

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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Men will always deceive themselves while they abandon experience for systems hatched up by superstition.

—D'HOLBACH.

A Word for Women.

"Women are much more materialistic in their conceptions of 'love' than men.....The world owes hardly anything to women as exponents of the ideal, whether in music, poetry, or the painted or plastic arts."—*Reynolds's Newspaper*, September 20.

THIS passage is taken from a review of a new volume of verse by the Hon. Stephen Coleridge. There are other passages still more uncomplimentary to the female sex. But they are not worth quoting, as they merely display a sour male temper. When one sex insults the other it is prudent to stop one's ears until the noise is over.

Had the above passage appeared in any paper but an organ of Democracy, and even Republicanism, we should not have noticed it. It deserves challenge, however, when there is danger of its being regarded as a statement of the attitude of the party of progress.

We are far from thinking that any personal responsibility for it attaches to the able and cultivated editor of *Reynolds's*. We believe Mr. Thompson has been holidaying in France, and this fleer at women may have crept into the paper during his absence. But the very fact that it did creep in shows there is a tendency on the part of many men to praise their own sex by defaming the other.

Nothing is more absurd than reflections cast upon women (as women) by men. In the first place, the female sex presents as many varieties of intelligence and character as the male sex; in the next place, women are very much what men have chosen to make them. This, at least, is certain, that men have wielded nearly all the direct political, social, and educational power; in addition to which, they have mainly decided which women should become wives and mothers, and thus have the opportunity of transmitting their qualities to posterity—in other words, of helping to determine the quality of the race.

The man who sneers at woman's intelligence is generally a fool. Not always, of course; for he may be a pessimist like Schopenhauer, whose distorted view on one subject we overlook for the sake of his sound view on so many others. But there are very few Schopenhauers in the world, and a vast quantity of insignificant people who are able to flatter their self-esteem most easily by running down someone else. Every man of sense knows that he only suffers by despising the intelligence of his mother or his wife. Women do not think exactly like men, but they think all the same, and their special point of view gives a fresh perception of the facts. They may be less reflective than men; they are certainly more intuitive. But this point need not be labored. Men and women are fortunately different, though they are both human. They are neither equal nor unequal. They are complementary to each other. And to discuss which is the better is like discussing which is the more valuable half of a pair of scissors.

It is sometimes said that women are more religious than men, and that they are the principal supporters

of priestcraft. This may be perfectly true, and yet the fault may not be exclusively their own. Sometimes the men are obviously to blame. There are even Freethinkers who leave their womenfolk to superstition, and never lift a finger to rescue them. What right have *they* to talk about the inferiority of the female mind? But there is something still more important to be said. If women have a peculiar tendency to religion, who are they that minister to and trade upon this tendency? *Men*. Men manufactured all the religions, invented all the dogmas, built all the churches, and wrote all the holy scriptures. Not a line of the Bible was written by a woman. No, it was the "superior sex" (God help them!) who palmed off a multitude of silly miracles as the works of infinite wisdom, who perpetrated the most contemptible absurdities with the most stupid solemnity, who even added filth to folly, and called it all the Word of God. It was this same "superior sex" who heroically cast the whole burden of the world's "sin" upon the shoulders of a single woman in the Garden of Eden. It was this same "superior sex" who insulted honest natural motherhood by the story of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ.

All religion has done for woman is to exploit her: and all the exploiters have been men.

Let us now come to the subject of "love." The reviewer we have quoted says that women are much more materialistic in their conceptions of "love" than men. This is a baseless slander. Evolution shows that maternity is the secret of all civilisation. The child made the female a mother, and the mother made the male a father. Childhood, motherhood, fatherhood; these are the steps of social development. And, if the truth must be told, the male is not yet as perfect a father as the female is a mother, even in the most civilised communities. He still needs a lot of breaking in; or, to use Mr. Meredith's simile, he has passed Port Seraglio, but has not yet rounded Cape Turk.

One of the reviewer's sentences is quite brutal; he represents woman as caring most for the physical aspect of "love"; but he probably means at bottom no more than this, that woman prefers a clean healthy man as a mate rather than a dirty wastrel who may spout floods of cheap sentimentality. In this, however, she shows a sound instinct; she is guarding the future of the species.

Let it be said here that woman has saved the race from man's ruin. If she had played the game of all the vices as he has, humankind would long ago have been extinct. He has polluted, and she has purified, the blood of the race.

Woman is so "materialistic" in love that she has even followed man into the gutter of his crimes and vices, and still offered her stainless bosom as a pillow for his unworthy head. How often has man been "materialistic" enough to do this for a woman?

Men with money of their own have married women they did not love in order to add to it. Who ever knew a woman "materialistic" enough to act in the same way? Give her freedom, and she will listen to the voice of her heart.

We could pursue this subject at great length, but we must come to what the reviewer says of women as exponents of the ideal. He says the world owes them hardly anything. Let us see.

Gainsborough was an exquisite painter. He painted

the famous Duchess of Devonshire. You look at the picture, and you say, How beautiful! But there was something *more* beautiful—the woman who sat (or stood) for the portrait. She *was* the Duchess of Devonshire. Gainsborough was an “exponent” of the ideal. She was the ideal itself.

If man has “worshipped” woman, it has been because she was more beautiful, more tender, more charming than himself. He felt in his heart of hearts that adoration of her drew forth all that was best in his own nature. He was all the while reverencing the “eternal feminine” which, as Goethe said, is leading us on.

It is not to be expected that woman, weighted with the burden of maternity, will equal man in all other directions. The mother of Shakespeare did not produce great plays. But she produced something great, nevertheless. She produced Shakespeare. Was not that an “ideal” performance? Was it ever beaten? Was it ever equalled?

Even as “exponents” of the ideal women have shown themselves capable of greatness. It is admitted that some of the most exquisite passages of ancient poetry were the work of Sappho. During the century or so in which modern women have had a real opportunity, they have done something quite considerable. George Sand in France, and George Eliot in England, are great names. Charlotte and Emily Bronte were women of noble genius; and before them was the fine genius of Jane Austen. Mrs. Browning’s “Sonnets from the Portuguese” belong to the very loftiest poetry of love. Christina Rossetti wrote poems which Mr. Swinburne never tires of praising. There are excellent women writers in the field of fiction to-day, if none of them can stand beside Thomas Hardy; and if we descend to clap-trap work, is Miss Marie Corelli any whit inferior to Mr. Hall Caine?

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Justice.

IN revolutions kings are banished either the country or existence. It would be waste of time to try and justify the peoples’ conduct to the deposed monarch, and it would be equally fruitless to try to convince the people that their late monarch was a really excellent person whom they had failed to appreciate. If this practice had been adhered to in religious revolutions the gods would long since have been banished from civilised society. The power has been quite taken out of their hands; physical science has amply confirmed the opinion of Lucretius that “Nature does all things of herself and without the aid of the gods”; and other branches of science have borne the same testimony. It is a far cry from the time when the gods ruled everything and did everything, to the present, when they control nothing and do nothing.

The revolution is as complete in morals as in physics. Once upon a time man’s chief desire was to justify his ways to God; now the chief energies of the Deity’s representatives on earth is spent in trying to justify God’s ways to man. This is a hard task; and, for the reason that as the gods are really concrete examples of an outworn phase of civilisation, it is practically an attempt to regulate man’s better and later acquired judgments by his earlier and lower ones. Added to which there is a growing recognition that morality is a human, or at most an animal, product, and that its extension to the extra-animal universe is wholly indefensible.

It is this aspect of the matter that is challenged in a recent lecture—the title of which I have placed at the head of this article—by the Rev. J. Brierly, better known as “J. B.” of the *Christian World*. Mr. Brierly admits that this is the view of most modern thinkers—Maeterlinck and Schopenhauer, for example; but he believes it to be a “most superficial view of things”—an expression of opinion that might have carried more weight had the names of

two such opponents been unmentioned. Superficiality is, perhaps, the last thing one would charge either Schopenhauer or Maeterlinck with.

Mr. Brierly asks what people mean when they speak of the “pitilessness of nature”? and replies that they are really attacking “her law of uniformity”; and then proceeds to point out that, as all our arts and sciences, all our mental furniture and moral notions, are based upon this, it is absurd to protest against it or attack it. Now, it is quite true that the pitilessness of nature is but another way of expressing its uniformity, and it is equally true that it is absurd to attack it. But Mr. Brierly is quite mistaken if he imagines that any Freethinker—that Maeterlinck or Schopenhauer, for instance—does “attack” it. What the Freethinker really does is to attack a certain conception of nature which the Christian professes to hold. The Christian asserts that operating through nature is a force that is in all essentials identical with humanity. It possesses love, wisdom, power. He further asserts that this force exerts itself for the *benefit* of humanity—some believers go further, and assert that it is exerted in a special manner towards certain individuals. In reply to this position, the Freethinker simply points out that natural forces do not act as though they were controlled by any such power. Men and women are killed or preserved without the slightest reference to their moral worth or social value. If two men visit a plague-stricken house, one to attend to the sick and the other to plunder the dying, the plague is as likely to attack one as the other; and, in fact, the thief often escapes while the nurse is killed.

Now it is obviously no reply to this criticism to say that this is the law of uniformity. The Freethinker has already pointed that out in his criticism; Mr. Brierly simply repeats the criticism, and having done so imagines that he has disposed of it. Which is exactly as though one who was charged with being drunk and incapable replied “Ah, yes, that was due to the beer,” and then expected to be acquitted. Surely it should be plain enough that *if* human righteousness and justice extends throughout the universe some difference ought to be made between the good and the bad, the foolish and the wise. The religious belief is so plainly at variance with facts that all Mr. Brierly can say is that if natural forces did accommodate themselves *in the manner demanded by the religious theory* the possibilities of living would be destroyed. Which is exactly what the Freethinker has been saying all along.

Mr. Brierly having affirmed the uniformity of nature in one paragraph, proceeds immediately to demolish it in the next. Did someone say, he asks, that nature makes no distinction between the godless and the praying soul? This is all an error, and his proof of it is the different *feelings* with which the mythical Jesus and the two thieves underwent the same punishment of crucifixion. And because in an assumed case the feelings with which an innocent man suffers are different to those experienced by a guilty one, Mr. Brierly concludes that nature *does* discriminate between the “praying soul and the godless,” and therefore his previous assertion that life would be impossible if nature did discriminate is abandoned.

Now, putting on one side the fact that many a criminal has met his fate at Tyburn with quite as much equanimity as that displayed by Jesus, one would fain ask how on earth can the *feelings* with which a person meets suffering disprove the statement that nature is without care whether it is a good or a bad person that suffers? The indifference of nature is shown by the same forces—other things equal—operating on different individuals in precisely the same manner. Mr. Brierly cannot dispute this fact, which is fatal to his theology, he can only say that all do not suffer to the same extent. No one denies this. If I plunge a needle into a child’s leg and a sudden stroke of paralysis saves it feeling pain, I hardly think that I should be acquitted of thoughtlessness or cruelty. It is nature’s absolute lack of discrimination in the moral or social value of those

who suffer that proves either the absence of mind in nature, or, if a mind be assumed, one of such a character that quite precludes the possibility of intelligent respect or worship.

From this aspect of the matter Mr. Brierly next turns to a consideration of the relation of religion to human justice. He tells us that if Jesus Christ were here to-day he would dwell upon social rather than upon ecclesiastical questions. This is a tolerably safe prophecy for any one to make. Mr. Piggot, of Clapton, said he *had* come again, and a crowd of Christians tried to break his neck. And the probability is that if Jesus Christ did come again Christians would lynch him before he had time to get through with his introductory address. The only unfortunate point about the prophecy is that if Mr. Brierly is right in his general belief, Jesus Christ has already been on earth, and on that occasion the subject of social and political justice seemed to interest him but little. The labor question was there in the ancient world, under the form of slavery. The land question was there, and Rome particularly was beginning to suffer from the neglect of agricultural areas and the flooding of its cities with a population that should have been employed upon the land. Yet Jesus had nothing to say of any importance or value on either of these questions. The Greeks discussed the meaning and application of social justice; the Romans discussed it; Jesus was busy discoursing on angels and devils, heaven and hell. Yet Mr. Brierly believes that if Jesus were here now he would talk about social questions rather than others. I can only say again, it is easy to prophesy, only one should take a little care that the facts *behind* do not make the prophecy quite ridiculous.

And here, after all, is Mr. Brierly's panacea for social ills. Political economy and such matters, he tells us, are all very well in their way, science is very good, but you can't get a religion out of the vibration of atoms, "the real solution of the problem" is not in the gospel of justice, but in that of "grace." We have received everything from God, and we should give everything to each other. We have railways because God gave us George Stephenson. We have *Hamlet* because God gave us Shakespeare. We get rid of evils because certain men and women have worked for their removal. Therefore we must work freely and live for one another, and so shall we reach the Millennium.

This is worth quoting, if only because it is characteristic of a religion that, as a religion, has nothing of any social value to teach, and, as an organisation, is afraid of offending its principal supporters. It is a counsel of perfection and quietism. To the one class it says, "Be charitable"; to the other, "You certainly ought to have the wherewithal to live decently; we hope you will get it, but for God's sake be patient until it arrives." Such teaching will help none and offend none. It will neither stop subscriptions nor teach others the direction in which real betterment lies. It is so pleasant and so harmless to say continually, "Love one another," but what beneficial effect this is going to have on the land question, on the housing question, or on the labor question, it is hard to see. It is quite certain that such teaching never stopped sweating or land-grabbing, and it is equally certain that it never will. A study of the history of this country would show Mr. Brierly that all the evils of modern times, even such as child-labor in factories and female-labor in mines, developed amidst a perfect riot of teaching of this description. Nay, the Christian employers who were growing wealthy on the yearly murder of children in cotton factories, and the degradation of women in mines, even went to the length of providing their employees with plenty of this Let-us-love-one-another kind of counsel. They knew that to fill people's minds with vague notions of this description was the most certain way of diverting their attention from practicable reform; and one feels that this game is not quite played out to-day.

Mr. Brierly has a remarkable and curious digression on the conception of justice in the ancient pagan world, the consideration of which I will leave until next week,

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Ministers in Conference.

LAST week four hundred ministers met at Oxford, under the presidency of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, for the purpose of discussing various points relating chiefly to the work of preaching. To Freethinkers generally the Conference, as such, is of no interest whatever; but in reading a report of the discussions in the *Christian World* two facts of the utmost significance arrested my attention. The first is that among the ministers who took part there was no agreement as to the source of the preacher's authority. There was a consensus of opinion that modern preaching is such a failure because it lacks the note of authority which characterised primitive preaching; but how is a preacher to get this desiderated note of authority? Everybody is familiar with Mr. Campbell's oft-repeated declaration that no one has a right to preach unless he is a prophet, and can see visions. He began his own ministry at the City Temple by boldly asserting that it had pleased God to honor him with a special revelation from heaven, and that he had entered his sacred profession in consequence of a brilliant vision of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world graciously vouchsafed to him; and it is his fondly cherished conviction that no preacher is worth his salt unless he can make substantially the same affirmation. But at the Conference several speakers ventured to differ from him. Principal Adeney, who is a trainer of young preachers, practically held Mr. Campbell's teaching up to ridicule. "I cannot agree," he said, "that the Christian minister of to-day should be a prophet, a man who sees visions, for who can guarantee that he will see three visions a week—156 a year? Rather let him be the evangelist, the messenger. The source of authority in preaching shall not be the profundity of a man's own spiritual experience, but his honest interpretation of the message his Master has given him." Dr. Campbell Morgan agreed with the Principal, and put in a strong plea for expository preaching, thus regarding the Bible as the seat of supreme authority in religion. Mr. Campbell is aware that the Bible cannot now occupy the authoritative position that it once did, and so he is prepared to appeal from the fallible Book to his own infallible experience. The thing that is patent to outsiders is that the pulpit, as such, has irretrievably lost all its ancient power. Unless a preacher is shrewd, and clever, and understands the tricks of rhetoric, or has a strong and magnetic personality, the people of this age leave him severely alone, and laugh all his loud pretensions to scorn.

The other significant fact that impressed me, in connection with this Conference, is that a strange pessimism underlay the discussions. It was taken for granted by all the speakers that this is not a believing age, but an age of doubt and unbelief. Usually Mr. Campbell is buoyantly optimistic, confidently alleging that Christianity is a grandly conquering religion; but at Oxford he admitted that the world is turning away from Christ and gradually becoming non-religious. "Every preacher," he said, "has to fight the *zeitgeist*—the spirit of the age." The *zeitgeist* is not Christian, it is not even religious. Christianity has been in Great Britain for seventeen hundred years, and yet even at this time of day the spirit of the age is opposed to it and requires to be resolutely fought. What a sad, depressing admission to come from a minister in the twentieth century! If by prayer Dr. Horton can find a lady's lost boot, why cannot he by the same means convert the whole

of London in one day? Surely it is in the highest degree criminal that London is still unsaved and getting more lost every year! Surely if the Lord troubles himself about lost boots and finds them, should he not trouble himself about lost souls, and save them, merely in answer to the prayers of his ordained ministers, if not for any other and higher reason? Or is the *zeitgeist* too strong to be conquered, not only by the huge army of vision-seeing preachers, but by all the forces of divinity as well? Whatever explanation of it may be offered, the fact remains, and was recognised by the Oxford Conference, that the majority of our people are passive if not active resisters of the Christian Religion. This is how Mr. Campbell addressed his brethren: "Materialism is only spirituality foreshortened; a new humanism is abroad which does not know itself to be spiritual. You will find men as humanitarian as yourselves, who yet do not know why they should accept your faith. You must teach them. So preach as to be able to say, 'One man—or two, or three—would have been a moral failure had not God sent me to him.' There can be no failure if our best has gone into the work." Note well this last sentence, for it means, if it means anything, that for nineteen centuries the best of which preachers are capable has not gone into their work. They have all been culpable idlers and triflers in the vineyard of their Lord, for they have miserably failed to win the world for Christ. It is undeniable that, after all these long ages of persistent preaching and ceaseless labor, the Christians are only about one in four or five of the population in the most Christian city under the sun. Does such a fact as this testify to the success of preaching? Even though you held twenty Conferences a year, and passed a thousand resolutions at each one, even though you elaborated your organisations to the last possible degree, and doubled the number of your eloquent preachers, you could not put back the clock of progress or stop the triumphant march of scientific knowledge. Science has already dethroned the Bible and the priest, and it is gradually but surely undermining the Church itself. Such is the trend of history, and nothing can interrupt it.

JOHN LLOYD.

Leicester Notes and Votes.

THE meeting of the Trades Union Congress at Leicester last week has drawn particular attention to this Midland town, and I think some miscellaneous local jottings may interest readers of the *Freethinker*.

On the Sunday preceding the Congress, the Church of Christ made its usual claim to act as nurse to the Labor Movement. A High Church cleric, the Rev. F. L. Donaldson, spoke to a congregation which contained a numerous group of local labor-leaders. His sermon breathed an ample sympathy for the effort of the people to purify social conditions. Towards the close of his discourse, he unfurled the banner of the Lord, and boldly claimed possession of the democratic policy and its supporters; and, in a glow of theistic imperialism, he exclaimed:—

"The Church itself is here in earth for the building up of character in the Life Eternal. For this reason I must believe that the great labor forces of the world will claim the alliance of religion. In the face of the evils I have cited, and of the forces arrayed against the brotherhood, 'industrial patriotism' is bound by the ideals and inspirations of its cause to seek alliance with the spiritual power. It cannot stand permanently aside, divorced from its natural ally, the Church of God."

On the same day, the Rev. E. Maclellan showed an equally ambitious spirit on behalf of Primitive Methodism; and, after praising the power and aim of the Labor Movement, he rapped out a warning which almost sounded like a curse:—

"There was no agency devoted to the service of men which could do its work as well without, as with, God, and those who disregarded that were, in his opinion, enemies to the cause they professed to serve."

I was not inclined to let these gentle Knights of the Church go "pricking o'er the plain" too serenely, and in the Secular Hall I took occasion to expound my own view of the "Religion of the Labor Movement." Defining that religion, or idealism, to be "the effort of the poorer class of workers to co-operate among themselves, and to co-operate with all other workers in society at large, for the betterment of their material and moral life," I traced the history of Trades Unionism and Co-operative industry, and showed how this democratic advance had been conducted on humanist lines, and practically unassociated with Christianity.

Some of us have kept a very vigilant eye on the Nonconformists of Leicester, and have tried to disturb the conceit of the Passive Resisters by continually challenging them to say if they want any kind of theological teaching (that is, teaching based on the doctrine of God) paid for out of public money. The prominent members of the Passive Resistance body have shown a glorious obstinacy in dodging this question. With the object of rendering them humble, we also arranged a public meeting in the Shoe Trade Hall in support of the following resolution:—

"That this meeting advocates the removal of the religious difficulty by providing that the education in all State-supported schools should be secular, and that freedom be given to the religious denominations to impart in their own way, at their own expense, and out of school hours, such religious instruction as parents may desire for their children."

We had a successful demonstration, attended by some four hundred people, and addressed by the Rev. John Page Hopps, Mrs. Bridges Adams, the Countess of Warwick, and others. The chair was taken by Mr. W. B. Hornidge, who is a member of our Secular Society, and who very ably presided over the Trades Union Congress. His courage in coming right out to the front on this question, and at a critical moment, deserves the heartiest recognition. Mr. J. Allanson Picton, formerly M.P. for the borough, had sent us a rousing letter, denouncing the hypocrisy of expecting teachers, in these days of Biblical criticism, to dole out to elementary school-children the stale and useless opinions of our grandfathers "about Paradise, and the Serpent, and the Deluge, and Balaam's Ass, and Jonah's Whale." Mr. Page Hopps came down on the poor Nonconformists like the east wind, and upbraided them for their betrayal of their own principle of the separation of religion from State control. However, they would have to yield to the logic of the case sooner or later. Mr. Hopps quoted Shakespeare:—

Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her,
Let her paint an inch thick, to this complexion
She must come at last!

Lady Warwick, I believe, had never before made a public declaration of her convictions on the present educational issue. I confess to some prejudice against titled persons, and I listened a little jealously to all she said. The lady spoke briefly, pointedly, and in excellent taste. We had heard much, she remarked, of the rights of the Nonconformist, and little of the rights of the children. There were many forms of religion, and many interpretations, and who was to decide which interpretation the State should offer the children? The Labor Party must strengthen itself in the House of Commons, and announce a constructive educational policy. And in order to realise that, the path must be cleared of the theologian and the sectarian. What the Countess urged was re-inforced by Mrs. Bridges Adams, member of the expiring London School Board. Mrs. Adams related how, at several successive elections, the so-called "Progressives" had failed to grapple with the theological difficulty, and continually yielded to the temptation to compromise. The resolution was passed with but two or three dissentients. Our local Liberal newspaper was impressed so deeply that it actually blessed us all, and confessed that our proposal was "the only settlement of the most embarrassing problem." The Passive Resisters read this

paper, and I trust they meditate on these things in the depth of their Nonconformist consciences.

The very same resolution that we had adopted appeared on the original agenda of the Trades Union Congress. But it had been manipulated in Committee into the curious form here given:—

“Removal of the religious difficulty by providing that the education in all State-aided schools shall be secular. Any religious denomination desiring to impart religious knowledge must do so at its own expense and out of school hours. Only such religious instruction as parents may desire for their children shall be given.”

One can almost detect an ingenious clerical hand in the modification. If the last sentence (“Only such religious instruction as parents may desire for their children shall be given”) had been approved, it would have been tantamount to consenting to the present bad “unsectarian” system. The Dissenters would have made out that parents desire the Bible-teaching now in force to be continued. Happily, the Congress saw the fly in the ointment; and cut out all the latter portion of the clause, simply and emphatically voting for secular education.

One other local incident is very significant. Councillor Walters, the Nonconformist chairman of the Education Committee, has startled the town by a scheme under which the Borough Council would rent the Church Schools for the secular sessions only, control and appoint the teachers (head as well as assistant), and leave the Church authorities to provide doctrinal teaching in the same buildings, but out of school hours and at their own expense. The Education Committee has endorsed the general principle of the scheme. It is good so far as it goes. But, as I have pointed out, the same treatment must be applied to the municipal (Board) schools. In all State-supported schools, provided or non-provided, the religious lessons must be left to the responsibility of the Christian, Jewish, or other denominations.

Reform is at last approaching, though one cannot say it is inevitable. One event would considerably delay the rational solution of this wretched religious quarrel, and that would be a union of the theological forces of Anglicanism and the Free Churches. We should be in a bad way if the Established Church and Nonconformity drank a friendly bottle of wine together. But that bottle will never be uncorked.

F. J. GOULD.

Origin of the Christ Myth.

We know that Christ never lived as the New Testament describes, just as we know that Jupiter (Zeus) & Co. did not live as per Homer. It is too late to beat about the bush; Jesus Christ and his apostles are as unreal and unhistorical as the Gods of Olympus or the Jins of the *Arabian Nights*. But how did the Jesus Christ legend originate? The elements of the New Testament were borrowed from many sources, and the churches have ever been mostly Pagan; but it seems to me that the general and bitter hate of Europeans to the Jew originated the yarn of the crucifixion and of all the steps which led to it. The Jews were repeatedly charged with crucifying children, and with other horrid crimes—anything to justify their persecutors in robbing, torturing and murdering them. The stock charges served their purpose for many centuries, and nobody thought it worth while to investigate or to doubt the truth of them.

Bearing this in mind, and given a sect or number of sects worshipping one Chrest, Christ, Logos, Son of God, anything you like, what was there to prevent the fanatics inventing the yarn of the Jews of Jerusalem having persecuted their Christ in infancy, of crucifying him in mature life? This fudged up story would inflame the fanaticism and fire the fury of the ignorant crowd—the very objects the priests had in view. Nothing could be better calculated to serve the interests of the priests than the Jesus yarn. To crucify a common child—that false charge against the Hebrews sufficed to bring upon them wrath enough; but to charge them with having seized the God of the priests and of the crowd, the God who was on a visit to Palestine for the benefit of the race, to seize him, to ill-treat, to crucify this divine being!—why, this was enough to make the people mad and the priests all-powerful, as it did.

I am aware that many will object to this view of the case on chronological grounds, as well as others; but Christian

chronology is of not the least value for the first three or four centuries; not a single date in it can be fixed with any degree of certainty. Indeed, we may say that no attempt at a Christian chronology was made till the sixth century, when Denis the Little undertook the task; and it took six or seven centuries more for any general scheme of dating to be adopted. Therefore, and for the reason that there is not one certain early Christian date that can be fixed upon, we need not be concerned about what chronology may say. The crucifixion yarn may have taken its present shape, or been concocted even, any time during the first three or four centuries called A.D. And the general hatred of the Jews furnishes an all-sufficient motive for the invention.

I am aware that it is hard for even a Freethinker to rid himself of life-long prejudices respecting what we were early taught as historic truth; but we must mount above all that as far as we are able, and accept of no assertion which is not well vouched for. Why should we? There is a dominating imperious fashion, an all-prevalent cant, a powerful Mrs. Grundyism, even among critics. They are impatient of vulgarity, of heresy, of schism, of innovation, of independence; they stand up for critical orthodoxy, and have their infallible leaders; and he who breaks away from their path or treads over the traces is treated with becoming severity and ordered back into his proper place. In our contest with the clergy it is better to err on the side which is all against them than to err in their favor. We are absolutely certain that they are wrong, that their whole gospel is a baseless superstition, their calling a mere trickster's trade; we know that Christ is anything but historical, and we have reason to doubt whether any of the more ancient (supposed to be so) Christian writings are anything better than forgeries; certainly few of them are. We must be credulous to accept the rest as genuine and authentic. The Church forged so extensively, and lied so roundly and universally, that her unsupported statements in her own favor, cannot be accepted for a moment.

To be sure, no one is bound to adopt anything I say, nor even to read it. I throw out the above for what it may be worth.

JOS SYMES.

—*Liberator* (Melbourne).

The Philosopher and the Fay.

GLIDING through the gloom of gloaming, when the moonlight warred with day,
There came an airy fairy liting down a lunar ray—
Sliding, gliding, slipping, tripping down a lambent lunar ray—
Alighting on the greensward where the moonbeams dance
and play.

As I wandered in a woodland, down a moss-grown vernal glade,
Pondering over mighty problems in its sad and sombre shade,
Suddenly there stood before me, with a mien so blithe and gay,
This sprightly airy fairy, this fantastic elfish fay.

I said: “There are no fairy nymphs that haunt the woodland's gloom;
There are no ghouls or goblins; no ghosts rise from the tomb;
’Tis nothing but a vision from where the moonbeams play;
’Tis my disordered fancies which my senses thus betray.”

“Poor mortal, cease from troubling,” came a tenuous vibrant voice,
“Cease pondering o'er these problems, and with the elves rejoice;

The world has much of beauty, why live for ought but self?
Why take thought of the future?” Thus spoke the little elf.

“There are some depths of sadness that touch the heights of joy,

To linger as a memory that nothing can destroy,
To form a link of silver in life's dull leaden chain”;
Said I, “Ah, airy fairy, we climb to peace through pain.”

With silvery laugh derisive, a mocking voice replied,
“The answer to these problems to mortals is denied.
I have no thought of yesterday, I think not of the morrow,
My life is lapped in gladness while yours is sunk in sorrow.”

“Ah, fairy sprite,” I made reply, “although you dance and play,

Your life is cold to truest joy, cold as this lunar ray;
Give me the sun's strong splendor, his strenuous lustrous light,
Although that splendor endeth in the nadir of the night.”

The elfin vision vanished, I woke from out my trance,
And saw there was no fairy where the moonbeams gleam and glance.

Then I knew that I had spoken but with my baser self,
And had conquered weak impulses while answering the elf.

LITCHWOOD.

Acid Drops.

There was a rumor that Lord Halsbury had resigned. It was a most absurd *canard*, and was promptly contradicted. Fancy a man like Lord Halsbury resigning an easy job with a salary of £10,000 a year! It is really *too* ridiculous. Lord Halsbury is too good a Christian to act in that way.

A Christian gentleman sends us a statistical extract from the *Sun* showing the immense circulation of "the Book of God" by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and he asks us how it compares with the circulation of the *Freethinker* and other "infidel" publications. The gentleman forgets that folly always enjoys a better circulation than wisdom.

"The clergy and ministers of Liverpool have given great support to the movement." Yet the paper which says this affects to be astonished at the success of the Torrey-Alexander mission. Fancy getting two or three thousand people together in a city of half a million inhabitants, and half the clergy and ministers on the job! Prodigious!

"Why I believe the Bible to be the Word of God" was the title of a lecture by Evangelist Torrey to a meeting of "business" men at Liverpool. All sorts of reasons were given, but the true one was not amongst them. Evangelist Torrey believes the Bible to be the Word of God because he was taught so.

Greater nonsense than this man uttered, according to the newspaper report, is difficult to imagine. For instance, he said that Christ was divine, or else he was either the greatest impostor or the most hopeless lunatic the world had ever seen. Evidently this Yankee Evangelist, who is imported to give Christianity a lift in this country, is quite ignorant of the character of "infidel" criticism. He actually fancies that "infidels" accept all the self-contradictory things in the four Gospels as having been uttered by one definite person. He does not seem to have heard that most "infidels" doubt whether "Christ" lived at all.

One Atheist who heard Evangelist Torrey's wonderful address to "business men" left the place with the feeling of a painful discovery. He did not know that there were so many lunatics in Liverpool.

More Jews have been killed at Mohileff. According to the *Official Messenger*, the cause of the disturbance was the provoking attitude taken up by the Jews toward the Christian population. This reminds us of the man who accounted for the dead sheep he was carrying off by saying he killed it in self-defence.

The following paragraph appeared in the *Manchester City News* of September 19:—

"GRACE AT WORKHOUSE MEALS.—The South Stincham Board of Guardians has again had before it the case of an inmate of the workhouse, named Vidler, who refuses to stand whilst grace is said at meals, declaring that he is not thankful, and that he would be a hypocrite if he said he was. It was reported that, in consequence of his behavior, the discipline of the whole establishment was seriously imperilled. The Master (Mr. Brown) stated that erroneous impressions had got abroad. There was no desire to force any creed or religion down the man's throat—he was simply asked to comply with regulations. From an entry in the house-book it appeared that the Committee had summoned him before them, and found that he was an Atheist, determined to set all rules at defiance. The Master was directed to take steps to secure obedience as was necessary, and to proceed to a prosecution if so advised."

What infamous blackguards are the persecutors of this unfortunate man! And what disgusting hypocrites, too! They don't want to force their religion down his throat. Oh dear no! But, at the same time, he must swallow it. If he doesn't, they will prosecute him. Well, we hope they will. We should be glad to see this case dragged into the fullest light of publicity; and, if we have the opportunity, we will see that this persecuted man is properly defended in court. The only offence alleged against him is an act of honesty. Being an Atheist, he declines to thank the God in whom he does not believe—and especially for a pauper's meal in a workhouse.

Here is a chance for the Passive Resisters. Dr. Clifford, for instance, ought to go on the warpath at once. He has access to the *Daily News*, and we have not. Let him show his honesty by taking up the case of this oppressed Atheist. If it is right to force an Atheist, in a State workhouse, to join in the religious exercise called grace before meals, there can be nothing wrong in teaching Church religion to Non-

conformist children in a State school. This is clear enough to any man with a grain of common sense and a spark of common honesty.

The first Passive Resister who had a chance of going to prison funked, and left his wife to pay the bill. The First Passive Resister to embrace the opportunity of martyrdom was Mr. Francis Nally, of Heage, near Belper. If there is anything in names this gentleman is Irish, and therefore born to the business.

More *Passive Resistance*. "Hisses and yells" at Taunton, the "mob breaking down the barriers and causing the auctioneers and officials to beat a hasty retreat," and the "police charging the mob." Such is the religion of turning-the-other-cheek in the twentieth century. At Bromley we read of "extra police" and the mob making "desperate efforts" to get at the auctioneer. This is a fair sample of a large order.

A Passive Resister at Bromley, a venerable gentleman called Popperwell, being asked by the magistrate to cut his oration short, begged to be allowed "one sentence." It was granted. "Well," he said; "in the reign of Queen Mary——" That was enough. By the time Mr. Popperwell had finished and brought his oration up to date his existing age of eighty-two would have been doubled.

Nonconformists are still given over to the spirit of humbug. Here is the Congregational Union of England and Wales putting forth a series of resolutions on the Education difficulty, the third of which urges Congregationalists to make their support of any Parliamentary candidate conditional on his being pledged "to abolish all religious tests in the teaching profession." Of course the Congregational Union knows that this is utterly impossible whilst religious teaching of any kind is retained in the public schools. It is positively silly to suppose that any subject can be taught without tests being applied to the teachers. There are tests in arithmetic, grammar, and geography; and there must be tests in religion too. You may abolish them openly, but you will be a fool to believe they do not operate behind the scenes.

Suppose the Churchmen and Nonconformists made up their quarrel. Would they quietly allow a known Freethinker to teach religion to their children? Of course they would not. They would relieve him of the job as soon as possible. That is what they did on the London School Board in the case of Mr. F. J. Gould. All his ability did not save him from the alternative of working without the slightest chance of promotion or seeking a new career in the outside world.

The Congregational Union goes on to assert its conviction that "the only final solution of the question will be found in a complete system of State-paid education from which all denominational teaching is excluded." Now this is worse than foolish; it is flatly dishonest. This juggle with the word "denominational" is perfectly contemptible. What these Congregationalists really mean is that they want *undenominational Christian* teaching in State-supported schools; and they impudently pretend that this is "the only final solution" for Jews and Freethinkers who object to the "Christian," and Catholics and Churchmen who object to the "undenominational."

There is only one form of really "undenominational" education, and that is Secular Education. This is the only point on which all parties in the State agree. Christianity itself is but one denomination. No doubt the largest, but still a denomination. And the Congregationalists, like the rest of their Nonconformist brethren, know this well enough. But they like to pursue an ostrich policy—which is at once dangerous and undignified. The poor ostrich keeps his head safe, but he gets shot in the rear.

A *Westminster Gazette* representative, in his notes on the Trade Union Congress, said that delegate after delegate declared his vote was given for Secular Education "as the only way out of the present difficulty." This was quite logical, the reporter said; the State should teach every religion, or none at all; yet, he said, it is "difficult to think of the English people as deliberately secularising their schools." Is it, now? We are of Mr. Macnamara's opinion, that if the priests, parsons, and ministers cleared out of the fight, it would be found that the great mass of the English people did not care twopence about the point in dispute. What they really want for their children is a sound, serviceable education, from a purely worldly point of view. John Smith wants his children to get a fair start in this world. He is content to let them stand their chance in the scramble for the next.

One delegate—whoever he was—said to the *Westminster Gazette* representative: "We have some Atheistic teachers under our Board, and they have to teach Bible lessons. To me this is ghastly, as I regard religion as too sacred to be taught by any but religious men." This delegate does not appear to have reflected that the business may have been equally "ghastly" to the Atheistic teachers.

Dissenting imbecility is displayed in a letter on this Education difficulty by Dr. William Mackeith (a reverend, we suppose) of 105, Douglas-street, Glasgow. This gentleman sends a letter all the way to London to explain why he, a Scotchman, sympathises with the English Free Churchmen. But his primary object, unless it be his secondary one, is to challenge Mr. Balfour's statement that "the educational system of Scotland is, and has always been, fundamentally denominational." Mr. Mackeith declares that this is false, and he set about proving it; and his proofs are the funniest we have seen for a long while.

"True," this Glasgow friend of the English Free Churchmen says, "the Bible is in our schools, but is the Bible a denominational book." Of course it is. The Protestant has one Bible, the Catholic another, and the Jew another still. Evidently any one of these Bibles must be a denominational book to the devotees of the other two; and, just as evidently, all three of them are denominational books to Freethinkers, Secularists, Rationalists, Agnostics, and Atheists.

Mr. Balfour may think the "Shorter Catechism" a denominational document, belonging exclusively to Presbyterians. But it is not so, says the Glasgow gentleman: it was drawn up by leading representatives of various Christian denominations (English and Scotch), and is really "a summation of the great vital truths of Christianity, upon which broad and comprehensive platform all Christian denominations may find a common basis."

This is indeed capital! Nothing could very well beat it in the way of self-confidence. The Glasgow gentleman offers the Shorter Catechism as a common platform—and, we suppose, the only one—for Catholics, Anglicans, Wesleyans, Baptists, and Congregationalists, as well as Presbyterians. The way for Christians to unite is to join *him*.

Well, there is very little likelihood that all England will join the standard of Scotch Presbyterianism. Some two centuries and a-half ago the Scotch Presbyterians thought otherwise. They fancied that England had thrown off the Episcopalian yoke to put its neck under the Presbyterian yoke. And they proceeded to act upon that supposition. But they got such a terrible banging from a grim person called Oliver Cromwell that the idea was pretty well knocked out of them. It seems to have revived, however, in D. William Mackeith, of 105 Douglas-street, Glasgow; though we do not suppose it will have any greater prosperity in the twentieth century than it had in the seventeenth.

Mr. Mackeith holds that he, as a true-blue Presbyterian, has got hold of "the great fundamentals" of Christianity, and that it is simply justice to enforce these "great fundamentals" upon all other Christians through the law of the land. The notion that *his* beliefs are denominational is so absurd that he is absolutely incapable of entertaining it. As for non-Christians, their views do not count at all. No doubt the Glasgow gentleman thinks they can easily be left out of the reckoning. Yet he may live long enough to find out his mistake.

A well-known Free Churchman and active Passive Resister, the Rev. F. B. Meyer, is publishing a book called *The Art of Life*. It would be an interesting book if it were honestly written. The art of life with gentlemen of Mr. Myer's cloth generally means subsisting on the bump of wonder.

Dr. John Clifford, the Passive Resistance hero—who seems to egg others on without courting martyrdom himself—wrote a long letter (his letters are always long) the other day to the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience on the Macedonian question. Incidentally he observed that the revelations of the Report on the South African War "paralyse tongue and hand." We did not think Dr. Clifford's tongue was so easily paralysed.

The conclusion of Dr. Clifford's letter was a splendid bit of canting piety. After referring to the wholesale murder and mutilation of men and children, and the unspeakable

infamies perpetrated on women and girls, the "great" preacher wound up as follows:—

"And throughout all, we can unite with our suffering brethren in prayer to the God of order and freedom, the Father of all men, to uphold and comfort the victims of this tyranny, and to cut short the reign of oppression."

One has to use self-control to answer this in parliamentary language. Dr. Clifford is simply dragging in the name of the imaginary supernatural being in whose service he earns a very good living, and obviously for trade purposes. Any other view of the matter involves a shocking view of his intelligence. It is difficult to believe that Dr. Clifford is intellectually serious. The God of order and freedom may, of course, exist; that is a point on which we will not dogmatise; but it is perfectly clear that his supervision does not extend to the south-east of Europe. And the "Father of all men" is a particularly rich joke when one set of his children are cutting the throats of another set, without the slightest interference on his part. Surely, too, if this God is to work a miracle, in reply to prayer, and cut short the reign of oppression, it is a pity he did not work it long ago, and thus save countless lives and untold misery. This wretched old farce of a Deity, whom Dr. Clifford holds up for our veneration, deserves nothing but brickbats and ordure. And to think that such a Deity is still declared to be the only guarantee for human virtue!

J. C. Reynolds, writing to the *Daily News* from Campden, said, "It must be absolutely incredible to unprejudiced persons who will take the trouble to study the Code in question that any human being should object to children being taught the Ten Commandments and the fifth chapter of Matthew." Well now, it is absolutely unintelligible to us that any man can let his boys be taught that they must not commit adultery. Is there any sense in telling a lad of ten not to covet his neighbor's wife? And in what sense could a girl covet her neighbor's wife at all?

The *Daily News* is nothing now if not religious. In a recent article on "Science and the Unseen" it preached a short sermon, which was remarkably like the average Nonconformist pulpit sermon, in everything but length. There was the same old juggle with cheap metaphysical language, and the same old emptiness of substantial meaning. By way of countenancing religious faith, it was remarked that "science itself is based upon faith," because it "assumes the unseen and postulates powers and forces of which it has no direct proof, and which are as inexplicable as any mystery of theology." No doubt this sounds very grand, but let us test it a little.

The word "unseen" is obviously used in a bastard sense. Properly speaking, it means invisible; that is, not perceptible by the organs of sight; though it may be perceptible by other organs. For instance, air is invisible, but you can feel it as you move through it, or when it blows against you. But what this writer means by "unseen" is imperceptible by *any* organ of sensation. And he actually fancies that science deals with *such* "unseen" forces; whereas all science is based upon the revelations of our senses, however high it may be carried by the operations of our intellect.

How absurd it is, in the next place, to say that the forces which science deals with are as inexplicable as any mystery of theology! There is absolutely no similarity between a mystery of science and a mystery of theology. A mystery of science simply means a point where our interrogation of nature does not elicit an answer. It is simply a confession of present ignorance, which may change into future knowledge. But a mystery of theology is something more than that. It is a dogmatic statement which positively clashes with present knowledge and outrages the laws of human thought. The mystery of electricity is a different thing altogether from the mystery of the Trinity. We do not quite understand electricity yet, but we never shall understand the Trinity. Nay more, the Trinity is in direct opposition to all we do know of arithmetic and personality. That an indivisible being should consist of three distinct persons; that all three should be equally infinite, and yet there are not three infinities but one infinite; that one of these persons should proceed from another, and that the third should proceed from both the other two, and yet that they are all three co-eternal; this is not a "mystery" in any natural sense of the word, but a series of flat self-contradictions. It is not so much a mystery as sheer tomfoolery. Call it a "mystery of faith" if you will, but don't pretend that it bears any sort of relationship to any difficulty in science.

Another sentence in this *Daily News* article is positively appalling in its defiance of the plainest teachings of Evolution. "Disinterestedness," it says, "kindliness, sympathy, the nobleness of rectitude, and the sweetness of goodness are

outside the boundaries of the material life. Their kingdom is not of this world." Now this is sheer ignorance, or gross playing to the religious gallery. Nothing is clearer than that all human morality has arisen from the play of the two fundamental instincts of self-preservation and reproduction in a state of gregariousness. It is also quite certain that every virtue which human beings display exists in some form or other in the lower animals. The kingdom of all the virtues is of this world. Morality was born on earth, and grew up here, and owes nothing at all to the supposed "elsewhere."

Kent, one of the garden counties of England, is simply swarming with French monks and nuns who have been turned out of France—or, rather, who have left it because they will not comply with the law. The great Convent near Ramsgate has been considerably enlarged, and we see that the Marist Brothers have purchased a mansion and four houses at Grove Ferry, a small village about six miles from Canterbury.

"Providence" has been very active in Jamaica lately, and, as usual, very indiscriminating. During the cyclone five churches and thirty-three mission and school chapels were wrecked, forty-four mission and school chapels seriously damaged, and twelve parsonages wrecked or seriously damaged. The Archbishop of the West Indies is soliciting funds to make good the losses sustained by the "poor clergy" through this "Act of God."

The Baptist Missionary Society is appealing for funds to relieve the pastors and churches that have suffered from the late cyclone in Jamaica. "Providence" cannot even make good its own damages. It is the chartered devastator of this planet.

The London Missionary Society is sending a deputation to China. So the report says. But the deputation is only to China in the geographical meaning of the word. Its members are simply going to visit the mission stations there. It has therefore as much relation to China as a flea has to the back of an elephant.

We saw a Dissenting sky-pilot the other day driving a pony and trap, with a showy lady by his side, and a sort of gardener-groom behind—judging by his big boots, baggy trousers, and slack-fitting buttoned coat. The most respectable of the four animals was the pony. Jesus Christ would have thought so too, if he preached the Sermon on the Mount.

When the lion and the lamb lie down together we know where to find the lamb. It will be the same with the "union" between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church. The latter will be inside. No wonder the *Catholic* journals are chuckling over the latest "union" instalment. The Rev. Robert Hugh Benson, M.A., son of the late Dr. Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury, has just "gone over to Rome." He does not appear to have left anything valuable behind him. You never hear of a big-salaried Church dignitary "going over."

A memorial of Queen Victoria has just been unveiled in Crathie Parish Church by King Edward. After the unveiling came the dedication. This was performed by the Rev. Dr. Gillespie "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Poor old Trinity! We don't suppose for a moment that they were consulted on this matter. They were simply dragged in to help along the business.

There will be no peace, a pious gentleman says, while the Sultan rules over Christian peoples. There does not seem to be too much peace where Christian nations rule over themselves—or others.

The Rev. B. C. Constable, of Stockport Unitarian Church, has been discoursing on Mr. Blatchford's *Clarion* articles. He thinks Mr. Blatchford is doing good, but he hopes destructive criticism will not be carried too far. We must never forget the existence of "the Great Supreme Power," and of "Jesus of Nazareth," and of "much that is inspiring in the Bible." These religionists cannot get on without some sort of a Trinity. Mr. Constable wants God, Christ, and the Bible. That is all. But what more does any Christian require—for a start?

The conductor of the largest Bible-class in the United Kingdoms is now a London parson. This gentleman, the Rev. Frank Swainson, has, as curate at All Saints', Sheffield, so filled his church with Bible-reading men, that the vicar has had to build a gallery to accommodate the enthusiastic

numbers. A Bible-class, however, implies the study of the Bible; and now, throughout the country, in all the Saturday evening papers are announcements of Bible-classes for men, to be held, "with a short service," in all the principal churches, chapels, and halls. These quite commonly fill the building to overflowing, yet, oddly enough, these "services" have been ignored by the Religious Census takers wherever church-goers have been enumerated.

When Mr. Combes, the French Premier, went to unveil the Renan statue at Tréguier, the clerical party offered Catholic young men's associations free tickets to Tréguier, free bludgeons, and free whistles. Such is the practical policy of the religion of love.

Now, to speak with moderation, this is an observable fact. Why this chastened self-abnegation on the part of, for example, Mr. Cadbury's officials? They have given the evening attendance at Roman Catholic churches thoroughly, well knowing every unit of which was a "twicer"; nor have they failed to count all the parsons, curates, choristers, pew-openers, and police-familiars, as church-goers; yet here are these excited Bible-thirsters bursting the very church walls, or on the point of doing so, as they come in their thousands to "study" the Book Divine, and the *Daily News* and the rest, with astounding stolidity, ignore the whole lot. This suggests a hitch somewhere. Without claiming to be a Sherlock Holmes, one may reasonably surmise the existence of something loose in the machinery of this parsonic flourish.

Formerly, men's Bible-classes were not held in churches, but in class-rooms. Some years ago, a young friend introduced us to one. The mode of study was for everyone to read aloud a verse of a chapter of the Bible. Then the class-leader asked questions. The chapter on this occasion was the sixth of Acts, which begins; "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews." When the chapter had been read through, the chairman made a little speech to the effect that it was their custom to endeavor to extract information out of the Scripture that was not apparent on the surface; therefore, he would start by asking, "What was the probable number of the multitude?"

The only data on this crucial point is, that at the start the disciples numbered 120, while they now required seven stewards to manage their affairs, and we sat out a whole hour while about thirty middle class men, the majority of whom were well towards forty or older, like little children made imbecile shots at the number. One would get red in the face and blurt out, "three hundred;" after a long silence, another would turn pale, and, after several gasps, whisper, "a thousand." Then one of the more experienced would come to the rescue and venture on a little original Higher Criticism on the point. But not one of them seemed to have a gleam of perception of the utter insanity of the question itself, and the pitiable folly of sensible men using their only opportunity of meeting to debate such impossible drivel.

This is a real Bible class. The fact that in such cities as Birmingham and Sheffield the clergy can crowd the largest churches with working men is phenomenal, and if it were done by holding Bible classes it would be portentous. But what is the reality? The truth is that nothing of the kind exists. The name "Bible class" for these meetings is absolutely false. The very boast of such numbers as Mr. Swainson gives demonstrates the unreality of the title. Conceive a single class of twenty-two hundred students, and those students giving but one hour a week to their subject!

These things really are entertainments. Orchestral concerts of rattling dramatic, amorous, and more or less military music, varied with fishy hymns and a few minutes' fanatical "homely" talk directed against those utter fools—the men who have stayed away. In the majority of cases the posters announcing these "Classes" do not venture to hint there is even a sermonette. The parson is called plain "Mr." and described as the "Speaker." His name is bracketed with the soprano, and, at times, even put below, and in a smaller type than "that of the lady who is soloist." Further, these meetings are not only not Bible classes, but they do not indicate any strength in the religious movement in the country; on the contrary, they are merely a reproduction of one of the means taken by the Continental clergy to bolster up the church before the Great French Revolution, viz., the concerts instituted by the Oratorians, who on Sunday afternoons gave for the benefit of young men sacred operas without action, which were therefore called "Oratorios."

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, September 27, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints', Manchester: afternoon at 3, "The Comedy of Passive Resistance"; evening at 6.30, "Nunquam's, Impeachment of Christianity."

October 11, Glasgow; 18, Camberwell.

November 1, Birmingham.

December 6, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton. September 27, m., Kingsland; e., Queen's Hall, Langham-place. Oct. 4, Glasgow; 25, Leicester.

R. F. BOLLINGTON.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.

E. L.—We referred to the correspondence in the *English Mechanic* some weeks ago. We see no reason why Freethought propaganda should not be attempted at Southampton. If a few "saints" got together to look to the local details some lectures might be "run" from London; provided, of course, that a decent hall were available.

F. S.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops." A most infamous incident. We wish the victim would put his case in writing and send it to us. We would try the manhood of some Labor member of parliament with it.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

E. H.—(1) Both letters are good. Secularists have never asked that their opinions should be taught at the public expense. Secular Education simply means confining the teaching to secular—that is, non-religious—subjects. This is not against religion, but independent of it. (2) Morality might be taught in schools, but we are not mad about it. It is not easily taught except by example. A truthful teacher does more good than a thousand lessons on morality. Here and there a teacher may have some genius for ethical teaching, but we are quite sure the majority have not—and never will have.

H. SILVERSTONE.—We cannot make a special appeal just now for the East London Branch. You have been doing good work in the open air, and you may do good work indoors. State your case, and make an application, to the N. S. S. Executive.

GEORGE PAYNE (Manchester).—The Treasurer has handed us your letter. It will be noticed when the Cohen Presentation Fund is reopened in our next issue.

TRUTHSEEKER.—Pleased to hear you so enjoyed the Queen's Hall lectures, and that you quite approve the barring of a certain platform nuisance. The worst of it is that discussion after lectures is so seldom of any value, and so often succeeds in destroying the impression the lecturer labored an hour to produce. There ought to be more barring of nuisances. We have a case in our mind at Manchester.

OLD BRADLAUGHITE.—We do not know the Mr. Alfred T. Story who writes in *T. P.'s Weekly* about the late Charles Bradlaugh's bumps, nor what opportunities he had of studying so particularly the great Iconoclast's bump of veneration. We fancy it is all nonsense.

J. R. (Liverpool).—Thanks for cuttings. See "Acid Drops."

J. G.—We utterly differ from your opinion that clearing supernaturalism out of people's brains leaves them selfish. Nearly all religion is sublimated selfishness. You yourself belie your own theory. It is easy to see that your pessimism is wounded humanity.

S. REEVE.—There is no "mistake" at all in the matter. Messrs. Smith & Son, and some other wholesale agents, positively decline to supply a copy of the *Freethinker*. This has nothing to do with "trade reasons," it is simply a bigoted refusal. There is doubtless some truth in the rest of your letter. It is certainly best for Freethinkers to get this journal through their newsagents, instead of waiting to get it at a Secular meeting-place on Sunday. Indeed, they ought to make this an invariable rule. The copies sold at meetings ought to be extra ones introduced to new readers.

J. G. STUART.—Always pleased to hear from you. You are doing a good work. Some of the seed you sow will spring up some day.

E. PARKER.—We are reopening the Cohen Presentation Fund next week, when the West Ham list you send us will be acknowledged.

HACKNEY SAINT.—Your letter is amusing. You seem to be a bit of a humorist yourself. You are mistaken on one point, however; we have not "quarrelled with," or even criticised, our Bradford contemporary. We make it a rule to mind our own business. You must be thinking of another paper in which Mr. Holyoake lately gave one of his lessons to Freethinkers.

WALTER HUNT.—No apology is needed. We have had to listen to many criticisms ever so much wider of the mark.

R. HENDERSON.—In our next.

C. LLOYD ENGSTROM.—Unfortunately too late for this number, but will appear in our next.

A. J. WILLETTE.—It has merit, but is not quite up to the mark in point of workmanship. We did not keep your friend's verse, as we understood it was only an extract from a long poem. Fichte has had his day, such as it was. We do not think of writing on him, at least for the present. Pleased to hear you are trying to push the circulation of this journal.

R. P. EDWARDS has changed his address to 189 Napier-road, New Brompton. Secretaries, etc., please note.

W. J. K.—Aveling's *Darwin Made Easy*, sold at our office for 1s., might help you. There is a larger book called *Darwinism*, by Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, published at 7s. 6d.

T. H. ELSTON.—Sixpenny books, after the style of our pioneer edition of Paine, are already projected. Pleased to hear you find the *Freethinker* more and more interesting and stimulating. We are glad, in one way, to see the names of Mr. J. M. Robertson, Mr. C. Cohen, and Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner on the Tyne-side Sunday Society's new lecture list. It shows a certain growth in liberality. Our doubt is whether lectures on purely outside subjects will do any particular good to the Freethought movement. See references elsewhere to the Fund you mention.

H. W. ELSLEY.—Your suggestions shall be considered. Your surmise is correct as to the authorship of the reference to the N. S. S. in the journal you send us. We smile, and pass on.

R. H. SIDE.—Miss Vance has handed us your note and enclosure. Thanks.

THE Hyde Park Branch wishes to acknowledge 5s. from R. E. D.

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.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Sept. 27) in the Secular Hall, Manchester, which is reopening after repairs and redecoration. His subjects, which are announced elsewhere, should attract large meetings. Six months ago Mr. Foote was unable to fulfil his lecturing engagement at Manchester, and big audiences were disappointed. They need not fear a second disappointment, however, as he has recovered from the severe illness which drove him off the platform.

Mr. Foote's second lecture drew a crowded audience to the Queen's Hall on Sunday evening. His discourse on "Mr. Bernard Shaw's New Evangel" was listened to for more than an hour with profound attention. Mr. C. Cohen, who occupied the chair, was applauded when he remarked that it was doubtful if so good a lecture, and certainly not a better one, could be heard in London. Several questions were asked, and three members of the audience offered some criticism. Two gratifying features of the meeting were the presence of many strangers and of a considerable number of ladies. It was a great pleasure to see the unflagging interest on the bright feminine faces. Those who say that ladies do not make Freethinkers (which, of course, is mere nonsense) may be asked whether proper opportunities have been offered them. Dingy, unattractive halls are not the places they are likely to frequent. If "anything does" for a man, it doesn't do for a woman—and she is probably right.

Mr. Bernard Shaw wrote from Scotland (but his letter did not arrive till Monday) saying that he would not be able to reach London until October 5, if so soon. "I should like to hear," he added, "what G. W. F. has to say about the Superman. Send me a *Freethinker*, or any other paper that contains a good report, if you will be so kind." This was addressed to the secretary, Miss Vance. Unfortunately there is no report to send Mr. Shaw, but he will soon be able to read Mr. Foote's criticism in the form of a *Freethinker* article.

Mr. Cohen takes the third of these Queen's Hall lectures. His subject to-night (Sept. 27) will be "Popery, Protestantism, or Freethought?" Such a subject is very opportune, and we trust Mr. Cohen will have a capital audience. He will have something to say, of course, about the Education difficulty and the present quarrel between the Church of England and Nonconformity. Freethinkers ought to have no difficulty in bringing along some of their Christian friends to this up-to-date lecture.

It will be remembered that the fourth Queen's Hall lecture will be delivered by Mr. John Lloyd, who has been telling in our columns, under the pen-name of Richard Trevor, the story of his travelling from the Christian pulpit to the Secular platform. Mr. Foote will take the chair on that occasion and introduce Mr. Lloyd to the Freethought party. There should be a bumping audience to welcome our latest recruit from the ranks of "the enemy."

A course of lectures under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, will be delivered in the Camberwell Secular Hall on Sunday evenings, October 11, 18, and 25. Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, and Mr. John Lloyd will be the lecturers. Posters, handbills, &c., are in preparation. Meanwhile the South London Freethinkers should make a note of these dates. The Hall should be crowded, and a good start given to the Camberwell Branch's winter propaganda.

We are unable as yet to say anything more definite about the projected course of lectures at West Ham. The halls required there are public property, and committees are very slow in their movements. A ridiculous time elapses between the application for the use of a public hall and a definite answer. This is not confined to West Ham. It is a common characteristic.

The last *Yarmouth Mercury* printed an excellent letter from Mr. J. W. de Caux on "Christian Fables," chiefly in reply to the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström. Mr. de Caux hits pretty hard, but he eschews personalities; he even admits that Mr. Engström is "a gentleman." Perhaps he would not have said this so readily if he had seen Mr. Engström's fresh letter in the same number of the *Mercury*. Some of the reverend gentleman's personal references to Mr. de Caux are simply insolent. And the worst of it is he may not think so.

We are glad to see that Mr. F. J. Gould managed to get an interesting letter on the Education difficulty into the *Daily News*. It was just in the nick of time. The friends of Secular Education were beginning to make themselves heard, so the dear *Daily News* got frightened, and blurted out that "No further letters can be received on this subject." Of course it did not mean *received* but *inserted*. The fright, you know!

The Alexander Hall, Liverpool, in which the local N. S. S. Branch holds its meetings, has been redecorated and illuminated with electric light. We mean, of course, the large hall, into which the Branch meetings are now permanently removed from the smaller hall downstairs. Mr. H. Percy Ward has been engaged by the Branch for another six months as lecturer and organiser. He reports that during July and August he has delivered more than forty lectures in the open air, in Liverpool, Birkenhead, and elsewhere. Excepting at Crewe, all the meetings were most orderly. The Liverpool Branch wants Sunday lectures at an early date from Mr. Foote, who will of course be glad to see his friends in that locality again.

The Newcastle Branch recommences its Thursday-night Debating Society on September 24, when Mr. R. Mitchell speaks on "Imperial Reciprocity." The week after, Mr. A. W. Hildreth criticises the Nonconformist Conscience in its relation to the education business; and, following that, there is a succession of good subjects to the end of the year, special prominence being given to the present proposed Fiscal changes. Of course, there is full discussion after each paper. The meeting-place is, as usual, in Lockhart's Cathedral Café, and the time for commencement, 8 o'clock.

There is one sensible Passive Resister in England, anyhow. Miss Emily Foster, sister of Sir Michael Foster, M.P., being summoned before the magistrates at Huntingdon, told them that "there would be no peace in England until secular education only was paid for out of the rates." Our lady readers should make a note of the fact that this *sensible* Passive Resister belongs to their own sex.

There is nothing to lament in the death of Professor Alexander Bain, of Aberdeen, at the venerable age of eighty-six. In his early life he was a weaver, but he obtained education for himself, and became one of the most distinguished scholars and thinkers of his time. He was for many years professor of logic and English literature in Aberdeen University, and was finally elected to the Lord Rectorship, from which he retired in 1887. Professor Bain's works on Logic and Mental and Moral Philosophy are well known throughout the English-speaking world, and have been translated into foreign languages. From these, and more particularly from his Monographs on James Mill and John Stuart

Mill, it was easy to see that he was a thoroughgoing Freethinker. He enjoyed the friendship, and won the high praise, of John Stuart Mill, with whom he was associated in the editorship of James Mill's important Analysis of the *Phenomena of the Human Mind*. Professor Bain's later years were spent in dignified retirement. He was greatly admired and universally esteemed.

We had the pleasure of meeting Professor Bain and exchanging a few words with him several years ago in London. It was at a West-end meeting for "gentlemen only" called by the Malthusian League, we believe, with a view to a straight talk by men of various sections of thought on the population question. We recollect that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström were amongst the speakers. We took our own turn, and when we sat down we were warmly complimented by a most intelligent and remarkably benevolent-looking old gentleman, who was sitting on the platform next to Dr. Drysdale. We were delighted to find it was Professor Bain. He did us the honor to say that we went straight to the heart of the subject when so many others were shilly-shallying.

Professor Bain deserved the highest credit for his own outspokenness in his Monograph on John Stuart Mill. So much had been said or hinted by orthodox apologists about Mill's religious "leanings" that it was refreshing to hear a contradiction from the most capable of his personal friends. "He absented himself," Bain said, "during his whole life, except as a mere child, from religious services. He scarcely ever read a theological book.....In everything characteristic of the creed of Christendom, he was a thorough-going negationist. He admitted neither its truth nor its utility." Mill attended Grote's funeral in Westminster Abbey in June, 1871; but great pressure had to be put upon him to induce him to be one of the pall-bearers. Grote was well-known to have been an Atheist; and, as Mill and Bain walked out of the Abbey together, the former said: "In no very long time I shall be laid in the ground with a very different ceremonial from that." "It so happened, however," Bain added, "that a prayer was delivered at his own interment, by the Protestant pastor at Avignon, who thereby got himself into trouble, from Mill's known scepticism, and had to write an exculpation in the local newspaper."

There was a good deal of Scotch pawkiness in Bain's account of Mill's posthumous *Essays on Religion*. The third essay on Theism had not been revised by Mill for publication. It contained the strained and absurd panegyric on Christ; an "inch" of concession which, as Bain remarked, was soon "stretched to an ell." Altogether these posthumous Essays, especially the last, did not correspond with what his friends "expected from him on that subject." Bain, indeed, could not help a passing sneer at "modern sentimental Theism." And the sort of God whose existence Mill seemed to think possible was not at all to Bain's liking. "A Being," he said, "that would not interfere to do us either harm or good can scarcely excite in us any strong regards; at least until we have undergone a new education." A sly bit of sarcasm!

With regard to Mill's panegyric on Christ, Bain observed that it seemed "a bold proceeding to take to pieces the Christ of Christianity, and to appropriate just so much of him as suits a 'rational criticism.'" The Unitarians had done this, not very successfully; for, as Bain said, "It would seem, in this as in other parts of religion, that what the rationalist disapproves of most, the multitude like best." Then came the following weighty passage: "We are, of course, at liberty to dissent from the prevailing view, which makes Christ a divine person. But to reduce a Deity to the human level, to rank him simply as a great man, and to hold ideal intercourse with him in that capacity, is, to say the least of it, an incongruity. Historians and moralists have been accustomed to treat with condemnation those monarchs that, after being dethroned, have accepted in full the position of subjects. Either to die, or else to withdraw into dignified isolation, has been accounted the only fitting termination to the loss of royal power. So, a Deity dethroned should retire altogether from playing a part in human affairs, and remain simply as an historic name."

Bain pointed out, finally, that if you give up Christ as God—much more if your God is only the shadowy being that Mill depicted—you will find life so transformed that "the sayings of Christ lose their suitability to human affairs." His sanctions, particularly, are no longer applicable. "The best guidance, under such altered circumstances," Bain said, "would be that furnished by the wisest of secular teachers." Nor can Christ be even an example to those who do not accept his view of the world.

If a Man Die, Shall He Live Again?

(Continued from page 597.)

POSITIVE affirmation or denial, I think, are out of place in a discussion where demonstration is impossible. It seems to me that the possible is infinite. I see no greater wonder in immortality, than in life itself. There cannot be a greater miracle than life. Even death, as we generally understand the word, is as wonderful as a birth to life. A continuation of life for ever, would be no greater miracle than its continuation for three score and ten years. The marvels contained in an atom are so great that it is difficult to think of anything greater. Immortality seems to me quite as possible as mortality. Something must be immortal, that is, eternal, and why cannot life be immortal as well as anything else? But I am anticipating. We do not know what is possible or impossible. A finite mind cannot penetrate an infinite universe, nor see what will happen during endless time. But we can discuss the problem, and balance the arguments, pro and con., without quarelling and tearing one another to pieces because we are unable to agree. Our concern should be that the truth may prevail.

If we look on man as a unity, and life in all its attributes, as part of man, the same as his arm or leg, it is very difficult to believe in its immortality. It is not the body only that dies, life dies with it. As soon as man ceases to live the body begins to decompose, the water in it evaporates, and all pass into other bodies and matter, moving and changing for ever. It is here where the difficulties of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body centre. During the whole of life the body is continually changing, so that a man who lives to be old has had many bodies when he dies. The particles composing the body at any period of life, have been, in all probability, parts of thousands of other bodies, during the millions of years passed since life began. And the same particles will continue to evolve and devolve other bodies, after leaving the present living man. How any individual body could have particles that formed millions of other bodies, as his own, seems an impossibility even to a miracle.

Were death only a trance, a suspended animation, and if the body in that state could be kept without decomposing and wasting, it would be possible to believe in a revival and reawakening after any lapse of time. In an old mine lately discovered, which had not been worked for over two thousand years, a bed of dead pansies was found under some stones, which were removed to see what there was underneath. On revisiting the mine some time afterwards, the visitors found the ground covered with flowers in full bloom. The dead pansies had revived under the influence of light and air. If a dead body could be preserved in a similar way, there might be a shadow of a ground underneath the belief in a revival or a resurrection of the dead. But we know that the body is not preserved after death, and therefore a belief in its immortality or its resurrection is untenable.

Therefore, we are driven to ask, has man a soul, and is the soul immortal? If there is no soul there is no immortality, and there might be a soul which is mortal, like the body. What is the soul? Has it form, organs, and body? Can the soul think, it speak, feel, see, hear, and move about? The body can do all these things because it has organs for the purpose. It has a brain to think, eyes to see, ears to hear, and so on. Has the soul organs also? If not, how can it think, speak, see or hear without them? As the body is continually changing and wasting it requires a fresh supply to replace what has been lost. Does the soul change and waste as everything else does? If it does, it requires new sustenance to keep up its substance. Has the soul a body, a form, a measure? Can it be weighed and measured? Does it eat and drink? What is its food? Can the soul be felt? Has anybody ever seen a soul? What is the

soul like? Those who believe in a soul, and blame all who cannot, ought to answer these questions, or confess that they have no knowledge on the subject.

Was the soul created, each soul separate, or have all souls existed from eternity? If the soul existed before the birth of the child, where? In what state? Was it asleep or awake? Conscious or unconscious? We are told that the great majority of souls will go to hell because they are bad. Are they bad before they join the body? Are some bad and some good? If they are all good at first, how do some become wicked after? If the soul was in existence before man was created, and then was good, was it just or kind to put a good soul in a body that was certain to become a wicked person? If the soul was in existence before the body, was it conscious of its existence? Did it know its destiny? Was it stationary or moving about, and where? Had the soul any choice when to be and who to be? If the time to appear, and in whom to appear, was fixed by some power outside, is it just to punish it for ever, because it was placed in the body of a great sinner?

If souls did not exist from eternity, ready made, to enter into a body in the fulness of time, how do they come to be? Are they bred? Do souls breed souls? Are they born like the body? If born, are they born a baby or full-grown? Do they grow like the body, become sick, and decay with age, as the body does? If they grow, on what do they feed, and what is their medicine when they become sick?

If not eternal, or born, how does the soul obtain its existence? Is it self-made, or the product of spontaneous generation? If neither, is it created? If created, it must be by God, who is the only creator, we are told. But the theory of creation does not remove the difficulties, nor contain an answer to the questions involved in the notion. If souls are created, when are they created? Were they created before man, same time as man, or after man? Were all souls created wholesale at the same time, or are they created one at a time, as they are wanted? If souls are created by God, and placed in bodies selected for them, and not by them, is it just to punish them because the bodies become sinners? As God knew the destiny of every soul he created, is it consistent with justice and love to create souls to be damned? Another matter requiring an answer is, as to when does the soul join the body? Is it before birth, at the birth, or after the birth?

It is no use to say all these questions are frivolous, and cannot be answered. Belief in a soul, separate and different in nature from the body, provokes the questions. If believers in the doctrine had any knowledge on the subject, they would answer, and that promptly. They do not answer, because they do not know; and, when they become honest enough to confess their ignorance, the doctrine and the objections will die together a natural death.

If the soul is not eternal, or bred and born, or self-made, or created, the only alternative theory is that, what is called a soul, is a part or attribute of the body, and therefore is not a soul in the meaning given to the word by theologians. The soul, as an attribute of the body, would mean the totality of intelligence, consciousness, and life of man. In the Bible, in very numerous passages, the word "soul" means the body, the whole man, the breath and life of man. In this sense, animals, and perhaps plants, have souls as well as man, with a difference in degree. If man has a larger soul than an animal, that does not prove that the soul of man is immortal and the souls of animals not, for the souls of some men are immensely greater than the souls of other men. There is not an argument for the immortality of the soul of man that could not be used, with equal force, to prove that animals have got an immortal soul as well as man.

As a matter of fact, there is not an argument or proof that man has got a spiritual, immaterial, and immortal soul, separate and independent of his body. Every scrap of evidence that we have tends to prove

that the soul is nothing but the life and attributes of the body, manifested through its many organs. It originates in the body, and with it, in the womb. It is born in the body, and with the body. It grows gradually with the body. If the body sickens, the soul sickens. If the body lose an organ—say the eye—the soul, like the body, becomes blind. If the brain is injured, or becomes diseased, the soul becomes insane. As the body grows old and infirm, the soul becomes decrepit with it; and when the body dies the soul dies with it. There is no evidence of a soul apart from the body and its organs, and it would be as rational to talk of seeing without eyes or living without a body as to speak of a soul apart from its body.

Even some scientific men, as well as others, speak and write of the connection between the soul and the body. Such language implies a dual existence, different and separate, but for the connection. The phrase seems to me absurd and misleading. Unbelievers in an immaterial and immortal soul cannot use such language without an apparent sanction of a doctrine they reject. It would be as rational to speak of the connection between the flame and the fire, or between the river and the water, as to speak of the connection between the soul and the body. The flame is the fire, the water is the river; the soul is the body, with its life and all its attributes.

They say that these notions are materialistic, and that I am a Materialist; implying—and, indeed, often saying—that Materialism is grovelling and degrading. If Christians would only think a little—which I fear they seldom do—they would see that, in reviling matter and Materialism, they are reviling the Creator they profess to believe in. If there be a God Almighty, as believers say there is, he is the Creator of matter as well as of spirit; and yet Christians insult their God by calling the wonderful work of his wisdom and power grovelling, mean, and degrading. I am not admitting the existence of God, or the Creation theory; I am only showing how inconsistent believers are when reviling matter created, they say, by their God. Here let me remind Christians that in reality they are themselves more materialistic than septsics. The teaching of the Bible, and by far the greatest number of professing Christians, that the bread and wine in the Communion is the flesh and blood of Jesus is as materialistic as anything can be. What can be more material than the resurrection of the body? The continual suggestive talk about the birth of a man from a Virgin, and the whole group of ideas about heaven and hell, are all material thoughts. In literature there is nothing more material, in all its thoughts, than the Song of Solomon, so called. As a matter of fact, all thoughts and ideas are based on material things. We have no knowledge of any kind that is not derived from matter, and the censure of Christians and others on Materialism shows how thoughtless and inconsistent they are.

R. J. DERFEL.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

FREETHINKERS AND MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, H. Barber, is evidently an admirer of Mr. Chamberlain and perhaps a Protectionist, at any rate he appears willing to accept Protection to spite Nonconformists, which is much like cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. He admires Mr. Chamberlain because he once gave £50 to support Mr. Bradlaugh's candidature, and doubtless he is worthy of admiration for such an act from one point of view. But is Mr. Barber sure that Mr. Chamberlain has the will to "give effect to our rights" now? He must remember that the Mr. Chamberlain who gave £50 to aid Mr. Bradlaugh's candidature and the Mr. Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary in an Unionist Cabinet, are as two distinct personages.

The title given him by *Reynolds's Newspaper* is, in my opinion, one of which he is particularly worthy.

Mr. Barber says the South African War is over and that

even Mr. Robertson must admit that Mr. Chamberlain has "come well out of it"—another tribute to Mr. Chamberlain; but Mr. Gladstone has also passed away and surely, despite his weaknesses, Mr. Gladstone "comes out of it" better than ever Mr. Chamberlain will do in the estimation of all thinking men. I would like to know what Mr. Barber means by "letting the *Daily News* draw the red herring of their anti-Zollverein agitation across our path of action": and again, "we have before us a closer object and one as dear: the intellectual emancipation of our own people." These require explanation, nay, demand it, unless it is to be understood that Freethinkers as a body are in favor of Protection, which I very much doubt.

The first appears to indicate this, while the second does not appear to have any bearing at all upon the subject, so far as Mr. Chamberlain is concerned. The fact that he is an Unitarian does not signify much politically.

W. McLEAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to Mr. H. Barber's letter in your last issue, the policy of Freethinkers at the next General Election is to vote for those Candidates who, by their programmes, show that they in Parliament will support secular and progressive reform. Because Mr. Chamberlain, by the one or two trivial personal acts in the past, mentioned by Mr. Barber, may appear to have favored Freethinkers, yet we must not overlook the fact that he is avowedly connected with a Party whose aims are antagonistic to Freethought.

Why should we endeavour to put into power a majority who have always supported the maintenance of religious institutions by the State; who strive to uphold Jingo Imperialism, even when the rights of the worker are absolutely crushed as the result; and who, when opportunity has occurred, made labor the footstool of monopoly and capitalism?

The Church only recently has had notorious favors showered upon it by the Party which Mr. Chamberlain professedly adheres to. Has that gentleman ever originated a really democratic measure?

When Mr. Chamberlain has dropped pandering to clericalism, when he no longer takes an interest in "extending our Empire" abroad, shutting his eyes to sadly needed reform at home; and when, to put it mildly, he can run the kingdom without having recourse to taxes on food, and giving to Education the share of our expenditure which he at present says should be given to our Army and Navy, then Freethinkers may give his Party their votes at a General Election.

H. W.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you please allow me a little space in your Journal to make a few remarks upon the above subject. Your correspondent, H. Barber, does not make it quite clear why he wishes to place Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain in contrast. He certainly does not, and cannot, as far as I know, show that Mr. Chamberlain was ever favorable to any extent, to the Freethought movement. As to Mr. Gladstone's manner in the House I beg to say that no such idea was ever conveyed to the Nonconformists as that Mr. Gladstone was "in communion with his God."

Now as to Mr. Chamberlain being too clever and too powerful for them, the exact opposite was the case, for a General Election placed Mr. Gladstone back in power and the Commons passed the Bill which was only defeated by the Lords. It seems to me to be extremely mean to suggest, in the absence of evidence, that the *Impregnable Rock* was written "to win the worship and the votes" of the faithful. Again: If Mr. Barber thinks that "Unitarianism is only one step from absolute repudiation of theological and black coat domination" I can only say that his experience is the opposite of mine.

We, as Freethinkers, are not likely to forget Mr. Chamberlain's donation towards Mr. Bradlaugh's expenses. Subscriptions were received from lots of differing people, amongst them Nonconformists. Are we to conclude that because a man gives in such a case—such a case of glaring injustice—that that man is in essence in favor of Freethought principles. As well quote the fact that Mr. Gladstone sent a wreath of flowers to the grave of that great man.

Then again why should we believe that Mr. Chamberlain could do no other than support a bill which contained a principle which he had no sympathy with. He had kicked over the traces in Liberal Cabinets for lesser things. The fact is he thought of his ambitious self, did this political chameleon; he remembered that the people had seen all his colours and probably would not relish a repetition of the exhibition.

"The General Election is near, and Freethinkers have to decide their own action." Without passing remarks upon

the composition of the foregoing sentence, I agree with its apparent meaning. But it is not by taking the advice of your correspondent that, in my opinion, Freethinkers will gain. I would suggest judicious questions to all candidates for Parliament, regardless of the color of their label, upon such subjects as: The total abolition of religious teaching in State schools; the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws; the abolition of the idiotic Act of Charles II. in regard to Sunday; pressure being brought to bear upon all magistrates to secure the carrying out of the law in respect of anti-vaccinists, also non-swearers in relation to the oath; and last, though not by any means least, the Disestablishment of the Church of England, which, I believe, would help, in spite of the opinions of "Chilperic." EDWIN PURCHES.

MR. HERBERT SPENCER'S "DIVINE EFFLUENCE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You ask "A Natural Religionist" where the opinion that Herbert Spencer believes man is endowed with "a divine effluence" is to be found in his writings.

Such a query coming from one who is supposed to be well versed in Herbert Spencer's style, naturally made me wonder whether the Editor was merely "fishing," or whether his edition of *First Principles* was as late as mine, 1893; because, although Mr. Spencer does not employ the exact expression, "a divine effluence," yet his statements prove conclusively he does believe there is a "something" equivalent to "a divine effluence" in man.

First, we find Mr. Spencer's belief in a Supreme Power, for he writes of "that vague consciousness of Absolute Being which no mental effort can suppress," and again that "we have an indefinite consciousness of an absolute reality transcending relations, which is produced by the absolute persistence in us of something which survives all changes of relation."

Next, we find Mr. Spencer's belief in "something" philosopher's call the "personality" or "ego," etc., and the soul or spirit of the theologian, "the divine effluence" of the religionist. ".....the personality of which each is conscious, and of which the existence is to each a fact beyond all others the most certain is yet a thing which cannot truly be known at all."

That is to say, this "divine effluence" which cannot truly be known at all, by the very fact that it is of a divine nature, is yet a fact of which each one is conscious, and therefore is known by us as "the fact beyond all others the most certain." Such emphatic language leaves no shadow of a doubt about it!

After these statements we can conclude that we are acquainted through experience or persistence with a "personality" or ego, spirit or soul, distinguishable from sensations and thoughts, and that we are capable of perceiving this "something" which philosophers and theologians have given various names, is of the same nature as "the Inscrutable Power which the universe manifests to us."

Mr. Herbert Spencer has shown us that the appeal to Reason is not conclusive evidence against "the divine effluence," but that there exists the still higher court of Faith which incontrovertibly proves its existence; and Mr. Spencer also shows the communion between man's "divine effluence" and the Inscrutable Power to be the essence of Religion.

In replying to some criticisms by someone who represented Mr. Spencer as teaching that "religion is equivalent to Nescience or Ignorance alone," he writes: "I have argued at considerable length, and in such various ways, that I thought it impossible to misunderstand me, that though the Power universally manifested to us through phenomena alike in the *surrounding world* and *in ourselves*, the Power 'in which we live, and move, and have our being,' is, and must ever remain, inscrutable, yet that the *existence* of this Inscrutable Power is the *most certain* of all truths. I have contended that while to the intellectual consciousness this Power, though unknowable in nature, must be ever present as existing; it must be to the emotional consciousness an object to the sentiment we call religious, since in substance, if not in form, it answers to the creating and sustaining Power towards which the religious sentiment is, in other cases, drawn out."

After this, who will affirm that Herbert Spencer is not a religionist, and that he does not believe in a "divine effluence"?

E. V. STERRY.

[This correspondent may fancy he has replied to our question. We do not. We asked for a reference to Mr. Herbert Spencer's opinion that man is endowed with a divine effluence." What we get in reply is a series of syllogisms instead of a simple quotation. It seems to be this correspondent's idea that it is all one whether Mr. Spencer's views are stated in his own language, or in language which any other person chooses to consider "equivalent." He does indeed produce the phrase "the divine effluence"

from Mr. Spencer's writings; but it is within quotation marks there, showing it is a phrase for which Mr. Spencer does not assume personal responsibility. The words "endowed," "divine," and "effluence," taken together, are the language of Theism. The poetical use of the word "divine" is one thing; primarily it means "pertaining to God (*Divus*)."

What we want to know, therefore, is this: Where does Mr. Spencer use it to express his own thought?—EDITOR.]

ASTROLOGY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR—Your paper dealing, as it does, with superstitions, I hope you may find room for a few lines.

Astrology is reckoned to be a science—that is, certain planets and stars, according to the date of birth, are said to indicate certain characters and events, and these planets and stars, millions of miles away, are assumed to be controlling the actions, life, and destiny of all people on this planet. To put it more minutely, the combing of the hair, an accident on a motor-car, the death of a friend, and hundreds of thousands of incidents which make up the life of a person, can all be told by answering the question, When were you born? Such is the grotesque and absurd declaration of the modern wise men of the West—the astrologers.

People are so curious to know their future—how many husbands they will have, how many children and how many troubles, that really anyone who will pretend to know this is sought after. Phenology, which had at one time a great run for character-describing, has become too tame, so now we have the Astrologer and the Palmist, who will tell the definite meaning of lines on the *hands*—not on the *feet*, for that is awkward, nor any other part of the anatomy, though it may be the custom among the Swazis. Both are quick-change artists, and can be one or the other in a couple of minutes. Both are humbugs, and have that faculty of wilful, determined, and fearless lying; but as there is always a gullible class (nurtured by the Church) who can feed on lies, and it pleases the ladies, we privilege them. The best liar makes the best astrological prophet, and the "diviner" who has an oily tongue, and who can cram the most into the shortest time, is the cleverest. Lately some have adopted a wise-man-of-the-East's gown, and have become apt disciples of the parson's serious and mournful looks. But it doesn't look so dull behind the curtain of the *sanctum sanctorum*, where lies the bag with the set, glistening eyes of the astrologer, who has just rushed in after fleecing poor Mary.

Next Sunday, the astrologer willing, he will lend his voice in the singing,

Shall we gather at the river?

These soft, sweet strains do not foreshadow the meeting on the Yukon as a *rendezvous*, but have reference to the river, and many rivers, in every town, and in every town where there is a church. There are shoals of fish, and they all happen to belong to the same species of herring the good fisherman Peter managed to net in. But the modern astrologer, by his science, is more clever than the notorious saint to whom was given the bunch of keys, as silver comes with *every* fish, and all fish look alike to him.

A few more curious sciences have lately been invented—of course science can now mean anything, as it is now jumbled in with miracles. We have some people who will tell what is to happen next week by the color of the eye and hair. Locks of hair and handwriting are *great* clues, as this method lends itself to the post and obtains security from identity. One young fellow at a Lancashire resort recently, where these different and variegated sciences abound, could tell *everything* by the *gait*, and rheumatism would have no effect on the efficacy of his calculations. All the wonderful discoveries could be told here—a gentle stroll of a few yards (in any attire) along the beach would reveal all.

But isn't it surprising, Mr. Editor, that one of your contemporaries and exchanges should take this astrology into its confidence, and advertise the business? Where is the sincerity and principle in a villainous mixture of this kind, and the consistency of a progressive paper, in some respects, degenerating into the official organ of this new set of wily brethren of the great fraternity, the future-mongers.

RATIONALIST.

Cyrus Townsend Brady was talking about the itinerant preachers of the past. "There was a notable itinerant who once preached on the 'Glory of the Saints,' and this is it, word for word: 'Who, my brethren, can describe the glory of a saint? Why, nothing on earth can liken it. If you drill a hole through the sun, and put it on your head for a crown, and split the moon in sunder and put the pieces on your shoulders for epaulets; if you tear down the starry curtain of the skies and wrap it round your body for a robe, and ride to heaven on the lightning wings of the tempest, this would be nothing to the glory of the saints.'"

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.

QUEEN'S HALL (Langham-place, W.): 8, C. Cohen, "Popery, Protestantism, or Froethought."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, E. B. Rose.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Needs; Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. A. Davies.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, J. Toope.

FINSBURY BRANCH N.S.S.(Clerkenwell-gn.): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Brockwell Park): 11.30, W. Sanders.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, G. PARSONS.

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

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (Town Hall-square): 11, Ernest Pack, "The Reformation"; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, 28, 29, and 30, Ernest Pack will lecture each evening at 7.

LEEDS (Vicar's Croft): Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, October 1, 2, and 3, Ernest Pack will lecture each evening at 7.

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): Ernest Pack, 3, "Gentle Jesus"; 6, "Are all Christians Idiots?"

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "An Outline of the Evolution Theory: IV. Social Evolution"; 7, "Joseph's Dream; A Criticism of Chamberlain's Fiscal Proposals." Monday, 28, at 7.45, Edgehill Church, Mr. Ward will lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 8, G. W. Foote, "The Comedy of Passive Resistance"; 6.30, "Nurquam's' Impeachment of Christianity." Admission 3d. and 6d. Tea at 5, 6d each.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Oct. 1 and 8, A. W. Hildreth, "Imperial Reciprocity."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Vocal and Instrumental Music, Recitations, etc.

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