

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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*Even gods must yield—religions take their turn :  
'Twas Jove's—'tis Mahomet's—and other creeds  
Will rise with other years, till man shall learn  
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds ;  
Poor child of Doubt and Death, whose hope is built  
on reeds.* —BYRON.

## All Sorts.

I AM not writing a formal article for this week's *Freethinker*; so I put what I have to say under the heading of "All Sorts." If I wanted to look learned and consequential I should call it an Olla Podrida. But I do not want to look anything of the kind; I never did, and I trust I never shall. Plain English—by which I do not mean vulgar English—is good enough for me. I am perfectly satisfied—if I may say so modestly enough—with the language that Shakespeare wrote; and, if I wanted a better one, I would certainly not make it up with fantastic scraps of ostentatious borrowing from all sorts of languages, living and dead. You will generally find, indeed, that the writer who tries to display his acquaintance with a number of tongues has an indifferent command of the one spoken by his readers.

The first thing I want to say this week is that the *Freethinker* has one of the widest circulations in the world. I do not mean that it has as many readers (or purchasers) as a popular morning newspaper. I wish it had. No, I simply mean that it goes all over the world and into all classes of society. This may sound strange to some orthodox ears; nevertheless it is perfectly true. During the existence of this journal, which has been under my conduct from the beginning, I have been in communication with what are called high and low, as well as rich and poor. The publication of the names of some of these persons would be quite an eye-opener. But they all know that their privacy is safe enough in my hands. I have even had a clergyman of the Church of England as a contributor. Some people will cry "Proof! Proof!" From the nature of the case this is impossible. Moreover, that clergyman knew I would never give him away. He felt that the "blasphemer" had a stricter sense of honor than some very orthodox gentlemen.

A certain percentage of the population are lunatics. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Freethinker* has, during twenty-two years, brought me into contact with a few ladies and gentlemen not quite in their right minds. One wild-eyed gentleman was particularly anxious to see me *alone*; but I was not at all anxious to afford him this pleasure. Before he left he assured me that "they" were after him, and he felt certain he must kill some of them; and he looked as though he would not find much difficulty in including me, or anybody else, amongst the "they." Or should it be "them"? I leave it as a bone for the grammarians. Another gentleman wrote to inform me that he was quite able to prove his "faith" by drinking poison, according to the last chapter of Mark, and that I might prepare the dose myself. He said he would call, but he didn't; and I don't know that either of us lost anything. A Liverpool gentleman "took me" when I offered to

sell all my golden flooring in the New Jerusalem for a five pound note. He sent me the note, and I assigned him the flooring; so I suppose, if I ever get to heaven, I shall have to pay him rent. It wouldn't be honest, of course, to sell the golden flooring again; but I am quite willing to take another "fiver" for the jewelled walls of my mansion in the skies. (See the book of Revelation). While some enterprising investor is making up his mind for this purchase, I may relate another experience. A few months ago, when I was not too well, and also struggling editorially with the *Freethinker*—it was on a Tuesday, our press day—a messenger came up from the shop to tell me that Dr. So and So and his wife would very much like to see me. I sent down word that I was really too busy, and that they would have to make an appointment. They sent up again to say they had come a long way to see me. That brought me down. I thought they might be Americans. But I soon found they were not. The lady did the talking. She said they had travelled up from a certain town in the West of England on purpose. Could they have even a five minutes' interview? Wishing to be courteous, especially to a lady, I said they should have the five minutes, and took them into the private office behind the shop. The lady informed me that the Lord had sent her with a message for me, and she fired off a few texts. "Well," I said, "you've delivered your message, and I'm afraid you must leave the rest to the Lord." But the lady was not to be dismissed in that way. She flopped down on her knees to offer up a brief prayer that the Lord would bless the interview. What on earth could I do? Had there been two males I would have marched them out quickly. The lady's case was different. "The man who lifts his hand against a woman, save in the way of kindness," etc., etc. I therefore let the lady talk to the Lord, and kept my eye on the gentleman. That they were mad was certain. Precisely *how* mad I could not tell. Anyhow, a movement of the gentleman brought me to his side. It was innocent enough, no doubt, but you never know what such people will do. I was glad when the gentleman, the lady, and the Lord left the place. Since then the lady has favored me with numerous texts through the post; and, if I must have them, I would rather have them in that way.

I received a letter recently from a different kind of Christian—the Rev. Forbes Phillips, vicar of Gorleston, near Great Yarmouth. This gentleman, I believe, is a brother of Mr. Stephen Phillips, the poet and romantic playwright; and is himself the author of a Church-and-Stage drama, in which Mrs. Brown Potter has played the leading part. Writing to me on July 20—and his letter was not marked "private"—he said: "The *Freethinker* is most interesting this week. Of course I don't agree with all it says, but I wish I could afford the money to have a copy of it sent to every clergyman and dissenting preacher in England." I wish so too, for I believe a copy of the *Freethinker* would do a great many of them good.

It would be very discourteous to suggest that Mr. Forbes Phillips is as "far gone" as the clergyman who has contributed to these columns. I am quite sure he is a Christian, as he understands the term. But he is commendably free from bigotry in seeing some good in a journal like this, and unusually courageous in writing me a letter to that effect.

A very different letter still reaches me from another Christian. It is dated from Cadwell House, Paignton, Devon, and is signed Walter P. Wolfe. It runs as follows:—

"In this week's 'Acid Drops' there are several paragraphs blaming 'Providence' for certain calamities which have happened lately, one referring to the floods in Silesia, and saying 'Providence' does not even spare its own meeting-places. This shows that by 'Providence' you mean the Lord or Good Spirit. Now you surely must be aware that according to the Christian theory there are two rival powers, (1) the Lord, (2) the Devil, constantly contending against each other, and that the Devil causes the evil in the world and the Lord causes the good. From the time when the Devil successfully tempted Eve to the time when he 'entered into' Judas he has been constantly thwarting the Lord and causing evil. To suppose that an omnipotent good Spirit would ever cause evil would be too absurd for the most superstitious person to assert, and it seems to me that you have rather caricatured the Christian religion by assigning blame where, according to their creed, none should be due."

My correspondent has evidently not thought this matter out. In the first place, I printed the word "Providence" between quotation marks, thus indicating that I was using a Christian word, and not one from my own vocabulary. If, however, there is a Providence, it must be a particular Providence, for a general Providence is simply nonsense, since every general is made up of particulars; and if there is a particular Providence, everything in the universe happens by the will or the permission (which is all one) of God. If the Devil exists, and exercises any power, he must do so by God's consent. This logically follows from my correspondent's description of God as *omnipotent*. There cannot be two omnipotents. If God and the Devil are independent and eternal rivals, there are two Gods instead of one, although of different characters. If, on the other hand, God is supreme, and the Devil subordinate, it is clear that God is responsible for all he allows the Devil to do. Therefore God really does all, as Isaiah declared, and as Jesus taught when he said that not a sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowledge.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Authority and Opinion.

THE *Hibbert Journal* is hardly living up to its prospectus. It commenced with the praiseworthy avowal that it intended to offer a platform for the discussion of religious and philosophic questions, and, as it expressly cut itself adrift from an unreasoning orthodoxy, the presumption was that the most advanced opinions would be enabled to express themselves in its pages. Up to the present the articles published have certainly differed in opinion, but they have been differences between well-defined limits. The quarrel is in the nature of a family disagreement between religious schools, with outside thought quite unrepresented. This can hardly be because the editors could not find non-religious or anti-religious thinkers willing and able enough to express *their* views. The chief reason is, one suspects, that the editors desire to keep the *Journal* as a kind of Mutual Admiration Society, for an interchange of religious opinions exclusively. Legitimate enough as this is in its way, there are so many avenues for this purpose that one does not quite see the necessity for a new one.

The last number of the *Journal* contains an article from a well-known writer, Mr. Wilfrid Ward, on "The Philosophy of Authority in Religion." The subject is of special interest to students of religion, for the reason that all forms of religion rest upon authority of a peculiar kind. The Roman Catholic has the authority of the Church; the uncultured Protestant substitutes that of the Bible; and when this is not put forward, one meets with the "authority of conscience," and even that of the *statu quo*, in the shape of a charge of irreverence, should

onehandle religious beliefs as they would other matters.

The essential question in a discussion of this kind is, "To what extent is an individual justified in submitting his judgment to that of another person, or body of persons, claiming to possess superior knowledge?" From my point of view, not at all. Mr. Ward sneers at the "one-man-one-vote theory of the philosophy of belief; the theory that the intellect of one man has as good a right to its opinion as that of another"; and tells us that we have to submit to the authority of experts on all hands. The uneducated submits to the authority of the educated, the child to that of the adult, the layman to that of the scientist. With this last statement one might agree were it not that in this particular instance it contains one of the root fallacies in Mr. Ward's essay.

To commence with, it is clear that in the first portion of the sentence quoted there is a confusion between the *right* of a man to express an opinion and the social value of the opinion expressed. The value of my opinion on either physics or mathematics may be very insignificant against that of Lord Kelvin or Sir Oliver Lodge. But my *right* to hold and express an opinion upon either of these subjects is just as great as theirs. Freethinkers have never been quite foolish enough to argue that all opinions were of equal value; all they have claimed is that the right of expression belongs equally to all; and for that opinion to be of any real value, it must rest upon a basis of individual conviction.

In the next place it may be questioned whether an opinion or a belief can in any case be accepted upon authority merely. People, it is said, have accepted beliefs on the authority of this church or the other. I do not think this a quite accurate statement of the case. What it really means is that the authority of the Church has been exercised in order to prevent the expression of opinion unfavorable to certain beliefs, or the fear of authority has led people to yield a passive assent to their promulgation. But people do not *accept* a belief, in any real sense of the word, upon the mere ground of authority. Opinion and belief, where it is genuine, must be a matter of individual conviction. It is that, or it is nothing.

True we refer to authorities, and properly so. Life is too short, and knowledge in all its branches too vast for any single individual to work out every detail for himself. I agree with Mr. Ward that it is the nature of social growth and social co-operation that we should all lean more or less upon the help of experts. But it by no means follows that it is the function of the expert to supply opinion—and this is what Mr. Ward is evidently aiming at. The true function of the expert in any of the sciences, in literature, or in biblical criticism, is to supply the data upon which opinions may be based. The labors of a critic who collates ancient manuscripts, examines various readings and textual differences, or of an astronomer who supplies me with certain information concerning the extent and constitution and motions of the planetary system, is work that I have neither time nor opportunity of doing myself. This, and other information is gathered for me, and, provided I have no reason for suspecting the honesty or ability of the investigator, I rely upon what may be called authority. But this authority is not supplying me with beliefs or opinions; but only with data upon which my own opinions may be based. And this is the real function of scientific "authorities," namely, to supply the general world with those data without which a reliable belief is impossible, and upon which all real opinion is based. But all opinion must ultimately be individual in character. So long as I have an opinion it is *mine*, and belongs to no one else. The information upon which that opinion is built will be often enough derived from other people, but it is an individual opinion after all. In strict truth "authority" has not, and can have no place in the region of opinion.

Mr. Ward, as is to be expected in the case of a religious advocate, makes no allowance whatever for

the conditions under which "authority" even in the guidance of opinion is permissible. And yet these conditions are all important. The testimony of experts, as William Kingdon Clifford pointed out many years ago, is valueless unless we are assured of three things—veracity, knowledge, and judgment. We must be convinced that our expert is speaking the truth so far as he knows it, that he has the knowledge that will enable him to speak with any weight, and that his judgment has been properly exercised in arriving at certain conclusions. We may give these saints and seers, whom Mr. Ward is anxious we should accept as guides in religious matters, the credit for having meant to speak the truth so far as they knew it. And having done this it remains incontestible that there is *not one* of the world's religious teachers who would fulfil the other two conditions. In every case they were dealing with matters that lie beyond the bounds of human knowledge. The existence of a supernatural world is something that does not come within the cognisance of human knowledge, and cannot be tested by the ordinary tests of the human intellect. If I accept the statement of an astronomer concerning the sun's distance from the earth, based upon the transit of Venus across the sun's disc, there is at least the safeguard that the method employed to obtain this result is one that can also be used by every human being of ordinary intelligence who cares to devote sufficient time and energy to its mastery. In the case of the religious teacher there is no such safeguard. *His* method of reaching a conclusion cannot be transmitted. All that I have to go upon is the bare statement that such a supernatural world does exist. Its existence cannot be demonstrated; the steps by which any particular person has arrived at a conviction of its existence are incommunicable; and yet we are coolly informed—not by Mr. Ward alone, but also by a whole host of recent writers—that *because* we accept the statements of a scientific teacher on subjects which we can all verify for ourselves, therefore no objection can be raised to accepting the *ipse dixit* of a religious seer on a matter which does not admit of verification in even the remotest degree.

So, too, if one takes religious leaders in the matter of judgment. Far from their having shown any determination to test or verify, the natural scepticism of the civilised mind in face of the unusual has been suppressed as the promptings of the Devil. The supernatural has been seen by them in the most ordinary of everyday events, in cases where even their followers decline to follow them. Their judgment on ordinary affairs is neither asked for nor accepted; for the very men who ask us to accept their declarations in favor of the supernatural are also those who, in the normal affairs of life, would put aside their advice as being comparatively valueless.

Mr. Ward seeks to escape these obvious difficulties in the way of accepting the authority of Church or seer in religious matters as final, by arguing that the perception of religious truth by a few individuals is on all fours with the growth of a new organ, such as that of sight or hearing. In the evolution of animal life, the first sensitiveness to light was probably the possession of a few, and the new world disclosed by this new sense is analagous to the sense possessed by the religious leader, and that just as the first variations in the direction of an organ of vision was the promise of a faculty afterwards to be possessed by all, so this "spiritual" sense is the promise of a new sense to the race.

This is, of course, only a new form of the old argument that the Freethinkers' denial of a "spiritual sense" to certain favored individuals is on all fours with a blind man's denial of sight to others, and with no better warranty than his own blindness. This is a favorite and well-worn argument, but it breaks down in one very important point. The ease with which a blind man may be convinced that other people can see, is shown by the

fact that no blind man ever did deny the sense of sight to others. He may not fully appreciate all that sight involves, but he has not the least difficulty in believing that other people possess a sense of which he is deficient. But in the case of an alleged "spiritual sense," there is no admission and no conception of the existence of a sense in one man that is not present in the other. So far as can be seen, Freethinker and religionist are alike in the number of faculties they possess. All the emotions that the religionist associates with his deity the Freethinker possesses, only he associates them with different objects. The difference between the two is not a difference of faculties at all; it is a difference of interpretation concerning the testimony of the same faculties. And, whereas the religious interpretation has been rejected just in proportion as we have gained a more accurate knowledge of the human organism, the Freethought interpretation has received, and is still receiving, constant verification.

Mr. Ward has also much to say concerning the authority of conscience, and a writer to whom he refers (Dr. Martineau) believed that conscience was the only sure revealer of deity. But the value of conscience as evidence of the truth of religion is absolutely *nil*. Conscience is really like a huge panorama; it discloses much, but only that which has previously been painted upon its surface. The testimony of conscience is good enough evidence as to the experience of the race, and an examination of its contents will help us to read much of the history of the race that would be otherwise inscrutable. But while conscience embodies the good and preservative instincts of the race, it embodies also many of its follies and mistakes. Naturally enough conscience, unless carefully controlled, leans towards supernaturalism. Countless generations have been cradled and swathed in such beliefs, and a mental tendency that has one aspect of all past history to support it is likely to express itself strongly. But conscience itself has to constantly submit to the authority of education and of circumstances. All civilisation is but a creation, a modification, and a re-creation of conscience. And it is more than strange that those who talk so loudly about the testimony of conscience to religion overlook the pregnant fact that this testimony voices its strongest accents in the infancy of the race, and grows ever weaker with the advance of civilisation.

C. COHEN.

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## From Christian Pulpit to Secular Platform.

BY RICHARD TREVOR.

### VI.—THE INTELLECT IN REVOLT.

WHY was I such an ardent and militant believer in the Calvinistic version of the Christian Religion? Was it because it commended itself to my reason as essentially and eternally true? Was it because I could prove its divinity by a long and elaborate train of irrefragable reasoning? Or was it simply because I had been diligently taught from the cradle to believe and cherish it? The fact is, that I was a Christian solely because I accepted the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God, and that I accepted the Bible as the only authoritative revelation from above because, primarily, my parents, and all the other people I knew, so regarded, and trained me so to regard, it, and, secondarily, because such was the doctrine of the Church into which I had been born. Had I been born and bred in a Mohammedan country, I would have been a Mohammedan on precisely the same ground. My belief in the Bible and Christianity came down to me as an inheritance from my ancestors: it ran in the blood, and I was not consulted as to whether I would take it or not. It was a purely mechanical, traditional, and superstitious belief, endowed with no inherent vitality with which to fight for its own existence. But such

is the force of the law of heredity, and of the influence of early training, that this dead faith remained with me to the close of the first year of my clerical career. When anybody asked me why I believed such-and-such a dogma, the only answer I could make was, "Because I find it in the Bible." When pressed further for the ground of my faith in the Bible, I could only cite the teaching of the great doctors of the Church. For the faith that was in me this was a flimsy, fragile, and worthless reason; but it was the only one I had to offer.

Just at that time a most remarkable theological book fell into my hands, entitled *The Limits of Religious Thought*, by the late Dean Mansel. That well-known dignitary of the Anglican Church was an exceptionally keen and subtle metaphysician of the school of Kant and Sir William Hamilton. One of the distinctive tenets of this school crystallised into the apt phrase, *The Relativity of Human Knowledge*, which figured so largely in the Lectures of Sir William Hamilton. This is the tenet that underlies Mr. Herbert Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy, and of which he makes such splendid applications in his *First Principles*. Mansel adopted this doctrine in its entirety, and applied it to theology. His main contention is that we cannot know the Infinite and Eternal, all knowledge being confined to visible, tangible, and finite objects. Hence, to our purely intellectual faculties, the Christian Creed is at once unbelievable and unthinkable. God is of necessity unknown and unknowable, uncomprehended and incomprehensible. We believe in him alone on the testimony of Scripture. Our reason, acting within its own legitimate limits, pronounces all our theological dogmas absurd and self-contradictory. As Christians, we are not thinkers or reasoners, but blind believers. It was under the influence of this monstrous teaching that Tennyson sang, in his *In Memoriam*,

We have but faith: we cannot know;  
For knowledge is of things we see.

*The Limits of Religious Thought* is now a dead book; but it was marked by much logical ingenuity and intellectual force, and a careful perusal of it compelled me to pause and think. I had been instructed to regard Calvinism as in the highest degree reasonable, although in its nature and origin immeasurably above reason. Times without number, as I imagined, I had successfully championed it along purely intellectual lines. But now I perceived, for the first time, that I had been laboring under a fatal delusion. In reality my reason had never had the opportunity of critically examining the Christian Faith, and of ascertaining whether it was in itself believable or not. I had begun life firmly believing it, and I had taken for granted that my reason gave it full support. But Dean Mansel's book opened my mind's eyes, and for the first time in my life I began to think for myself. But no sooner did I begin to think for myself, than the foundations of my faith commenced to tremble and crumble beneath my feet, and I realised how completely I had been the slave of superstition and traditionalism. The house of my faith tumbled into awful ruin, and I was flung headlong into an unfathomable pit of pain and misery. I walked about in the dark dungeon as one demented, weepingly bemoaning my infinite loss. The discovery that the so-called truths of the Bible were, not only above, but also in utter contravention of reason brought with it a most disagreeable sense of deprivation and impoverishment. To be actually without God and without hope in the world was a calamity too dreadful to contemplate. So deep and poignant was my grief that I sank into utter despair. I grew so tired of my life that I was strongly tempted to put a violent end to it. At last a voice cried out of the central deeps of my being, "Thou coward!" and thereupon I determined to fight my battle through to the bitter end. But the end was not reached for several years. Fierce in the extreme was the soul-wrestling with Giant Doubt. What sunless days and starless nights I wept my way through! How

incessantly and confidently I prayed for guidance to a deaf, unheeding Deity! In my eagerness I consulted innumerable standard books on the Evidences, wended my weary way through ponderous Bodies of Divinity, and gave whole nights as well as days to a prayerful study of the Bible, yearning unspeakably all the while for the return of my faith.

In this crisis books of science were conscientiously eschewed as positively dangerous, because in the circles in which I turned science was violently denounced as irreligious and atheistical. Although I had lost my faith in God, and Christ, and the spiritual world, I still regarded Darwin and Tyndall as enemies of mankind. I had not read a line of their works; but it was my strong conviction that Evolution was a hellish theory. When Dr. Charles Hodge, the renowned orthodox divine, published his little volume against it, I was transported with delight, and contributed an impassioned eulogy of the production to a religious magazine. It never occurred to me to suggest that the learned divine did not understand what the word "Darwinism" meant, and was not competent to pronounce judgment against it with such dogmatic assurance. But while thus rashly taking sides with the theologian against the naturalist, I was myself in an entirely atheistical frame of mind. I was afraid of science, because I knew it could not help me back to faith. Nor could I take any of my friends into my confidence, for they were all such orthodox believers that they had no patience with doubt and doubters. Thus, in a loneliness that lacerated the very soul, I had to wage ceaseless war, singlehanded, against my cruel foe. How much I suffered neither tongue nor pen can ever tell.

But the long night came to an end, the welcome light began to dawn upon my desolate heart, and slowly two great truths, like twin suns, appeared on the horizon, and offered me their kindly service. As I have already stated, these truths were the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, and to them I tendered the full homage of my being. Of course, my acceptance of the Divine Fatherhood necessitated the reconstruction of Christ. The deposition of the Despot and the enthronement of the Father involved the overthrow of the Calvinistic conception of the Savior. In my search for a consistent interpretation of Jesus and his work, I fell on a most ingenious and suggestive book, entitled *Vicarious Sacrifice*, by the late Horace Bushnell, a very profound but shockingly heterodox theologian. In this luminous volume, the great man maintained that we are to regard Christ as the last and absolutely perfect revelation of God, and that his work consisted, not in conciliating or propitiating a vindictive Tyrant, but in making known the all-holy, all-merciful, and all-redeeming Father. This was a new evangel towards which my hungry heart leaped with boundless gratitude. Surely this was a genuine return to the simple teaching of the Apostolic Church. And with this new-found gospel, I returned to the pulpit, aglow with zeal, jubilantly triumphant, and resolutely bent on scathingly denouncing the very theology on which I had been brought up, and which I had previously preached with such confidence. On the Calvinism that was once so dear and precious in my sight I now poured scalding streams of scorn. The exhibition of such iconoclastic vehemence filled the church to overflowing with interested hearers, the great majority of whom enthusiastically approved and applauded my deliverances. A few of the older and narrower thinkers frowned, and raved, and threatened, and denounced, it is true; but the bulk of the people rejoiced, and wished me God-speed in the fulfilment of what they styled my beneficent mission.

This was my second theological house, and O with what ardor I thanked God for having inspired me to erect it! It was such a lovely structure, and in it I hoped to spend the remainder of my life. Alas, little did I then think that this house also was built upon the sand, and that, like the foolish man of the parable, I should soon find it tumbling disastrously about my ears.

## Church Attendance Around The Athenæum.

THE Athenæum Hall is now no more. Fortunately it is destroyed altogether, and cannot in twenty or thirty years' time be taken over by the Christians as a "mission" by men who would claim to have extinguished "the Atheist Foote," as their fathers now triumph over the destruction of the Secularists of the Cleveland Hall—a destruction which, oddly enough, did not take place until many, many years after the Secularists had left it, during which, for a considerable time, it was occupied as a school of ballet-dancing by Madam Katty Lanner. But the Cleveland Hall capture has been claimed as a triumphant victory of Christianity over Freethought in the quarter of London in which the Cleveland Hall stands; and, without doubt, the removal of the Athenæum Hall will be added to it as a final demonstration of the utter annihilation of Secularism.

The closing of the Cleveland and Athenæum Halls as places of popular speaking is, however, merely part of a general anti-gregarian movement which during the last thirty or forty years has been taking place in this neighborhood, and perhaps throughout England, in consequence of which the Christian Churches and their imitators have suffered infinitely more than Atheists. I remember this district when Bradlaugh was unknown as "Bradlaugh," and was making a reputation as "Iconoclast." At that time the Secularists were so poor, and so few, they could not afford printed posters; and the announcements of his lectures were in manuscript. Then the neighboring churches were more than filled to overflowing. The surplus attendants at All Saints', Margaret-street, used to block the road for a couple of hours after the service had commenced on Sunday morning. St. Andrew's, Well-street, was nearly as popular. Mr. Cadman drew immense congregations at Holy Trinity, Euston-road. Bellew was at the height of his fame in Bloomsbury-street; and Brock, the Baptist, was a living power next door. James Martineau, in Portland-street, drew such intellectual tide-waiters as the Carlyles, and was imagined to be the high-water mark of advanced learning; while Madam Blavatsky was commencing her European career in a little hall in Gower-street. Probably no district in London was so crowded with religious agencies. Taking a square of which the Athenæum should be the centre, and the Euston-road one side, we may get an area extending from Regent-street to Ormond-street, and from Great Marlborough-street to Euston-road. This includes, east of Tottenham Court-road, one of the most "respectable" quarters of London, and west one of the very worst and most infamous. The population during these last forty years has been little changed. A number of dwelling-houses have been replaced by factories or turned into workshops; but, on the other hand, an immense number of private houses have been turned into boarding-houses or lodging-houses, and even into actual barracks for foreign youths seeking a livelihood in England. Further, whole streets of stables and workshops have made way for immense Mansions, and the probability is, that instead of the population having lessened, it has increased. Now, what has been the success of the Christians who triumph over the theft of the Cleveland Hall?

A chapel for Germans has been built in Cleveland-street and a church has come to the front in Great Marlborough-street. But I doubt that this church is an addition. The building of these, with a "parish room" in Great Portland-street, is, as far as I can find, all that the Protestant Churches have done, while the Romanists have contrived to build a chapel in Ogle-street. Three places of worship in about a square mile of one of the densest quarters of London! But against this there is the fact that during this period, within this area, the famous church at the top of Regent-street, which used to be regarded as one of the great triumphs of architecture of the world, has been pulled down to make way for shops. Bellew's Church has gone the same way and has

been replaced by mansions and a shop. James Montgomery's Chapel has been cleared off for the offices of a Friendly Society. A chapel in Wells-street, after being used as workshops, has been destroyed. Grafton Hall, where a Mr. Marshall was much admired, is out of existence. Store-street Hall, for some time used by Mr. Boulding, is now a showroom; while the Quakers' Chapel in Keppel-street has vanished altogether, leaving on the east side of Tottenham Court-road Archdeacon Dunbar's chapel in Tavistock-street in possession of a cabinet maker.

These, however, are not all. St. Andrew's Hall, in which Dr. Parfit held what are now called Ethical services, is closed for meetings of a religious character. A little "Humanitarian Hall" in Castle-street long since expired. Thus, against, at best, three churches built, we have four churches and four chapels gone out of existence, an absolute loss of five religious edifices, viz., Bellew's Church, the church in Regent-street, Percy Chapel, Keppel-street Chapel, Tavistock-street Chapel, and Wells-street Chapel. And against one parish room built, there has been a loss of at least four preaching places, so that in all eight places of worship have gone out of existence without anything taking their place. Beyond this, again, the existing Christian-organisations are either moribund or in a greatly enfeebled condition. All Saints, Margaret-street, only knows of its former popularity as a tradition, and its clergy triumph if they fill the church—much less block the road. Their sisterhood has, at last, been dismissed from Middlesex Hospital, the nursing of which they exploited for £3,000 a-year, and which they were constantly accused of degrading to a mere propagandist centre of superstition. The Irvingites of Gordon-square are stagnant, and their big cathedral still remains unfinished. Craven Chapel, which formerly drew congregations numbering several thousands, can now muster so few, that a short while since only eight persons were found there at the morning service, and the same decadence will be found throughout the district. With all this we can afford to await tranquilly any libels that may be in gestation as to the end of the Athenæum, yet the fact of so great a decline in the custom of association in public, in one district, is worth a moment's consideration. As far as I know the change is taking place throughout England, and is not confined to Marylebone; certainly the same thing is occurring in other parts of London. A chapel has just been closed in Mayfair, a chapel and a hall have also gone out of existence in Kentish Town. The great chapel in Park-street, Camden Town, only attracts about twenty persons; and not long since a second church was pulled down in Regent-street. If anyone carefully examines any of the suburbs, he will see that there are very far fewer churches and chapels built in proportion to the number of houses than were erected in the neighborhoods built two hundred, or even a hundred, years ago; and that such as are built are mere rough brick-barns, without even decent pointing; and then if he remembers that, such as they are, they are built by the money obtained by the sale of the sites of City churches, augmented by grants from the Bishop of London's Fund, he will realise that an essential change is taking place in the very character of the nation. I venture to suggest the cause is political, and is not confined to Britain. It is to be noticed that dancing-rooms, as well as meeting-places, are going out of existence. The truth is, that since the abortive revolutions of 1847-48 the governments of Europe have steadily segregated the peoples, and are now drilling them into a new militarism serfdom. The Mutual Improvement Society of that day is replaced by the cheap double-turn Musical Hall; and the Mechanics' Institute and Co-operative Society by the Eleusis Club. The free-and-easy Band of Hope has become the military and drastic Lads' Brigade, while the "chummy" Young Men's Christian Associations and Discussion and Literary Societies are killed by the military and fanatical Christian Endeavorers. Every errand-boy both is, and knows himself to be, "caught"

by the secret police, and aspires to be an exasperating evil in society as a "game tec." Every factory girl talks of her "section." Demagogues openly preach the return to barbarism and military feudal slavery, while rational men either shut themselves like hermits in their houses, or buy a bicycle and fly association with their fellow-men altogether.

GEORGE TREBELLS.

### Honest Ethics.

Christianity teaches that all offences can be forgiven. Every church unconsciously allows people to commit crimes on credit. I do not mean by this that any church consciously advocates immorality. I most cheerfully admit that thousands and thousands of ministers are endeavoring to do good—that they are pure, self-denying men, trying to make the world better. But there is a frightful defect in their philosophy. They say to the bank cashier: You must not steal, you must not take a dollar—larceny is wrong, it is contrary to all law, human and divine—but if you do steal every cent in the bank, God will as gladly, quickly forgive you in Canada as he will in the United States. On the other hand, what is called infidelity says: There is no being in the universe who rewards, and there is no being who punishes—every act has its consequences. If the act is good, the consequences are good; if the act is bad, the consequences are bad; and these consequences must be borne by the actor. It says to every human being: You must reap what you sow. There is no reward, there is no punishment, but there are consequences; and these consequences are the invisible and implacable police of nature. They cannot be avoided. They cannot be bribed. No power can awe them, and there is not gold enough in the world to make them pause. Even a God cannot induce them to release for one instant their victim. The great truth is, in my judgment, the gospel of morality.—*Ingersoll.*

### Beware of the Priests!

Or all the "female forms divine"  
That of religion have a lick,  
O may I never call her mine,  
That is a Roman Catholic.

Her mind, her heart, her very soul—  
The secrets of her family—  
Must be within the priest's control,  
Or surely she will damned be.

And though I might, with all my heart,  
Desire to call my lot my own,  
The priest's intolerable part  
Leaves not that sacred spot alone.

My nearest, dearest flesh and blood,  
Each winsome girl and son of them,  
For mental worth and moral good  
Would be the priest's—each one of them.

For these are aye the "Church's" prize;  
By means of the confessional  
The priest his holy unction plies;  
And, while we love and bless 'em all,

By crafty wiles, or, if these fail,  
By threats of future deep despair,  
He on their mother will prevail  
To bring her little sheep to shear.

And so the mother rules the child;  
The "Church" the mother's tutor is;  
These to each other reconciled,  
And man, the priest's in future is.

Thus does the "Church's" blighting gin  
Go round and round, and round again;  
Brave men may mental freedom win,  
Yet find their children bound again.

"Of all the 'female forms divine'  
That of religion have a lick,"  
For propagating priestly slime  
'Tis woman, if a Catholic.

S. PULMAN.

### Acid Drops.

The Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, who recovers his old freedom on the question of "secular education" now that the London School Board is doomed, writes to the *Daily News* on "Methodism on the Rates." He wants to know whether the "trail of the priest" is any worse than the "trail" of the Methodist who takes public money for Methodist schools. "It would be a healthy piece of consistency," he says, "if Dr. Clifford would denounce his Methodist friends as vigorously as he has denounced his Anglican and Roman enemies." Quite so. We have said the same thing repeatedly. But there is nothing "healthy" about Dr. Clifford in this controversy.

Dr. Clifford replies to Mr. Headlam, but answers nothing he said. Mr. Headlam's principal point was this: If it is wrong for Churchmen and Catholics to teach their religion in schools paid for by the general public, is it right for Methodists to teach their religion in schools supported in the same way? On this point Dr. Clifford is silent. Yet his letter is ten times as long as Mr. Headlam's.

Amidst the mass of Dr. Clifford's vague and hypocritical verbiage there is now and then a clear sentence. He says, for instance, that "we must have this education problem solved on exclusively civic lines, not on ecclesiastical or theological." "Let the State," he further says, "acting through Parliament, stay within its own realms, and leave all the Churches free to do their own work in their own way on their own premises, at their own cost." This *sounds* all right. But we have to read it in the light of Dr. Clifford's previous utterances; and, reading it thus, we are obliged to say that he does not mean what this new utterance, taken by itself, plainly signifies. Dr. Clifford has already said that he is willing to see "secular education" in all State schools, but it must be "secular education" *plus* the Bible. Which is like vegetarianism *plus* beefsteak.

The daily organ of the Nonconformist Conscience falls foul of Archbishop Davidson, and accuses him of shedding "crocodile's tears" over the Passive Resisters. But we all know what Christians think of each other when they differ. It will be best, therefore, to pass on to a point of more importance. The *Daily News* ventures to tell the Archbishop what the Nonconformists are really fighting for. "They object on principle," our contemporary says, "to a fresh endowment of denominational teaching." *Principle*, indeed! What principle is there in objecting to a *fresh* endowment? When you once start endowing denominational teaching, there is no principle involved in the question of more or less. In this matter, as in so many others, *ce n'est que le premier pas qui compte*. The first step is everything.

Setting aside the word *principle*, however, the *Daily News* is quite right. It was the "fresh endowment" that caused all the rumpus. The old arrangement was upset, and the balance of advantage was altered in favor of the Established Church. Under the old arrangement there was honor among thieves. Now the thieves are quarrelling with each other, while many of the people they robbed are looking on delighted.

There is another Nonconformist grievance. "They object," the *Daily News* says, "to seeing their sons and daughters excluded from the teacherships of schools for which they have to pay." But are *their* sons and daughters more sacred than the sons and daughters of other people? The Nonconformists used to smile when the sons and daughters of Freethinkers were excluded from the teacherships of schools. They even helped to exclude them. Now that *their* progeny are likely to be excluded, they cry out "on principle." Nonsense! There is no principle in their complaint. The Nonconformist howl is that of an old bully getting a battering.

A number of more or less distinguished Passive Resisters, including Dr. J. Massie, formerly Vice-Principal of Mansfield College, have been summoned at Oxford. Mr. Brain, who spoke for all the defendants, stated that they objected to paying for the support of denominational schools in which teaching was given which they believed to be erroneous. Presumably, then, they have no objection to denominational schools in which the teaching given is such as they approve. This is not a fight for principle; it is a fight for power.

Mr. Brain further stated that the defendants objected to the Education Act because the effect of it was to impose a religious test upon servants who were practically civil servants. Yes, but why did they not object to religious tests

when *others* were the sufferers? Religious tests have always existed practically under the Education Act of 1870. This has been well-known to the Nonconformist leaders, and if they pretend to be ignorant of it they are gross hypocrites.

Nonconformist leaders who are working this Passive Resistance movement for all it is worth—and some people think a good deal more—may yet find that they have sown the wind and must reap the whirlwind. Their method is to get summoned for their rates; to insist on making perfectly irrelevant speeches before the magistrates, who are not legislators; to let their goods be distrained; to call their friends, accompanied by a miscellaneous rabble, to the sale; to insult and assault the auctioneer, or wink at the miscellaneous rabble doing it; and generally to “raise hell,” as the Americans call it. They forget that lessons in anarchy are soon learnt, and that other dissidents may “raise hell” in future, and cite the Passive Resistance movement as a precedent.

The property of one Passive Resister seized for the Education rate was a Bible Dictionary. It was a presentation copy, and the bailiff probably thought the owner would be sure to purchase it back; otherwise it would have been a dead weight on his hands. What is the value of orthodox Bible Dictionaries—even to the butterman?

Passive Resistance is catching. The Southwark costermongers refuse to obey the order debarring them from trading in London-road and other thoroughfares. They declare that the police will have to forcibly remove their barrows. Perhaps they will hold a demonstration—under the chairmanship of Dr. Clifford.

Mr. Bottomley's interesting evening paper, the *Sun*, thinks it necessary (we suppose) to burn a pinch of incense occasionally on the altar of the popular faith. One of its recent “Sermons of the Day” lauded Christianity as a religion that relieved men of many things—one of them being unbelief. But is the preacher sure that unbelievers want to be relieved? Whon Touchstone offers to cure Orlando of love, the latter replies, “I would not be cured.” He preferred to keep his complaint. And we fancy the unbeliever is in the same box. When he has lost belief, for instance, in everlasting hell-fire, he is seldom anxious to have it restored. He is generally so much happier without it.

There was a “peace” meeting at Colchester, and the Rev. J. P. Gledstone was speaking fervently. “The devil they had to fight,” he said, “was the devil at their elbow.” “That is what I want to do,” he added, “I want to fight the devils at my elbow.” Whereat the audience roared with laughter, for at the speaker's elbow sat two black-coated Nonconformist ministers.

The Houses of Convocation have decided that women are not to vote for the National Church Council. This is objected to as “quite Mohammedan.” It is pointed out that if it were not for women two-thirds of the churches would be empty. Yes, and if the women left, precious few men would remain.

The Nonconformist Conscience appears to be rousing itself to some purpose, and the priest in politics seems likely to be supplemented by the preacher in politics. We see by a newspaper report of the Bible Christian Conference that a well-known Dissenting exhorter, the Rev. Sylvester Horne, has been delivering a fervent address to a crowded audience on politics and theology. He is represented as saying that the influence of Christ was the most important thing in the world, and that to increase it they must send Christ's men into public life to govern public affairs; they must have Christian men at the helm of the State. Well, those Christian men, if they are men of God, which seems to be the idea, must all be Nonconformists, as Church of England clergymen are debarred from sitting in the House of Commons. What glorious times, then, we shall have when Dr. Clifford is Premier, and Dr. Horton is Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Dr. Meyer is Colonial Secretary, and Mr. Campbell is Minister of War. How the Nonconformists will all sing then, “Oh the business! Things are beginning to hum.”

There are said to be 12,000 professional writers in Germany, 400 of whom are poets. Indeed! Why, the 12,000 might as well call themselves poets as the 400. There never were 400 poets in any country—unless you include amongst poets all the ladies and gentlemen who write pious verses for the religious journals.

Willesdon is the second instalment of the *Daily News* religious census of Greater London. The population is 114,815; including 53,651 males, and 61,164 females. The

total attendance, morning and evening, counting all the “twicers” as two separate persons, is only 19,716. For once in a way the Nonconformists beat the Church of England and the Roman Catholics combined; the denominational figures being:—Established Church, 7,733; Nonconformist Churches, 10,869; Roman Catholic Church, 460; Other Services, 654. Generally speaking, however, the figures are not gratifying, from an orthodox point of view. The aggregate attendance in the morning is one person in fifteen; in the evening one person in nine. The proportion of men is one in sixteen in the morning, and one in eleven in the evening; that of the women, one in eighteen in the morning, and one in seven in the evening. A tremendous lot of men and women in Willesden seem to prefer anything but the House of God on a July Sunday.

The *Christian World* observes that in connection with the agitation over the Education Bill “One thing is certain—every day that passes without a settlement brings us nearer to the complete severance of religious teaching from the State curriculum.” Exactly; and this is one reason why all lovers of justice welcome the agitation. When rogues fall out, etc.

Dr. Horton has a brilliant method of settling the disagreement. He prefers undenominational religious instruction by properly appointed teachers; but, as Catholics and Churchmen would not be satisfied, he generously suggests that an arrangement should be made whereby teachers should be appointed to the various schools who agree with the religious beliefs of the children therein. Needless to say, this very high-minded person sees nothing unjust in thus “persecuting” non-Christians for the benefit of Christianity in general. The *Christian World* thinks it not improbable that some such plan may be adopted. The suggestion and its endorsement shows how much honesty there is in the religious cry for equality of treatment.

Mr. Campbell, of the City Temple, what with his theatrical “get-up” and his fatuous addresses, with their assumptions of knowledge, bids fair to be one of the most amusing preachers of the day. This gentleman is not concerned over the *Daily News* census, because if a census were taken of all the people who are listening to Atheistic addresses on Sunday, it would be found that there were more people in church and chapel than at these meetings. And, with the air of an Horatius at the bridge, he *challenges* any doubter to institute such a computation. One is aghast at the wisdom of this much-advertised gentleman who decides that a fair test of the prevalence of unbelief is to be found in the number of attendants at Atheistic lectures. If Mr. Campbell stopped now and again to understand the subject he deals with, he would discover for every unbeliever who attends a Freethought lecture there are a hundred—probably hundreds—who are absent. It is not the object of Freethought to build up churches, nor is attendance at meetings held to be the Freethinker's primary duty. And herein lies the difference that Mr. Campbell is unable to appreciate.

Here is another gem from the same sermon. People say Christianity is not true; whereupon our preacher exclaims, “Let us come to the point. If Christianity is not true, what is it that is true?” Was ever such stupidity put into cold print by a popular preacher before? Why, there are heaps of things that *are* true, whether Christianity is true or not. It is true that honesty is better than dishonesty; true that truth is better than falsehood; true that to understand a subject is better than talking about it; and true that Mr. Campbell usually does the latter without troubling about the former.

And here, finally, is Mr. Campbell's proof that Christianity *is* true. Produce one Catherine Booth, and you have a book far more eloquent in its witness for Christianity than anything that can be written by an apologist. Disprove a Catherine Booth and you disprove Jesus. Well, one is driven to confess that such stupidity is almost impregnable. How on earth can the life of a good woman prove Christianity to be true? At most, the life of Catherine Booth (we need not question her goodness) only proves that she believed it to be true. But then so did Edwards, so did Chapman, so did Dougal. The reasoning is stupendous. Catherine Booth was a good woman; therefore, Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, rose from the dead, is very God of very God; therefore Mr. Campbell was “called” by God Almighty to the City Temple. Of course, there are no good women outside Christianity; there were none before it, and there will be none after it—facts which make Mr. Campbell's reasoning the more conclusive. To find a man of this stamp boomed by the press is enough to make one believe that progress is a myth and civilisation a failure.

The *Yarmouth Mercury* is to be congratulated on its sense of fairplay. It does not shrink from printing controversial letters on burning questions which are tabooed in most journals, and we hope it has its reward in an increasing circulation. It is a pity, however, that, in default of abler orthodox champions, it has to give so much space to Mr. John Rudge, whose ignorance and incapacity are only equalled by his impudence. This person actually writes of Voltaire and "Tom Payne"—that is how he spells it—as having "persuaded the people to get rid of God and religion." Unless he is an infamous liar, which we would rather not believe, it is evident that he is totally unacquainted with the writings of these great Freethinkers. They were both Deists. Paine wrote an eloquent essay to prove God's existence, and Voltaire said that if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him.

Another fool—and a bigger one than John Rudge—has joined in the *Yarmouth Mercury* discussion on the Christian side. He signs himself Arthur Blows, and dates from Silvertown, London, E. We never came across a more bumptious ignoramus. He rolls off a lot of names, and evidently never read a line of their writings, or of scholarly writings about them. For instance, he is guilty of the amazingly ridiculous assertion that the Emperor Julian "lived very near the time of the Apostles," and "bitterly hated Paul and Peter." It is really enough to make a cat die of laughter. Julian was separated from these actual or fictitious worthies by hundreds of years. An assertion of the same kind is that Celsus wrote "affirming the Savior's incarnation—his being born of a virgin." Celsus affirmed the very contrary. He said that Jesus was the illegitimate child of a Jewish woman and a Roman soldier. But enough of this monster of impudent illiteracy.

There are so many Bishops nowadays that they cannot all have seats in the House of Lords. The Bishop of Bristol becomes entitled to a seat on the retirement of the Bishop of Manchester. The next seat will fall to the Bishop of Wakefield. Why not increase the number of episcopal seats in the Gilded Chamber, or else clear out the whole Bench of Bishops together?

The retiring Bishop of Manchester is chiefly remarkable for his repeated misrepresentations as to the effects of "secular education" in Victoria. His statements and figures were contradicted again and again, and once at least officially; but he stuck to them all the same—like a good Christian.

Lord Roberts, replying to a correspondent who asked him whether he thought it would be possible to utilise Sundays for the purpose of drilling Volunteers, says he "fears it is neither practicable nor desirable that a system of Sunday parades for drill purposes should be established." If his lordship *fears* it, he wishes the contrary. But perhaps it is only an unfortunate expression. For our own part, we should say that Sunday might be put to many uses, and that drilling is one of the worst of them.

We cut the following paragraph recently from a morning newspaper:—"William Keenan, John McAllister, and James Roberts, laborers, were charged at Liverpool yesterday with wounding several constables on Sunday night during a quarrel in connection with a religious controversy. The prisoners and others attacked the policemen on duty and badly maltreated them, one constable being in hospital in a critical state from stabs with a pocket-knife. The prisoners were remanded." What a beautiful tribute to the humanising influence of religion!

The *Daily News* deserves credit for not publishing betting news. It is now going to exclude "liquor" advertisements, at a reputed loss of many thousands a year; that is, if it does not find compensation in other ways. The second step is more open to dispute than the first—in spite of the thanks of the Birmingham Free Church Council, which expresses its "sincere admiration of this heroic devotion to the Kingdom of Christ." Such language is enough to make one stare. Teetotalism may be a very good thing, but what on earth (or elsewhere) has it to do with the Kingdom of Christ? Jesus consorted with winebibbers in Palestine, he drank wine with his disciples, and he manufactured a lot of wine to keep a marriage feast going. If this is teetotalism, we can only say it resembles that of the gentleman in the story who accepted a glass of grog, saying that he was a teetotaler, but not a bigoted one.

We called attention some little time ago to a very important by-law lately issued by the Board of Education. It is in accordance with the provisions of Section 7 of the Education Act, 1870. We now give it in full:—"The time during

which every child shall attend school shall be the whole time for which the school selected shall be open for the instruction of children of similar age, provided that where the parent has notified to the managers in writing his intention to withdraw the child from instruction in religious subjects, such time shall be the whole time for which the school selected shall be open for secular instruction only." Now the long and the short of this by-law is that the school register may be marked *after*, instead of *before*, the religious instruction. And, as we expected, the men of God are up in arms against it. They perceive that it means, sooner or later, the secularising of our national education.

The row began in the House of Lords. Lord Reay led the attack under cover of a question. In the course of his remarks he said that this new by-law "constituted a fundamental change in our educational system." The Education Board, by a mere stroke of the pen, had brought about what was attempted in 1870, and was defeated; and was certainly not contemplated by the Act of last year. He believed it would be opposed by the public opinion of the country, which had never sanctioned any step taken in the direction of secularising our education. Thus spake Lord Reay indignantly, and when he resumed his seat there was a responsive flutter along the whole bench of Bishops.

Up sprang, first of all, the Bishop of London, to sound a note of warning on behalf of the Church schools. He declared that the new by-law would depreciate religion in the minds of the children, because it would be no longer a subject of instruction within their school hours. Next came the Bishop of Hereford. His lordship was positively alarmed. In his opinion, this by-law, if carried into effect, would have disastrous consequences; it would mean that some children would never see the inside of a Bible, and would grow up in ignorance of the principles of religion. It was practically the first step towards the secularising of schools. The Bishop of Rochester also chanted the same lamentation. But the Government official, the Marquis of Londonderry, was not to be shaken. He stuck to the by-law, though he tried to assure the Bishops that it would not work out as disastrously as they prophesied.

The Bishops, however, were right. They scented a most formidable danger. Hitherto parents who withdrew their children from religious instruction have had to send them to kick their heels (in most cases) while it was going on. Under the new by-law they can send their children to school when the religious instruction is over. The result will be that lots of parents will withdraw their children and send them to school later. And in this they will have the sympathy (and aid) of the children themselves.

During this conversation—for it was not a debate—in the House of Lords, the Bishops hypocritically referred to the Conscience Clause as a reason why *all* children should be in school before the religious instruction begins. We say "hypocritically" with due deliberation. The Bishops know quite well that they are playing a trick in their own interest. The Conscience Clause throws the onus of raising an objection on the dissidents, and most of them are too weak or timid for the task. Making the religious instruction *really* optional, by allowing the time given to it to form no *necessary* part of the schooltime, would put the difficulties on the opposite side. What the clericals want, and what they enjoyed under the old rule, is as much indirect compulsion as possible. For they feel that religion is practically doomed if it is left to the deliberate care of parents. In other words, the love of religion is an exotic growth for the most part, and only springs up naturally on a very limited soil.

A seaside exhorter on the East coast lately informed his audience that he visited the Hall of Science many years ago and called Charles Bradlaugh "a liar." The Freethinkers wanted to turn him out, but Charles Bradlaugh said, "No, leave that misguided young man alone; he will see the light in time." The exhorter had previously said that Charles Bradlaugh was a gentleman, but his comment on this utterance of "Iconoclast's" was, "So you see the Devil sometimes speaks the truth." The compliment to Charles Bradlaugh was dictated by prudence, the coupling of Charles Bradlaugh with the Devil was spontaneous and sincere. The exhorter forgot, however, that the Devil *always* speaks the truth—at least in the Bible. Many lies are told there, but not one of them by Satan.

This exhorter observed incidentally that no Atheist is a good husband. One Atheist's wife heard it, and smiled.



## Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(All Engagements suspended until September.)

### To Correspondents.

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

HACKNEY SAINT.—Your cuttings are welcome.

C. MASON.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

NEPTUNE.—We are afraid it is only too characteristic of the average Christian.

WE must again remind correspondents that we cannot answer letters bearing no name and address, both of which must be given, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith. This rule is universal and inflexible.

T. HOPKINS.—Miss Vance has passed over your amusing letter, etc. Thanks. The "general"—to use your language—is very much better.

J. W. GOTT.—Sorry to hear that the Leeds crowd took to stone-throwing, not during the lecture, but outside the Park in the roadway, and that Mr. Pack got a nasty cut on the head. The Halifax experience was regrettable. It looks as though an entirely fresh propaganda of Freethought were necessary in Yorkshire. Pray keep us informed as to the course of events. We note your statement that the announcement in the *Freethinker* is the only advertisement you have had of these meetings.

C. J.—Thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always welcome.

R. FRANCIS.—We hope to make this journal still more interesting and useful during the coming winter.

THE COHEN PRESENTATION.—C. J., 10s.

OLD SUBSCRIBER.—Pleased to know that you continue, after all those years, to "devour" your *Freethinker* weekly. "Book Chat" will be resumed when the Editor returns to London. We believe it was generally regarded as an interesting feature of this journal. We note your reference to the Lamb volume.

W. MANN.—We hope to publish the first half of your article on Heine next week.

H. CARVER.—Your Christian friend has been drawing on his imagination, or honoring a draft on someone else's. Colonel Ingersoll was not visited on his death-bed by a minister of religion, who found him trembling on the verge of eternity. Colonel Ingersoll never was on a death-bed. He died suddenly in his chair, of heart failure, which he was perfectly aware might cause his death at any time. Mrs. Ingersoll asked him how he felt; he said "Better now," with a loving smile; and the next moment he was dead with that smile still on his face. Some of the foolish Christians, indeed, said that God had cut him off suddenly in his sins. We doubt it. But your orthodox friend is wrong, anyway.

G. M. COOPER (Newport) writes:—"I should like to draw your attention to what seems a case of boycott. Quite recently I came across the *Freethinker* for the first time, and introduced the paper to a friend. We thought we would become readers of the paper; but on asking for it at Smith & Sons' railway stall here my friend was told, and not at all politely, that they did not have it. They were asked to order it, but to our astonishment they absolutely refused, adding that the firm would not supply it. I take it that ours is not the only case. According to this, it seems to me, we are not to read according to our own inclinations but according to those of our news-agents." The boycott of which our correspondent complains is simply disgraceful. Smith & Sons' business at railway stations is a monopoly, and they should be obliged to sell whatever is in demand. The character of papers is a matter for public opinion, and, if necessary, the police. Self-elected censors are an impudent nuisance.

E. ROSENBERG asks for "Abracadabra's" opinion as to the genuineness of early Jewish history. He also asks us whether "the testimony of Josephus concerning Christ is genuine." This matter is dealt with in the chapter on "Pious Forgeries" in our *Crimes of Christianity*. We do not know a scholar of any repute who defends the Josephus passage. Bishop Warburton said it was not only a forgery, but a very clumsy one; and this is evident to anyone who will read it critically. Gibbon said, not as an opinion, but as an obvious fact, that the famous Christ passage was inserted into the text of Josephus between the time of Origen and the time of Eusebius. It was never heard of until the fourth century, and Eusebius was quite capable of forging it himself.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

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LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote is still absent from London, and we must repeat the announcement that, as his letters have to be forwarded to him, all matter intended for insertion in the next issue of the *Freethinker* should be posted so as to reach our publishing office on Monday morning.

We are happy to state that Mr. Foote is greatly benefiting in health by his stay at the seaside. He is now looking, and feeling, more like his old self. His voice, too, is recovering its old tone.

Mr. Cohen has joined the holiday-makers, and is recreating on the South Coast. We are sure our readers will wish him "a good time."

Mr. Foote has accepted the invitation to open the new lecturing season at the Manchester Secular Hall on the last Sunday in September. The committee hope to have the much-needed repairs and decorations done by that date. The cost will be from twenty-five to thirty pounds. We hope our readers in the Manchester district will give a little financial help, and give it promptly; especially those of them who may be looking forward to hearing Mr. Foote's opening lectures. Subscriptions should be sent to the honorary secretary, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, 15 Mytton-street, Hulme, Manchester.

The Annual Meeting of the Newcastle Branch was held in Lockhart's Cocoa Rooms, New Bridge-street, when there was a good attendance. Mr. J. G. Bartram was elected as President for the coming year, with Messrs. Richardson, Easton, Mitchell, and Wright as Vice-Presidents. Mr. T. H. Elstob, 24 Woodbine-road, Gosforth, was re-elected Secretary. The Annual Report and Balance-sheet were adopted as satisfactory, whilst it was also agreed to issue manifestoes from time to time in the town, as occasion may require, setting forth the Secular point of view. It was agreed, also, to hold the Annual Excursion of the Branch in conjunction with the Shields friends to Holywell Dene on Sunday, August 9, leaving New Bridge-street Station by 1.25 train for Monk-seaton. There is also a train leaving the Central at 1 o'clock for Monkseaton which may be more convenient for some, and which will be joined at North Shields by some of the Shields friends. It is hoped there will be a good turn-out, and Tyneside sympathisers will be made welcome if they put in an appearance. Tea has been arranged at Mrs. Talbot's, near the Old Mill, at one shilling per head.

We are glad to see that Mr. J. W. de Caux, who so ably defends Freethought in correspondence in the *Yarmouth Mercury*, refuses to be drawn off the scent of discussion by Christian irrelevancies. He sticks to the argument he initiated: if Adam and Eve are legendary beings, who never fell because they never existed, what did Christ come (supposing he came) to save us from? The Christians fight as shy of this question as an old rat does of a trap.

The London *Sun* is printing a public correspondence on "Are the Churches a Failure." One clergyman who takes part in it, and naturally remains anonymous, states that he does not believe half he preaches, and loathes the duplicity he is obliged to practise. "If I give up my work for conscience sake," he asks, "what is to become of me and my children?" Hundreds of Christian ministers might ask the same question. At a certain time of life, a man with a family finds it next to impossible to begin a fresh career. Let us pity the preachers of the Gospel who find themselves in a trap, and who see no way of escape. There are men who could face poverty themselves, but could not bear the cry for bread of their own children. Let us pity them.

*Picture-Politics*, in some "Zollverein" verses accompanying one of Mr. F. C. Gould's cartoons, associates the three names of Gladstone, Cobden, and Bradlaugh as great Freethinkers.

## The Tabernacle of the Congregation.

IN the book of Exodus we find no less than twelve chapters devoted to the making of a grand Tabernacle, or what the Revisers call a "Tent of Meeting," with the furniture appertaining thereto, and to the dress of the high priest. In this book Moses is represented as receiving minute and detailed instructions as to the shape, materials, and dimensions of everything relating to the Tabernacle (Exod. xxv.-xxvii.). Next, he receives directions with regard to all the articles of dress to be worn by the high priest (Exod. xxviii.). This is followed by instructions respecting the ritual connected with the Tabernacle (Exod. xxix., xxx.). After this, we have a detailed account of the actual making of the Tabernacle and its furniture (Exod. xxxv.-xxxix.). Lastly, we have an account of the setting up of the Tabernacle when all its parts had been completed (Exod. xl.).

This wonderful Tabernacle is described as a moveable building that could be easily taken to pieces, so as to be carried about by the Israelites when moving from place to place. It is represented as existing during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, during the life of Joshua in Canaan, during all the time of the Judges, during the reigns of Saul and David, and during the first ten years of the reign of Solomon; that is, until superseded by the temple, when its long life is supposed to come to an end. Engaged in the services of this Tabernacle, too—at least, so we are told—was a whole tribe of priests and Levites.

Taking the length of the cubit as 21 inches, this grand Tabernacle (if we believe the account in Exodus) was 52 feet 6 inches long, 17 feet 6 inches broad, and the same in height. It was made of acacia wood, fastened together by grooves and clasps, and overlaid with gold or silver. It had four coverings: one—the inmost—of fine linen richly embroidered, one of goats' hair, a third of rams' skins dyed red, and an outer one of badgers' skins. The building, when erected, stood in a large space open to the sky, called the Court of the Tabernacle, 175 feet long and 87 feet 6 inches broad, enclosed by a row of 20 pillars on the two longer sides, by 10 pillars at the western side, and by 6 pillars on the eastern side, leaving an entrance on the latter side of the width of four pillars. The pillars were 8 feet 9 inches in height, and overlaid with silver, and curtains were hung from pillar to pillar. The Tabernacle itself was divided into two unequal compartments by a richly embroidered curtain or veil, the outer and larger division being called the Holy Place or Sanctuary, and the inner the Most Holy Place. Within the latter was a box or ark of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, the lid of which (called the Mercy seat) being of pure gold, and ornamented with two golden cherubim. In the outer place or sanctuary were a table overlaid with gold for "shew-bread," an altar for the burning of incense, also overlaid with gold, and a golden candlestick with seven branches. In the Court of the Tabernacle was the altar of burnt offering, made of brass, upon which all sacrifices were to be offered, also a brazen laver or "sea."

For the service of this grand Tabernacle the Lord is stated to have selected all the men of the tribe of Levi, and to have divided them into two classes—priests and Levites. The priesthood, according to the Levitical code, was limited to the sons or descendants of Aaron, whose duty it was to offer all sacrifices, all the rest of the tribe—the Levites—merely assisting the priests in performing the more servile offices. In the case of the priests, no age is prescribed either for their entrance on office or their retirement; but in that of the Levites, the time of service is stated to be from 30 to 50 years of age. As to what was to be the occupation of the Levite up to his 30th year the authors of this code are discreetly silent. The number of this army of slaughter-men in the time of Moses is given as 8 priests—Aaron

and his two sons—and 8,580 Levites between 30 and 50 years of age (Num. iv. 48), it being implied that all were engaged in the Tabernacle service.

Now, I have no hesitation in saying that this grand Tabernacle, so minutely described in Exodus, was nothing more or less than a purely imaginary structure, which never existed anywhere save in the Priestly code concocted by a post-exilic writer, and, as a consequence, that the priests and Levites, which are represented as engaged in its service, were of the same mythical character. If this be the case, it follows, as a matter of course, that Moses was not the author of the books in which this Tabernacle is mentioned. The reasons for this conclusion will, no doubt, be easily perceived.

The first matter which may be adduced in support of the foregoing statement is the unhistorical character of the alleged exodus from Egypt and the forty years' wandering in the desert, as well as the alleged conquest of Canaan by Joshua, as described in the Hexateuch. The Bible record of these and other scripture events have been proved to be fictitious, and were so proved in this journal not very long ago. Assuming, then, that the before-mentioned events are pure fiction, it follows that the Bible account of the making and erection of a tabernacle in the wilderness, and of the appointment of the tribe of Levi to minister in, and take charge of, it, is also fictitious. It goes, of course, without saying that if the Israelites never wandered about in the desert, as recorded in the Pentateuch, no tabernacle could have been made and set up during these imaginary wanderings. We have thus a clear proof of the non-existence of the Tabernacle in the time of Moses. I will, however, assume that the unhistorical character of the narrative portions of the Pentateuch has not been placed beyond doubt, in which case we shall have to seek other proofs.

It will, no doubt, be remembered that in the so-called "books of Moses" there are incorporated three codes of laws of different dates—the Book of the Covenant (Ex. xx. 22—xxiii. 33), the Deuteronomic code (Deut. v.—xxviii., omitting xxvii.), and the Priestly code (Leviticus, and portions of Exodus and Numbers). Now, the first point to be noticed is, that the mythical Tabernacle of the Congregation is found only in the latest of these codes; in the first two it is not so much as named.

In the Book of the Covenant no such Tabernacle was necessary; for every man was allowed to offer sacrifice himself, if he chose to do so, and when and where he pleased, provided only that the altar which he used was made of earth or unhewn stone.

In the Deuteronomic code, as we have already seen, all sacrifices were to be offered in one particular place—the "habitation" which the Lord should select out of all the tribes to cause his name to dwell there—that is to say, upon the altar at the temple in Jerusalem. If it be contended (as is often done) that this particular place of sacrifice referred to the Tabernacle described in Exodus, which Tabernacle was afterwards to be set up permanently in one of the cities of Canaan, then the question arises, Why has not the writer said so? Why, for instance, has he not represented his mythical Moses as giving commands to the following effect: "All sacrifices must be offered on the brazen altar in the Court of the Tabernacle, wheresoever that Tabernacle may happen to be stationed. When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, in whatsoever part of the land thou dwellest, thou shalt bring all thine offerings unto the Lord's Tabernacle. And the man that neglecteth so to do, that soul shall be cut off from his people." Instead of this, the writer uses language which refers only to the temple. It is clear that the author of the Deuteronomic code, writing in the early part of the reign of Josiah, knew nothing of a grand Tabernacle supposed to have been made by Moses in the wilderness and afterwards set up in Canaan. Anyone who reads this code carefully will see that the Moses therein delineated was unacquainted with any such structure. All he knew was that the Lord had directed him to make a simple

"ark of wood"—not that so elaborately described in the Priestly code—for the purpose of holding two inscribed tablets. And here, perhaps, it may be necessary to state that the words "the tabernacle of the congregation" occur in Deut. xxxi. 14-15; but the paragraph in which they appear is recognised by Biblical critics as one of those that were added at a later date. The Deuteronomic code ends with the statement: "These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb" (xxix. 1). This code, it is scarcely necessary to say, is not free from interpolations. As an example, let the reader turn to chapter x., and read the first eleven verses, omitting verses 6 to 9. When he has done this he will see that the latter paragraph (verses 6 to 9) is an undoubted interpolation. In the same way chapter xxviii. follows on after chapter xxvi.

Again, in the Deuteronomic code the author appears to have regarded all Levites as priests; for he speaks of the latter as "the priests the Levites," or "the priests the sons of Levi." There is thus some uncertainty, even in the Pentateuch itself, as to who were the priests, and who the Levites. In the following examples the Deuteronomist represents the Lord as saying:—

Deut. xvii. 9.—"And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days: and thou shalt inquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment."

Deut. xxi. 5.—"And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and according to their word shall every controversy and every stroke be."

Deut. xvi. 11.—"And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are in the midst of thee."

Deut. xxvi. 12.—"When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithe of thine increase in the third year, which is the year of tithing, then thou shalt give it unto the Levite, to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled."

Now, it is quite evident that the author of this code, writing a few years prior to the eighteenth year of Josiah, could not very well speak of, and recommend to favorable notice, a class of men that did not exist in his day. This writer has, it is true, introduced some new laws relating to the observance of feasts and the offering of sacrifices, which were previously unknown; but there must undoubtedly have been an order of men in his day known as Levites, some of which were also recognised as priests. From what he says it would seem that the Levites were a set of mendicants, who followed no occupation save that of cutting up animals and offering them in sacrifice, and who, apparently, wandered about singly in search of a job. The writer, also, certainly draws a distinction between "the priests the Levites" and "the Levite." For an explanation of this seeming mystery we have to turn to the prophet Ezekiel who lived in the reign of the last king of Judah before the exile.

The last-named writer, himself a priest, formulated a new system of his own for the future worship of Yahveh (Ezek. xli.-xlvi.), which system the authors of the Levitical code adopted with certain additions and modifications. Ezekiel, for instance, represents the Lord as directing that a lamb should be offered every morning as a "continual burnt offering" (xli. 13-15). The authors of the Priestly code adopted this daily sacrifice, but they added a second lamb, the latter to be offered every evening, and they represented the command respecting both sacrifices as given by the Lord to Moses (Exod. xxix. 38-41; Num. xxviii. 3-8).

Ezekiel, in his new system of temple service, refers to the priests and Levites of earlier times. Speaking in the name of the Lord, he says:—

"No alien.....shall enter into my sanctuary.....But the Levites that went far from me, when Israel went astray from me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity.....Because they ministered unto them before their idols.....they shall not come near unto me, to execute the office of priest unto me.....Yet will I make them keepers of the charge of the house for all the service thereof.....But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me.....they shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge" (xliv. 9-16).

Here again we have "the priests the Levites" and "the Levites," as in Deuteronomy, and we learn some particulars which the author of the latter book has omitted. The Levites were evidently a class of professional sacrificers or priests who, from the earliest times, had offered sacrifice to the gods of Canaan, Yahveh included. David had two of these priests, Zadok and Abiathar, in his service (2 Sam. xx. 25). The latter, at the commencement of the reign of Solomon, was dismissed from his office for complicity in the rebellion of David's son Adonijah; after which the priesthood in the kingdom of Judah remained in the family of Zadok, whose descendants continued faithful to Yahveh. These were "the priests the Levites." Ezekiel, though himself a priest, knew nothing of the appointment of Aaron and his sons as priests to the Lord for ever. With him the Jewish priesthood commenced with Zadok. Neither, again, did the author of Deuteronomy know anything of this appointment, or that there was such an office as that of high priest. Aaron is mentioned once (Deut. ix. 20), but only as the brother of Moses, who was responsible, in that law-giver's absence, for the worship of the golden calf. In the Deuteronomic code "the priest the Levite" is named with a certain amount of respect, and as having an assured position; "the Levite" is spoken of as a homeless person who was to be fed and treated kindly on account of his sacred calling. In Judges xvii. we have an account of one of these itinerant Levites, which commences as follows:—

"And there was a young man out of Bethlehem-judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite" (verse 7).

This remarkable passage suggests a query similar to the well-known conundrum, "When is a door not a door?" This is: "When is a Levite not a Levite?" The answer in the latter case is, "When he is of the tribe of Judah." There follows, however, from this question another little conundrum, which I leave the reader to solve for himself. This is: If a Levite of the Priestly code was one who belonged to the tribe of Levi, how was the "young man" who is mentioned in Judges xvii. 7 a Levite? This query I commend to the notice of Bible reconcilers and members of the Christian Evidence Society.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

### Is There a God?—III.

(Continued from page 491.)

Belief, or want of belief, will not alter facts. If there is a God, ignorance of his existence, or a denial that he exists, will not abolish him. If there is no God, such as theologians and deists believe there is, belief, dogmatic teaching, nor arguments, will not make one. Therefore belief, or want of belief, changes nothing in the facts of nature. If it is folly to say there is no God, it is folly also to say there is, until he reveals himself in such a way that no one can misunderstand the revelation or deny its author. It is a mistake to suppose men have an inward objection to know God. Would anyone object to have a personal acquaintance with a great man, a great poet or writer, a millionaire, a king, or an emperor? A man related to any of them would often mention the fact with pride and evident delight. How much more would not men take pride in

knowing and having personal acquaintance with the creator of the universe, if such a being existed, and there was means of having communion with him?

Whether there is a God or there is not, we know there is a universe; we see it, we feel it, we are in it, and part of it. We may reasonably think that the universe is infinite and eternal, full of mystery and intelligence. There is intelligence in this world, for man is here, possessing the highest intelligence that we know of. As there is intelligence here, we may believe there is intelligence in other worlds, possibly even of a higher order than here. But whether there is a being anywhere in the universe possessing infinite intelligence in himself, we have no means of knowing, and it is wrong to condemn anyone for confessing his ignorance of an imaginary being,

Is a belief in a god necessary and beneficial in its effects? Are those who believe more moral and useful in consequence of their belief? If the belief is beneficial, though false, it might be defended for the good it did. But I think a negative answer must be given to the inquiry. The worst nations of the past and present were, and are, god-believers. Nations believing in the same God and the same religion murder one another in war. God-believers have shed rivers of blood for impossible crimes. Today faith and immorality of the deepest dye, and worship and criminality, are constantly found together. On the other hand, men without a belief in God are found to be moral and useful citizens, lovers of truth, justice, and freedom, and self-sacrificing workers for the uplifting of the human race. In fact, a large proportion of the workers for reform and progress at the present time are persons without a belief in a God or in religion as interpreted by existing Christian sects.

It is possible to have a belief in a god accompanied with very little faith in other directions. There are men who are always parading their belief in a deity, who have very little or no faith in man, in truth, in reason, in love and brotherhood, or in the efficacy of human effort to improve the condition of the people in this world. They are persons of small faith, however loud their profession of Deism may be. On the other hand, there are men without a belief in a god who abound in faith in other things; who are full of loving-kindness; who love truth, justice, and righteousness; who are exemplary in their lives and eminent in usefulness; who are full of love, hope, and mercy; and who are ever ready to sacrifice self on the altar of public good. They are persons of big faith.

If there be a God, and he desired that all men should believe in him, it is reasonable to suppose he would reveal himself in such a way that it would be impossible to doubt his existence. To suppose that a god would entrust the evidence of himself to a fallible, ignorant, incompetent, and a deceitful creature, to be revealed to others, is absurd. If it is God that endowed man with reason, he must have expected him to use it, and he cannot respect a man who receives without evidence assertions which to his reason appear absurd and unreasonable. The only rational conclusion to draw is, either that there is no God such as theologians preach; or that he is not infinite and almighty; or that he, for some reason known to himself only, wishes to remain unseen and unknown.

If there be a God who created the universe, the universe must be what he intended it to be, and he is responsible for all that is. It is not want of reverence that leads to such a conclusion. The process of thinking seems to be unable to find a path leading to any other deduction. To suppose that a creature can defy and defeat a creator is to make a creature not only equal to, but even greater than, the creator. If the conclusion is disastrous to other doctrines taught, so much the worse for the doctrines. Reason has cause to be proud for every error destroyed. In the case of a volcanic eruption, when thousands of lives are suddenly lost, no one would think of blaming

the mountain or the lava or the victims. But supposing there was a being outside or inside the mountain, who deliberately, of his own free will, planned and made the explosion, knowing the sad results that would follow, everyone would agree that he was responsible for all the consequences. Or suppose there was a being who knew the calamity was coming, and when it would come, and did not inform the inhabitants and urge them to remove to a place of safety, would not all condemn him and execrate his very name? And suppose there was a man who knew of the danger, and had power to prevent it, and did nothing, would not all denounce him as a cruel monster? Now, if we apply this mode of reasoning to nature and to man, how is it possible to avoid applying the same method in regard to God? To reason it would appear justifiable and imperative to follow a closer and stricter method of inquiry in regard to God than to man, as man is imperfect, finite, and fallible, and God is said to be perfect, infinite, and infallible. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion if there is an infinite, almighty God, who has made the universe, he is responsible for it and for all that takes place within it.

And if there be a god who is infinite in all his attributes and eternal in his existence, does it not follow that he has duties to perform towards the creatures he has made? Society holds parents responsible for feeding, clothing, and sheltering their children, and punishes them if they neglect their duty. Good men and women consider it their duty to band themselves together to do what they can to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, instruct the ignorant, rescue the fallen, improve the conditions of life, and increase the happiness of the world. If it is the duty of men individually to look after themselves, and, collectively, after society, how much more is it the duty of God to feed, clothe, and shelter his children; to heal the sick, rescue the fallen, reform the wicked, and make all his children good and happy. Men cannot do these things effectually, because they have not sufficient wisdom and power. They would do all if they could. But if there is a God of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, he could abolish poverty, crime, and misery by merely willing it. As he does not do it, we are justified in supposing either he is not all-good, or not all-powerful, or that such a being is unknown.

The foregoing considerations are sufficient to justify the position taken by an Agnostic. But what should be his attitude towards the word "god"? The word is so ingrained in men that it will be almost impossible to get rid of it, and possibly very difficult to coin another so handy and expressive. And if the word is used as a personification of all that is good, loveable, and worthy, I see no great objection to its use and retention. In that sense all could believe in God, and in the Devil as a personification of all that is bad. The Devil already, even in the churches, is a mere personification of evil, and not a real personal being. No doubt God, in the course of time, will share the same fate, and then God will be an ideal model being, or a personification of all good.

R. J. DERFEL.

#### AS THEY LOOKED AT IT.

"It's a fine day, deacon!" "Yes; but we're all miserable creetur's!" "Craps lookin' tip-top!" "Yes, but thar's some big calamity comin' on us." "Health never better!" "Oh, yes; but we'll be sendin' for the doctor 'fore long." "Well, thank God, we're living, anyhow!" "Yes," groaned the deacon, as he shuffled off, "but our time's comin'."—*Atlanta Constitution*.

#### AND VICE VERSA.

"Those two dominics don't seem to speak," remarked Jiggsby. "No," replied Hornblower. "They're at loggerheads. Whenever one prays for rain the other turns in and prays for dry weather." "You don't say so!" "Fact. And when it rains, the one who prayed for rain nearly sets the other one wild with his domineering manner."

## Correspondence.

## EDUCATION REFORM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I be permitted to remark upon the letter of a correspondent of yours (Mr. H. C. Goddard), which is in reply to a letter of mine which recently appeared in your columns, headed "Suggestion for Education Reform"?

Your correspondent is good enough to agree with me so far as "the abolition of sectarianism from rate and tax-supported schools" is concerned. He goes with me so far, but denounces my other proposition as absolutely erroneous, and (I am afraid rather egotistically) affirms that the scheme would be impracticable in its execution.

In his conciseness the gentleman has forgotten one thing. He says: "Would Mr. A care to pay the same rate for his son to learn bricklaying as Mr. B paid for his son to become an artist?" This is sublime! Would that be more unfair than the present educational system, where Secularist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and all creeds pay rates for one religion to be taught, *whether they like it or no!* The present system slaps your face, and expects you to gratuitously offer your ear to be pulled.

"Few children show any marked ability till they leave school," he says. Do they not? Do not a certain portion of a class at school always keep near the top, and the rest near the bottom? Who shall say that the child who keeps persistently in front at school is not the brainy child?

Show me a child, diligent at school, and a leader among his schoolfellows, and I'll show you one who'll be a man of the world, and a leader of men!

Is this saying true, or is it not?

A. T. WARRIS.

## SUMMER FOODS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—All movements that have for their object a better standard of physical or mental elevation are encouraged by your paper; so you have inserted a letter from a physician supporting vegetarianism. Like the sincere religionist, the vegetarian is a martyr for his opinions: the former denies himself a good Sunday's holiday, endeavoring in various ways to make his life miserable; the vegetarian, for an idea to "live and let live," in its relation to the beasts, will deny himself roast beef, preferring to live on haricots, apples, etc. In support of this system of diet, "Physician" says it is healthier. Granted, in the tropics, where the heat is so relaxing, and where energy is at a discount; but it could not suit, say, Esquimaux to endure a temperature of 30° or 50° below zero. Neither would it suit the British Isles, where the climate is so varying.

There is such a tendency to go to extremes, not only in religion, but in our food and drink—from the man who has an idea he is a son, brother, or some relation of the trinitarian gods, to the vegetarian and teetotaler, who would have all adopt their peculiar mode of living. To mention such "reforms" to an ordinary Parisian or a Turk would but make him laugh, and pronounce them as the ideas of an ascetic. But such fads can clearly be traced as the natural result of a theological, narrow-minded, and sectarian training, in this England of ours, which has opened the way for their acceptance. Neither would the idea of living on vegetables, fruit, and water be discouraged by that powerful class who feed on champagne and ten course dinners. It will be a bad day when the working man will live on sixpence a day; and this is the "reform" of the vegetarian.

Our concern is simply the improvement of the mind and body of man, and if vegetarianism can do this it is worthy of encouragement. But there are no signs of such results. The strict, habituated vegetarians are saturated with superstitions, and not so clear-headed as the man in the street; and, though possessed of a good skin, their shanks are very lean and bony.

RATIONALIST.

The story is told of a Scotch preacher who gave his people long, strong sermons, and delivered them in a remarkably deliberate manner. One Sunday he asked a friend who was visiting him to occupy his pulpit in the morning. "An' were you satisfied wi' my preaching?" asked his friend, as they walked home from the kirk. "Weel," said his host, slowly, "it was a fair discourse, Will'm, a fair discourse; but it pained me at the last to see the folk looking sae fresh and wide awake. I mistrust 'twasna sae long nor sae sound as it should hae been"—*Youth's Companion.*

## Leo XIII. and Renan.

Leo XIII. was perhaps the most liberal Pope that ever sat on the chair of St. Peter. What he thought of the Higher Criticism may be gathered from his attitude towards Renan, of which the following anecdote is reported, which may be true, and if not true may be considered *ben trovato* because characteristic of the Pontiff's attitude toward scholars of Renan's stamp. When told of Renan's death Pope Leo XIII. asked: "How did he die?" "Impenitent," was the reply. Leo XIII. reflected a moment and then remarked very quietly: "That is better." The prelate having expressed some surprise, the Pope went on to explain that Renan had proved by his end that his doubt was sincere. He would be judged by his sincerity, which, if it was thorough, might absolve him. A few moments afterwards he observed that Renan had done more good than harm to the Church. He had aroused the theologians from their torpor. He had embodied the doubts of modern thought. He had marshalled its forces. The Church had been surprised; but could they believe that all this was not designed by Providence? And they might hope that particular indulgence would be shown to one who was the instrument of God's wrath.—*Open Court* (Chicago).

## CHRIST'S NOTHING.

As the origin, so also do the life and works of Jesus Christ rest upon pure nothing. His kingdom was not of this world—the other is nothing. He fed the souls of all mankind with love, and love has proved itself to be—nothing. He fed the bodies of five thousand hearers with a few loaves of bread, which were as good as—nothing. He lived forty days in the wilderness upon—nothing. He wore a coat without a seam, consequently sewed with—nothing. He ordered the evil spirits to go into the swine and the swine perceived—nothing. He made the dead live again and the lame walk with—nothing. He died on the cross for—nothing. He was laid in a grave, and when it was opened again, there was found—nothing. He passed into hell, into purgatory, into heaven, and into other regions of nothing, and continues to live as the universal, immortal nothing. Through his inexhaustible legacy of nothing, every good-for-nothing peasant, every brutish glutton, every disgusting hypocrite called priest, becomes a holy man through—nothing.—*Karl Heinzen.*

## WHY THE MASSES CONSENTED.

When it was proposed to create yet more public offices, the stupid masses were made suspicious. "There is no work for more offices!" protested the masses. But, fortunately, constructive statesmen were not lacking. "More offices," explained these, "will necessitate the erection of additional public buildings, which means a graft for about everybody." Now the masses changed their tune, and filled the air with psalms of thanksgiving, in that there was somebody at hand to tell them what was what.—*Puck.*

## THE SPORT'S PHILOSOPHY.

Oh, foolish man, who doth so toil and spin,  
By day, and then lie waking half the night,  
Contriving superfluity to win,  
Who grabbeth all within his reach and sight,  
Regardless of his need; who plans to skin  
His fellow men, so to augment his pile,  
And who, one million made, doth straight begin  
Upon the next, and recks not, though the while  
His brothers hunger and his name revile,  
And love flits by him, and all tender ties  
Are broken, and though pleasure's dazzling smile  
He sees not, grubbing still with downcast eyes;  
Who lives in dread he may untimely "bust,"  
Dies, and is merged into his god, "the dust."

No sordid heap will I accumulate,  
Nor oversweat—not if I know myself.  
I'll spend my dollars at about the rate  
That I acquire the necessary pelf.  
My watch I always can hypothecate  
Should I at any time be running short,  
Or have mine host inscribe it on the slate,  
When I to his thirst parlor do resort.  
To Kitty I will show myself a sport,  
And purchase freely if she bats an eye.  
In pleasure's paths I gayly will cavort,  
And eat three meals a day—each one with pic.  
I'm right with Omar Khayyam, who once said,  
"Live while you can—you'll be a long time dead."

—Chicago Daily News.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen, two special Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S.: Station-road, 11.30, Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6, R. P. Edwards.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, E. B. Rose.

FINSBURY BRANCH N.S.S. (Clerkenwell-green): 11.30, a Lecture.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7.30, W. J. Ramsey.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30; Hammersmith Broadway, 7.30, Lectures.

### COUNTRY.

BATLEY (Market Square): Tuesday, 11, at 7, Ernest Pack, "The Bible God."

BIRKENHEAD (Park Entrance): Thursday, 13, at 8, H. Percy Ward.

BRADFORD (Town Hall Square): 11, Ernest Pack, "Ghosts."

BRIGHOUSE (Market Place): Saturday, 15, at 7, Ernest Pack, "St. John's Nightmare."

CHESTER (Market Place): Tuesday and Wednesday, 11 and 12, at 8, H. Percy Ward.

HECKMONDWICKE (Market Place): Monday, 10, at 7, Ernest Pack, "Miracles."

HUDDERSFIELD (Market Cross): Wednesday, 12, at 7, Ernest Pack, "What must we do to be Saved?"

KEIGHLEY (Skipton-road): Thursday, 13, at 7, Ernest Pack, "Jesus the Jew."

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): Ernest Pack, 3, "Adam the Dust-Man"; 6.30, "The Bible and Beer."

LIVERPOOL (Wellington Column): 3, H. Percy Ward; 7, Islington Square (if wet, in the Alexandra Hall); Edge Hill Church, Monday, 10, at 8,

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Excursion of Members and Friends. Meet at 1.50, Return fare 6d.

SHIPLEY (Market-place): Friday, 14, at 7, Ernest Pack, "Heaven and Hell."

SOUTH SHIELDS.—Holywell Dene Picnic.

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