing its President before the public as a vulgar blackguard, whom a highly truthful and virtuous man can no longer work with, and by this means divert sympathy and funds from the N. S. S. into other channels. Let it be noted that Mr. Watts's circular, referred to in *Reynolds's*, was dated August, 1902. Why, then, has the editor only just received a copy? Clearly because there is now a special effort being made to raise funds for the N. S. S., and it is hoped that by these tactics some of the subscriptions that *might* come will be stopped. Whether it has this effect or not remains to be seen. Mr. Foote, too, is confined to his room; he *might* have been unable to reply until "Shilling Month" was over, and this also may have entered into their calculations.

Now let us look at the paragraph in question. Its whole import is that in consequence of the "incredibly vulgar" letters of Mr. Foote, Mr. Watts was compelled to resign both his position as Vice President of the N. S. S. and that of contributor to the *Freethinker*. The facts of the case are few and simple. For some time it had been known to those at the head of affairs, as well as to others, that Mr. Watts was doing all that lay in his power to injure the National Secular Society, The Secular Society, Limited, and the Freethought Publishing Company. Mr. Watts was not, of course, compelled to remain a member of either of these bodies, nor is there any reason why, if he saw cause for doing so, he should not have thrown in his lot with any other organisation. But remaining a member of these bodies he was in honor bound to act loyally towards them. In place of this, while his tributes to Mr. Foote on the public platform were of the most fulsome description—as all attendants at Conferences will remember—in private there was no tale too vile for him to tell. And it had long been noticed that Mr. Watts's close acquaintance with a supporter of the N. S. S. usually coincided with a slackening of their help.

All this, and much more, was borne by those concerned, with, I think, a too great patience, until the facts became so patent and the offences so flagrant, that in self-defence something had to be done. The facts—or rather, some of them, for there were many more that were *not* brought forward—were laid before the Executive, and the members, declining to accept a tardy letter of resignation that had just come to hand, passed a resolution removing Mr. Watts's name from the register of the N. S. S. It is, therefore, evident that Mr. Watts ceased to be a member of the N. S. S., not because of any private letters that had passed between Mr. Foote and himself, but in con-

sequence of his general behaviour towards the body of which he professed to be a devoted member.

With the communications that have passed between Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts I am not primarily concerned, except to point out that the letter complained of was a *private* letter, written under long-sustained annoyance. It may have been a hasty letter, and so far might have been better unwritten, but I certainly fail to see the "incredible vulgarity" of it. My principle concern is with the welfare of the N. S. S., and although I have never either flattered its President in public or slandered him in private, I hope that so long as I remain one of its vice-presidents I shall not stand idly by while such communications as the above concerning its leader are put before a public necessarily unacquainted with the real facts of the case.

So many complaints and letters have reached the N.S.S. offices in connection with this paragraph that, on Tuesday evening last, the Secretary summoned a Special Meeting of the N. S. S. Executive, when the following resolution was passed:—

"That this Executive of the National Secular Society, having had its attention called to a paragraph in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, of January 18, in which it is alleged that Mr. C. Watts *resigned* his Vice-presidency of the N.S.S., and whereas it is further implied that this was done in consequence of certain private communications between himself and Mr. Foote, and believing that the information has been furnished to the Editor of *Reynolds's* with the sole desire of injuring the propaganda of the N.S.S., emphatically protests against such a travesty of the true facts of the case going before the public uncorrected.

"Mr. Charles Watts's name was removed from the register of the N. S. S. at a specially convened meeting, held on July 23, 1902, to which he was summoned, but did not attend, and on the grounds of his conduct having been such as was wholly inconsistent with his retaining his vice-presidency of the Society. The charges brought against Mr. Watts were known to himself and to every member of the Executive, who found in them more than adequate grounds for the step they took. This Executive regrets the necessity of re-opening the painful subject, but circumstances render it necessary."

I regret exceedingly that this matter should have cropped up while Mr. Foote is ill and unable to carry out his editorial duties, but this has, perhaps, its compensating features. It is well that now and again some one else should take the responsibility of a little plain speaking besides the President of the N. S. S. How he will view my reopening the matter I neither know nor care. I have done so because I believe that something must be done to check the campaign of slander that is now being carried on. Plain speaking, I believe, pays best in the long run, and a little of it at this juncture seems to me opportune.

C. COHEN.

Sugar Plums.

Our readers will be pleased to learn that Mr. Foote has so far recovered as to be able to write an article for this week's issue. We have received many letters of enquiry on the subject, and we wish this to be taken as a general reply to all who are not otherwise answered. Mr. Foote would no doubt blush to read all the sympathetic things that have been said concerning him, and we have no doubt such as he does read will serve to lighten the enforced tedium of a sick room. Unfortunately Mr. Foote's indisposition was far more serious than he allowed people to understand, and his recovery, therefore, will not be quite as rapid as was hoped. The truth is, as we pointed out last week, that Mr. Foote was hit far more severely by his imprisonment in 1883 than either he or others thought; and his recent susceptibility to severe colds is primarily the effect of this, accentuated by

the many preventable worries of the last two or three years. Only those who are in intimate touch with the affairs of the party know the systematic campaign of slander that he and the N. S. S. have been, and are still, subjected to. Against open enemies one can be upon one's guard. But against a campaign of inuendoes, private circulars, and general whispered calumny, no one can ever be adequately guarded. In their day Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant were subject to the same attacks, and from some of the same parties. It may be news to some Freethinkers, though not, perhaps, to others, that some of the vilest stories concerning Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh had their origin in the same evil minds that are now busily at work. History repeats itself, which is not surprising, seeing that the same parties are making it.

Meanwhile, the best incentive to Mr. Foote's quick recovery would be a vigorous response to the appeal now being made in aid of Freethought propaganda. As the primary object of this attack is to break up the N. S. S., we hope that all our readers will show in a practical fashion that this program is not quite so easy to carry into execution as it is to draw up. We are bound to say that hitherto the response has not been what it ought to have been. Many are doubtless holding back, feeling that there is still time before the month closes. We would ask all such to remember that he gives best who gives quickly, and that all who do give serve as an encouragement to others to do likewise. There should be no difficulty in raising several hundreds of pounds during the month, and in one way or another every penny will be spent on Freethought propaganda.

In spite of the fearful weather in London on Sunday last, there was a good attendance at the Athenæum Hall to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Why are the Churches Empty?" The chairman made a strong appeal for opposition, with the usual result. This evening (Jan. 25) Mr. Cohen again lectures, taking for his subject "Sir Oliver Lodge on Science and Faith." Sir Oliver Lodge is one of our most prominent men of science, and his article in the current issue of the *Hibbert Journal* is bound to be used by religious advocates in defence of their faith. Under the circumstances it would be well if some of them could be present to hear a Freethinker's criticism of this performance. We hope, anyway, that there will be a good attendance.

F. S., who sends one hundred shillings to Shilling Month, writes: "I sincerely hope that this time at least your appeal may meet with the response it so richly deserves. Pray attempt to show a progressive total until the Fund is closed. By so doing, every contributor, I think, will be pleased to know the total sum collected, while some of the indifferent members of the party who have not contributed at all may be stimulated to do so when they see how inadequate the response has been." We have arranged for the total of the acknowledgments to be printed weekly.

There is an able and instructive letter by "Atheist" in the *Haltwhistle Echo* for January 9, in reply to a Mr. Carrick. We have not seen the latter's communication, but can gather its general tenour from the reply. "Atheist" rightly holds that there is absolutely no evidence in support of the belief that consciousness persists after the disintegration of the organism. Our longings and cravings for a future life are absolutely valueless as evidence. Indeed, it might be well argued that all we have is a longing for life, and that longing would be satisfied quite as well by a continued existence on earth as in the Christian heaven. We are pleased to see "Atheist's" pithy letter in a place where it will do so much good.

A debate has been arranged, and will take place—weather permitting—at Highbury-place on February 8, at 11.30 a.m., between Messrs. E. B. Rose and H. T. Nicholson, hon. sec. of the North London Christian Evidence Association. The subject to be discussed is: "Christianity or Secularism: Which is Best?" Mr. Rose is well known to most of our London readers as an old and able exponent of Secularism, and will no doubt render a good account of himself in his coming dialectical tussle with the Christian Evidence man, who is, we understand by the way, a decided improvement upon the average representative of the older Christian Evidence Society. It is to be hoped that all Freethinkers in North, North-East, and East London will make a point of attending what should prove an instructive and profitable debate, especially in view of the fact that it is intended to make a collection for the benefit of the Penrhyn Quarrymen's Fund.

Under the heading of "Secularism in Italy," the *Daily Telegraph* gives an account of a meeting held at Milan

under the auspices of the International Federation of Freethought. About 2,500 people attended, including many ladies. Addresses were given by delegates from France, Belgium, and Switzerland. The meeting closed with a resolution to establish branches of the Federation in all large Italian towns.

"Merlin," writing in last Sunday's *Referee* on the Church, says: "The mass of law-abiding and respectable citizens is virtually Agnostic. Where its Agnosticism is not reasoned out, it is habitual and unconcerned. The orderly, honest, duty-doing people who never think about religion one way or the other, form by far the largest class in the whole community." This frank recognition of the truth of the matter by a public writer, who is not in the least prejudiced in favor of Agnosticism, ought to be noted by those who continually assert or infer that religion is the basis of all morality, and that Christianity is the essential source of honesty and virtue among the more highly civilised races.

Our esteemed contemporary, the *Boston Investigator*, in its issue of December 20, reprints from the *Freethinker*, in extenso, the article by Mr. J. A. Fallows, M.A., on "The Case Against Luther."

We are pleased to learn that the opening of the South Shields lecture course was a complete success. Mr. Percy Ward gave the initial lecture to a crowded audience. Mr. S. M. Peacock presided, and thought the movement was full of promise, and pointed to a successful course. No doubt the audience were of the same opinion, and we trust that all will help to make it so. There has been far too little work in Tyneside lately; not from any fault of the local workers, but too little all the same. Mr. Ward again lectures from the same platform (Victoria Hall, Fowler-street, this evening, January 25, and we hope the experience of last Sunday will be repeated.

Shilling Month.

GENERAL

(For division between the National Secular Society and the maintenance of the Sunday Freethought Platform at the Athenæum Hall).

The figure after subscribers' names represents the number of shillings they have forwarded to the fund.

A. Rowley, 5; J. Barry, 5; J. W. de Caux, 20; W. H. Morrish, 3½; George Jacob, 2; W. Waymark, 3½; George Taylor, 5; W. M., 1; R. H. Side, 10; J. T. E., 3; J. Greedy, 1; W. C. Middleton, 6; Miss Middleton, 2; R. B. Middleton, 2; S. Edmonds, 4; Robert Green, 10; John Bland, 3; W. E., 2; David Watt, 3; Yeavinger Bell, 2; W. Cromach, 3; J. Young, 5; W. S., 5; T. Hibbott, 2; Nemo, 1; J. W. Griffiths, 4; A. Friend, 100; Jas. Milner, 5; A. G. Lyc, 1; J. P. Browne, 2; R. Norcott, 2; W. B., 2; D. Gillespie, 5; T. R. Almond, 2½; F. R., 1; J. H. R., 1; J. P., 1½; C. Heatou, 2; J. Jones, 2; R. Daniel, 2; J. Chick, 10; Two Clifton Admirers, 5; F. J. Voisey, 5.

Per Miss Vance: E. Self, 4; R. B. Fletcher, 1; C. C., 1; J. Bevins, 5.

Per A. C. L. (Birmingham): A. C. L., 2; H. B., 1; G. J., 1; P. H., 1.—Total, £13 18s.

SPECIAL

(For Maintaining the Sunday Freethought Lectures at the Athenæum Hall).

Major John C. Harris, R.E., 100; A. J. Young, 2½; S. J. W., 10; A. Rushton, 5; Dos Librepensadores, 4; T. J. Thomas, 5; H. C. B., 5; Deux Libres-Pensours, 40; C. A. W., 2; R. Johnson, 50.

Per Miss Vance: G. Calcutt, 1; J. Scott, 1.—Total, £11 5s. 6d.

SPECIAL

(For N. S. S. General Fund).

Per Miss Vance: R. Carroll, 20; R. E. L., 2½; West Ham Branch, 10; C. Shepherd, 2½; F. D., 5; Silex, 5; J. Hocking, 1; J. Williams, 1; M. Christopher, 2; J. Graham, 1; P. Rowland, 5; C. Blackburn, 1; H. Barrett, 10½; Edmontou Branch, 4; G. Hutchinson, 1; W. Lupton, 20; J. Hindle, 2; J. Scott, 1.—Total, £4 14s. 6d.

Mark Twain Was Silent.

At a recent dinner party the subject of eternal life and future punishment came up for a lengthy discussion, in which Mark Twain, who was present, took no part. A lady near him suddenly turned towards him, and exclaimed: "Why do you not say anything? I want your opinion." Twain replied gravely: "Madame, you must excuse me. I am silent of necessity. I have friends in both places."

Book Chat.

ALTHOUGH the novels of Dickens have a perennial fascination for many types of mind, although Mr. Andrew Lang has edited an admirable and handsome edition, and Mr. George Gissing a critical monograph, of great sympathy and insight, yet it must be said that the bulk of his readers are not those that set much store by Thackeray and Mr. George Meredith, to name only the greatest workers in the field of fiction. The case against Dickens was put pointedly by G. H. Lewes in an article in the *Fortnightly Review* for 1872. The essay, we believe, hurt a good many people's feelings. But criticism that is worth anything cannot help doing so at times. Lewes sums up thus:—

"Dickens sees, feels; but the logic of feeling seems the only logic he can imagine. Thought is strangely absent from his work. I do not suppose a single thoughtful remark on life and character could be found throughout his twenty volumes. Not only is there a marked absence of the reflective tendency, but one sees no indication of the past life of humanity having ever occupied him; keenly as he observes the object before him, he never counsels his observations into general expressions, never seems interested in the general relation of things. Compared with that of Fielding or Thackeray, his was merely an animal intelligence 'restricted to perception..... We turn over the pages in vain search of thought, definite psychological observation, *grace of style, charm of composition.*'"

To the first part of this weighty indictment we should not be disposed to demur very strongly, although it may be that Dickens's immense popularity with the unthinking and inartistic section of the public helped to sharpen the blade of Lewes's critical axe. However that may be, there is one point upon which Lewes was certainly wrong—his denial to Dickens of "grace of style and charm of composition." It may seem strange to readers to whom Dickens is almost a name to compare him with R. L. Stevenson and Walter Pater; but it may be done in all seriousness. He was an artist in language, with lapses, of course, into mere rhetoric. Every man whose word is large in bulk is not likely to be even throughout. Even Pater, whose prose is usually lucid, can be hopelessly involved at times.

This very question, so summarily disposed of by Lewes, has just been raised by Mrs. Meynell, herself a writer of carefully superintended prose, in the current number of the *Atlantic Monthly*. The essay is both judicious and sympathetic. She admits his defects as a writer which, after all, are small in comparison with his 'good qualities. Her praise is expressed thus: "To read him is to undergo a new conviction of his authorship, the vitality of his diction, of a style that springs and makes a way through the burden of custom." This eulogism is not a mere dogmatic assertion as against that of the earlier critic. Mrs. Meynell proves her case, we think, to the complete satisfaction of most educated readers. Let anyone who is inclined to think lightly of Dickens' style read the following sentences;—

"There has been rain this afternoon, and a wintry shudder goes among the little pools in the cracked, uneven flagstones—some of the leaves, in a timid rush, seek sanctuary within the low-arched cathedral door; but two men coming out resist them; and cast them out with their feet."

This is only one instance out of hundreds; but it serves to show that the novelist was not the bungler some people would make him out to be. Lewes' overshooting the mark was probably due to his preoccupation with the more serious side of the novelist's task, and also a certain insensitiveness to artistic presentment. His own prose is never strikingly felicitous, and his syntax is not to be compared in the same breath with that of Dickens', which is as incomparable as Flaubert's.

There are some things they do better in France. We have lately been reading a small but important volume by two French historians, MM. Langlois and Seignobos, who bring to their work a measure of critical acumen quite refreshing to meet with. It is called an *Introduction aux études historiques, 1900* (Introduction to historical studies). As an attempt to lay down the conditions of accurate work, useful both to the student and general reader, its value cannot easily be over-rated. We have only to compare with it such a commonplace and futile production as Freeman's *Methods of Historical Study* to recognise the different texture of English and French work. The attitude of the writers is rigorously critical, and, although their fear of generalisation amounts almost to a nervous revulsion, it is to some extent justified by Taine's shortcomings in this respect. What attracted our attention particularly was the insistence on the necessity of criticism, and the reiterated assertion that it is contrary to the normal tendency of the intellect. "The natural instinct of a man in the water is to do all he

can to drown himself; to learn to swim is to acquire the habit of repressing these spontaneous movements and replacing them by others. In the same way the habit of criticism is not natural; it must be inculcated, and it only becomes organic by repeated exercises." It is not necessary here to enlarge upon a subject the importance of which is recognised by all Freethinkers. Yet we cannot be too constantly on our guard against this most insidious foe of true knowledge. It is natural for all men to be lazy and perfunctory, and this unwillingness to exert oneself is the profound reason of credulity.

We see from the *Athenaeum* that the late Sir Edwin Johnson, the author of the *Rise of Christendom*, has left a companion volume, which is to be published by subscription. It is to be called the *Rise of English Culture*, and discusses the documents and records upon which every English History is founded.

Those for whom original and living criticism of literature is a thing to be thankful for will remember with pleasure a small volume on Greek literature by Mr. Gilbert Murray. In that compact and excellent study, perhaps the best thing was the brilliant defence of Euripides as the most interesting, to the modern mind, of the Greek poets. Two plays of this ancient Freethinker have been translated by Mr. Murray and just published by Mr. George Allen. The translator has done more than any one, more than Browning even, to help to make the old Greek dramatist a living power for modern minds. His defence against the possible objection that he has been too zealous in this respect is that "If in a matter of scholarship it is well to be 'safe' or even to 'hedge,' in a matter of art any such cowardice is fatal. I have in my own mind a fairly clear conception of what I take to be the spirit of Euripides, and I have kept my hands very free in trying to get over it."

That Mr. Murray will annoy the academic critic, that he will bring upon his head the wrath of a Saintsbury or a Churton Collins is obvious enough, that he has done more than anyone to make interesting a poet whose whole energy was on the side of Freethought is equally obvious and praiseworthy.

Mr. Gosse is very often at loggerheads with his fellow critics. Usually he has only himself to blame. Like Froude he appears to suffer from constitutional inaccuracy, although in him the disease is intermittent. We have a dim recollection of a remote and unheroic "shindy" between him and that literary fire-eater, Mr. Churton Collins, and only lately he fell foul of a celebrated man of law for making some characteristically insane remarks about literature. Even here his genius for inexactitude gave his adversary an advantage certainly factitious; but the public obviously did not know that it was anything but a genuine victory. We now find Mr. Beeching showing up a number of his mistakes in an excellent article in the *National Review* on the *Poetry of Herrick*. Mr. Beeching is nothing if not polite, and if he had chosen he might very well have made more capital out of Mr. Gosse's errors. Mr. Beeching is mainly concerned in vindicating Herrick's reputation as an exemplary parson. All this is of course to the point; but for us it is not the parson in Herrick, but the poet, that we greatly care about. Mr. Beeching himself is a poet we have read with pleasure, and sometimes with delight. His summing up of Herrick's genius, the genius of the greatest song writer that ever lived, is an admirable piece of criticism.

We remember reading some while ago, in the *Cornhill Magazine*, we believe, an essay by Mr. Beeching on Donne; there, too, he had occasion to point out the way of exactness to Mr. Gosse. Talking of Donne, who is a poet and free writer known, unfortunately, to a very small number of readers, we think a reasonably cheap edition of his poems would bring credit, if not very much profit, to a publisher. There are, we believe, only two editions available now—one by Grosart, and another edited a few years ago by Mr. E. K. Chambers. If the publishers of the Temple Classics, who have given us charming editions of Florio's *Montaigne* and North's *Plutarch*, would present us with a Donne in, say, three volumes, and edited by some competent Elizabethan scholar, Mr. Beeching or Mr. F. S. Boas, they would gain the thanks of many lovers of literature.

W. F.

A pious old deacon up at Perry went to a prayer-meeting one night lately, and unwittingly fell asleep. He was called upon to pray, and, being dutifully punched in the ribs by his better half, bellowed out—"Gol daru you, Betsy, kindle it yourself."

Correspondence.

VIVISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Public attention is at last turning to vivisection, and some attempt is being made to expose the terrible cruelties practised on animals in medical laboratories. A recently published book called *Scientific Research*, by Mr. Stephen Smith, of the Royal College of Surgeons, should be widely read, however painful such reading may be to the just and merciful-minded among us. True gratitude is due to the author for giving to the public that knowledge he has himself gained of the atrocious sufferings inflicted upon animals, both in England and abroad, in the name of medical research. The vivisector, seeking to excuse himself, will say, "Suffering inflicted upon animals is justified in the alleviation of human suffering."

If he were to say instead, "We are justified in doing evil that good may come," there could be only one opinion as to his assertion. It is false. We may not do evil under any circumstances and be held guiltless. No end can ever justify an evil means. Wrong never can be right. If cruelty is ever wrong, it must be wrong always. Leaving this highest side of the question as to the moral right or wrong of vivisection, and looking at the purely practical side, we may ask, "What has been gained by vivisection?"

"Is there a lower yearly death-rate since vivisection has been practised?" No; if there has been a decrease in certain forms of disease, there has been a rapid increase in others. Cancer, diphtheria, tetanus, tuberculosis, are all on the increase. There is not even a concensus of medical opinion on the utility of vivisection. Many of the highest names in the medical profession are *against* vivisection, condemning it as misleading, and worse than useless. Even the vivisector, Claud Bernard, says: "Our hands are empty of results." Again we ask: "What has been gained by vivisection?" Its upholders will reply: "A more perfect knowledge of the living organism; an advanced knowledge of physiology."

But (apart from the opinion of those who deny this claim to vivisection) we reply: "Is this knowledge purely gain? Does the gain balance the loss?"

The vivisector, in pursuing his researches on the quivering flesh of his victim, callous to its moans and cries, may be gaining "an advanced knowledge of physiology"; but what is he *losing*? His manhood, his chivalry, his sympathy with the weak and helpless and suffering, his respect for the life of a living creature, which should be the physician's most sacred care. The physician's high calling is that of saving life, of alleviating suffering. How is the vivisector fulfilling that calling?

It is vain to delude oneself by thinking that anæsthetics are applied to the animal under experiment. For one such case there are ten in which no anæsthetic is given. The nature of certain experiments is such that the *effect* upon the animal must be studied. An insensible condition would render this impossible. Therefore some of the most painful experiments are performed without anæsthetics, or with curare, which paralyses the *muscles* of the victim while the power of *feeling* is in no way deadened. The animal remains motionless while suffering the acutest agony. Such devilish cruelty is unthinkable. Yet it is practised every day. I think if the English public fully realised that animal torture of this kind is actually *legalised* in England under the Vivisection Act of 1876, there would be a greater outcry, an appeal that would not cease till it was heard.

C. M. MALLETT.

LYNCHING.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Looking over the Report of the Howard Association, I am glad to see a reference to the lynching of negroes in the Southern States of America.

It appears that a member of the Committee of this Association recently addressed the President of the U. S. on the subject, and received from him a courteous note and a pamphlet, the latter containing a marked paragraph in which President Roosevelt had previously alluded to lynching in the following terms:—

"From time to time there occur in our country, to the deep and lasting shame of our people, lynchings carried on under circumstances of inhuman cruelty and barbarity—cruelty infinitely worse than any that has ever been committed by our troops in the Philippines, worse to the victims and far more brutalising in those guilty of it. The men who fail to condemn these lynchings are indeed guilty of neglecting the beam in their own eye while taunting their brother about the mote in his."

It is cheering to all lovers of justice to read such an utterance as this.

How much need there is of outspokenness on this subject may be judged when we consider what Professor Andrew Sledd, late of Emory College, Oxford, Georgia, wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July last, under the heading of "The Negro—Another View." (See Report of Howard Association, 1902.)

"In the last decade of the last century of Christian grace and civilisation more men met their death by violence at the hands of the lynchers than were executed by due process of the law.....The total number thus hurried untried and unshriven into eternity during those ten unholy years approximated seventeen hundred souls.

"The lynching habit is largely sectional. Seventy to eighty per cent. of all these lynchings occur in the Southern States.

"The lynchings are largely racial. Three quarters of those thus done to death are negroes."

I see by the *Daily Chronicle* of December 29 that a negro and his wife were lynched at Greenwood, South Carolina, on the previous day. Is it not time that there should be some abatement of these dreadful occurrences? Ought not the civilisation of the Western World to be able to free us from the shock and pain of having to read about such doings as these lynching scenes involve?

J. STRATTON.

The Treasure.

THE Ward of the Sacred Treasure clutched tightly the curtain which hid That Treasure's effulgence from mortals; as the Wards of the old days did.

A mighty crowd swayed before him, a woeful wail rent the air:

"What of the Treasure, O Guardian, delivered by God to thy care?"

"So oft thou hast told us about it, yet hast thou not shown a sign

To prove that the hidden Riches are shared—that not *all* are thine.

Nay, suppose that there is no Treasure! 'Tis evil, we know, to doubt,

And 'simple faith' is the safest, but—*what did it ever find out?*"

The Ward of the Treasure blessed them—his blessing was all he *gave*,

Then passed from their ken; another stood preaching, austere and grave,

His hand holding fast the curtain which the hope of the throng concealed.

"I talk, you listen, my loved ones; *too much must not be revealed!*"

Then one from the crowd stepped forward and rent the curtain in twain.

The watchers' voices were lifted in anger and rage and pain, For beyond the curtain was nothing save the blackness of Stygian night;

No sign of what each had hoped for—the Treasure just out of sight.

But soon died the cries of anger, and soon ceased the sobs of woe,

And smiles and laughter succeeded as the duped ones turned to go;

For free were they for the world's work, and free from the Fraud who'd told

Of the golden Treasure in glory—in exchange for their earthly gold.

JOHN YOUNG.

American Ministers.

In the United States the young ministers are much sought after as husbands in the small towns. The pastor is the only man who has white hands and a passable education; his do-nothingness and his gold spectacles look imposing to common folk; and the girl who marries him acquires at once the priority over others; she shares in the divine prestige, she is envied by all her companions. Thus, in the Universities, the school of theology is always frequented by a great number of students, and is endowed with prodigality. At Chicago I saw the *début* of a newly married young minister. He had the air of a bad little scholar. His pleasant little wife sat in the front rank of the faithful and drank in his words. They were in the honeymoon. Leaving his bed, this boy went giving advice with an absurd gravity, on conscience, virtue, and the rule of life, to five hundred persons who should have pulled his ears, but who listened to him quite submissively.

—Urbain Gohier in "La Raison."

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, "Sir Oliver Lodge on Science and Faith."

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

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

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, H. Snell, "What Shall England Stand for in 1903?"

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, W. H. Loach, "Characteristics of South African Life."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY: 7.30, Annual General Meeting, Tea and Social at 4.30.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Committee Meeting. Discussion Class. "The Housing Question." 6.30, A. G. Nostic, "The Solar System," with astronomical slides and limelight illustrations.

LIVERPOOL HUMANITARIAN LEAGUE (Park-road, Dingle): Tuesday, February 3, 8, Discussion, "The Work of the Humanitarian League." Short addresses by Ernest Bell and Henry S. Salt.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, E. J. Sale, "Why I am Not Religious."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 3, Ernest Evans, "The Autobiography of the Earth." 6.30, "Volcanoes, Ancient and Modern." Lantern illustrations. Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Cafe): Thursday, January 29, 8, D. R. Bow, "The Function of Government."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Special, and Gratuitous, Music and other Recitals, etc., by a number of Ladies and Gentlemen. Collection for Local Hospitals.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Victoria Hall, Fowler-street): 7, H. Percy Ward, "The Gospel According to Charles Darwin."

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