

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Noble fruitful Labor, growing ever nobler—the grand sole miracle of Man; whereby Man has risen from the low places of this Earth, very literally, into divine Heavens.—CARLYLE.

The Holy War.

I.

Now that the "Eastern Question" is once more burning, and all sorts of charges are made against the Turk—not only as a Turk, but also as a *Mohammedan*—it will be as well, at least for Freethinkers, to get a clear view of the facts of the case; since it is only the facts that are of any importance whatever to men of judgment who think for themselves.

The Christians in the south-east of Europe are represented as ethnologically and morally superior to the Mohammedans. They are thus represented, that is, by their partisans in the pulpit and the press. But they are not thus represented by travellers. It is almost the universal testimony of those who have visited that part of the world that the Mohammedans are, on the whole, superior to the Christians in chastity, temperance, self-control, veracity, and sincerity; in all the virtues that build up a clean, wholesome, and dignified manhood.

One single fact speaks volumes. During the late war between Greece and Turkey—if it can be called a war, seeing how the Greeks were so occupied in retreating—it was noted by the English correspondents that the wounded Turks in hospital did amazingly well; their flesh, torn by bullets, or cut by surgical operations, healed with astonishing rapidity. This was owing to the purity of their blood and the soundness of their constitution; which, in turn, were signs of the general sobriety and sanity of their lives. Call them "animals," if your bigotry prompts you; at least you must admit that they were *clean* animals. The facts are too strong against the contrary assertion.

The superiority of the Mohammedans in the fundamental virtues of human life is a very old story. The testimony of the chroniclers of the Crusades on this point is very striking. It was a commonplace amongst Protestant preachers on salvation by faith, who were fond of declaring that if good works could save a man, Turks would go to heaven before Christians. John Wesley said the same thing in slightly altered words. Half a century later, Byron seized on this very point in that splendid battle scene in the eighth canto of *Don Juan*, where the old Turk, whose five sons have all fallen around him, still wields his blade, and refuses to surrender, in spite of the entreaties of the rough Russians who were touched by the only thing that could touch them—his serene bravery. Was the poet describing the son of Priam, or Peleus, or Jove?

Neither—but a good, plain, old temperate man.

Byron saw with his own eyes and knew what he was talking about. A recent traveller has observed that the honest business men in Salonica are mostly Turks: Byron noticed the same characteristic nearly a hundred years ago. In a note to the second canto of *Childe Harold* he said:—

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"In all money transactions with the Moslems, I ever found the strictest honor, the highest disinterestedness. In transacting business with them, there are none of those dirty peculations, under the name of interest, difference of exchange, commission, etc. etc., uniformly found in applying to a Greek consul to cash bills, even on the first houses in Pera."

The same sincerity was apparent in their religious devotions. Renan was so impressed whenever he stood within a mosque that he could hardly help wishing himself a Mussulman. Byron wrote thus of the Mohammedans he had often beheld at their prayers:

"On me the simple and entire sincerity of these men, and the spirit which appeared to be within and upon them, made a far greater impression than any general rite which was ever performed in places of worship, of which I have seen those of almost every persuasion under the sun."

Speaking of the Turks in general, Byron said with great energy:—

"If it is difficult to pronounce what they are, we can at least say what they are *not*: they are *not* treacherous, they are *not* cowardly, they do *not* burn heretics, they are *not* assassins, nor has an enemy advanced to their capital. They are faithful to their sultan till he becomes unfit to govern, and devout to their God without an inquisition. Were they driven from St. Sophia [Constantinople] to-morrow, and the French or Russians enthroned in their stead, it would become a question whether Europe would gain by the exchange. England would certainly be the loser."

Byron praises the toleration of the Turks in this passage. Strange as it may sound to orthodox Christian ears, Mohammedanism is not a persecuting religion; and, as a matter of fact, there is far more religious freedom in Turkey than in Russia—more, indeed, than has obtained until quite recently in progressive countries like England and France. Carry the comparison back a hundred, or even fifty years ago, and you will find that Turkey was in this respect the most enlightened and liberal country in Europe.

II.

Some plain truth on this matter was lately expressed by Professor Syed Ali Bilgrami, lecturer in the Marathi language at the University of Cambridge. This gentleman was interviewed by a representative of the *Daily News*; or rather, as we fancy, by someone who knew what nonsense men like the Archdeacon of London were talking about the Turk, and tried to correct it by getting this "interview" inserted in a journal of well-known Christian tendencies. One passage in the interviewer's report is well worth quoting:—

"Then you claim that Islam is tolerant?"

"It is the most tolerant faith of all. There has never been such absolute toleration under any other religion. In Turkey, if a subject pays his taxes and discharges his civil obligations, he is absolutely free as to faith. Missionaries of all religions are tolerated. Why, if I preached Islam here in Norwood you know I should be mobbed."

With regard to one important point—however much it may be considered as by the way—Professor Bilgrami made a statement which cannot be too often repeated. "I think," he said, "the Mohammedans suffer even more than the Christians for want of firm and equitable government." A number of testimonies to this effect are quoted by Professor T. W. Arnold in his able, and, in some respects noble,

book, *The Preaching of Islam* (pp. 182, 183). Finlay, the great historian of Greece, remarked that "The central government of the Sultan has generally treated its Mussulman subjects with as much cruelty and injustice as the conquered Christians." Forsyth, writing as late as 1876, said that Turkish misgovernment falls with a heavy hand upon all alike. "In some parts of the kingdom," he added, "the poverty of the Mussulmans may be actually worse than the poverty of the Christians, and it is *their* condition which most excites the pity of the traveller." Bryce, writing still later of the north of Asia Minor, said: "All this oppression and misery falls upon the Mohammedan population equally with the Christian." The real truth is that the condition of the Christians in Turkey is not primarily a religious question at all, but a purely political one. Had this truth been steadily borne in mind, and firmly represented to the public opinion of the Western world, the "Eastern Question" might long ago have ceased to exist—that is, if the Western Powers had also been sincere in their expressions of desire for a reformation in the state of affairs in Turkey, instead of aiming at its dismemberment and spoliation. As the matter stands, however, the "Eastern Question" is invariably reopened in a blaze of religious fanaticism. The present trouble in Macedonia, which has been brewing for a considerable time, clearly originated from social and political causes. Nevertheless, it is a Christian feeling which the advocates of immediate interference on the part of England are working upon; it is also Christian feeling which inspires the animosity towards the Turk of the masses of the Russian people; and, quite naturally, it is Moslem fanaticism to which the Sultan knows he must appeal to counterbalance the bigotry on the other side. Thus do the rulers and leaders of men, in all countries, trade upon their inherited prejudices, in order to employ their force for the ends of social and political ambition.

III.

But to return to our special subject. We have already alluded to a false statement of the Archdeacon of London; it was that, "The propagation of his faith by the sword is part of the religion of the Turk." This is devoutly believed by the vast majority of Christians. But, like a good many other things they devoutly believe, it rests upon a very flimsy foundation. Professor Bilgrami denied it most emphatically:—

"Propagation of religion by the sword? That is entirely an exploded view. No Mohammedan ever thinks that religion is to be propagated by the sword."

Professor Bilgrami took the opportunity to add something that will astonish the Christians who read it. They have been taught that Mohammedans call them "infidels"—which, by the way, is their *own* favorite term for those who differ from *them*. But this, Professor Bilgrami said, is wholly incorrect:—

"The 'infidels' referred to in the Koran were the cruel, idolatrous pagans of Arabia. The Christians are called 'the people of the Book,' and we believe in the sinless life and prophetic mission of Christ, though not in his Divinity."

The statement that it is a part of the Turk's religion to propagate his faith by the sword is a very old calumny. Its justification has always been that it served the turn. That it was a lie was a matter of little importance. When our English Pocock visited the great Christian apologist Grotius, in the seventeenth century, and asked him his authority for the story that Mohammed kept a tame pigeon to pick peas out of his ear, and pretended that it whispered him messages from God, Grotius admitted that he had no authority for it at all. Yet the lie lived on for another two hundred years.

If we go back to Lord Bacon we shall find him giving classic expression to this old charge against the Turk of conquest in the name of religion. In the Essay "Of Kingdoms and Estates" his lordship

says: "The Turk hath at hand, for cause of war, the propagation of his law or sect, a quarrel that he may always command." In the Essay "Of Unity in Religion" he amplifies this statement:—

"There be two swords amongst Christians, the spiritual and the temporal; and both have their due office in the maintenance of religion. But we may not take up the third sword, which is Mahomet's sword, or like unto it: that is, to propagate religion by wars, or by sanguinary persecutions to force consciences; except it be in cases of overt scandal, blasphemy, or intermixture of practice against the state."

It is common for the advocates of Christianity against other religions to display craftiness, and Lord Bacon was no exception to the rule. Courage, indeed, as well as cunning, was necessary to write such a passage as this while Christendom was being torn to pieces with religious wars. There is even a positively atrocious subtlety in the idea that, while it is wrong to declare war against another country for the purpose of propagating your own religion, it is quite right to carry on a war, for the same object, against your fellow citizens.

Lord Bacon deals with this subject again, from a political point of view, in his tractate on "War with Spain":—

"In deliberation of war against the Turk it hath been often, with great judgment, maintained that Christian princes and states have always a sufficient ground of invasive war against the enemy; not for cause of religion, but upon a just fear; forasmuch as it is a fundamental law in the Turkish empire that they may, without any further provocation, make war upon Christendom for the propagation of their law; so that there lieth upon Christians a perpetual fear of war, hanging over their heads, from them; and therefore they may at all times, as they think good, be upon the preventive."

What a detestable doctrine—built upon what a foundation of falsehood! Whenever you feel disposed to cut the Turk's throat, however long he may have been living at peace with you, all you have to do is recollect that if he were logical he would be trying to cut your throat, and then you may logically proceed to cut his in self-defence.

Dr. Johnson was just the man to repeat this doctrine, although the lapse of a hundred and fifty years compelled him to be more cautious in his expressions. In a note on Shakespeare's *Henry IV.*, he says:—

"If it be a part of the religion of the Mohammedans to extirpate by the sword all other religions, it is, by the laws of self-defence, lawful for men of every other religion, and for Christians among others, to make war upon Mohammedans, simply as Mohammedans, as men obliged by their own principles to make war upon Christians, and only lying in wait till opportunity shall promise them success."

The "if" in this passage destroys the force of all that follows. But a truer knowledge of Mohammedanism was beginning to prevail, and Johnson had to be more circumspect than his great predecessor.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

The Cant of Nonconformity.

THE cant of Nonconformity is in the air; and of all the cants that the country is troubled with this is the worst. The political cant is bad, but it has the redeeming feature that most people feel that it *is* cant. The religious cant is worse, for it is so case-hardened by time that it is almost impervious to attack. But the worst cant of all is that of the Nonconformist. At bottom it rests upon all that is most obstructive in the English character. And while the cant of the politician is generally uttered with a tongue in the cheek, that of the Nonconformist is voiced with the utmost gravity. Apparently its authors take themselves with the greatest seriousness. They find nothing incongruous in declaring *themselves* the bulwark of English liberties, the champions of every reform, and almost the creators of a

moral sense. Never, apparently, does it dawn upon them that England's greatness dates a *little* further back than the sour puritanism of the later seventeenth century, or that by far the larger part of the work that has contributed to the real greatness of the nation in art, science, and literature has been accomplished outside the Nonconformist ranks. For this class the history of civilisation seems to commence with the Protestant Reformation, and to culminate in the National Council of Free Churches.

By itself Nonconformity is a good word, and one is reminded of Emerson's "Whoso would be a man must be a Nonconformist." But there is a whole world of difference between the Emersonian Nonconformity and that of the Dissenting Christian world. The one is a whole-souled, healthy repudiation of custom as custom, of tradition as tradition, and a determination to rest obedience upon an intelligent recognition of the value of the commands that are to be obeyed. The other is simply and entirely a refusal to conform to certain religious customs—a refusal based upon a sectarianism even narrower than that which it assails. It is the revolt of a bigot against all bigotry other than his own. There is really nothing that the Dissenter hates more than genuine Nonconformity; toward this, whenever occasion offers, he shows the most uncompromising hostility. To put the matter in a sentence, the Nonconformity of the Nonconformist is inseparably bound up with a *conformity* of the most unintelligent and obstructive description.

That this is not a mere paradox, but a sober statement of fact, a few examples will prove. There is nothing about which present-day Dissenters cant more than "liberty." It is always on their lips, it fills their writings, and one would imagine that to secure this they would sacrifice everything. What are the facts? Historically, there is not a single Nonconformist leader that has not drawn a line of demarcation between granting liberty to Christians and non-Christians; while many have even discriminated among Christians themselves. In the historic cases where what now ranks as Nonconformity has ruled, Geneva, New England, Scotland, in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and England in the seventeenth century, the repression, the intolerance, and the religious savagery have been as marked as under any other Christian Church that has ever existed. Men and women were hanged, drowned, burned, tortured, and imprisoned by Calvinism, Presbyterianism, and Puritanism as heartily as by the Roman Catholics or Episcopalians. Methodism and a few other sects came too late in the day to exercise the same Christian tactics, or there is no doubt they might be added to the list. No wonder Milton said that new presbyter was but old priest writ large.

What effort has Nonconformist Christianity ever made to secure all-round liberty of thought, irrespective of any shade of thought? During all the years that men and women were fined and imprisoned for the law-made crime of blasphemy, whoever heard of any official, or even general, protest from Dissenters against such attacks on liberty of thought and speech? One here and there may have protested; but what is the solitary voice of one man, better than his creed, against the passive and active acquiescence of the rest? As a body, the Dissenters have given their cordial support to the maintenance of laws against "blasphemy." Their protest has been all along only against such laws as oppress members of the Dissenting Churches; once these have been removed, other regulations against non-Christians receive their loyal adherence.

Nor does the Nonconformist conception of liberty stop here. In the smaller intolerances of life the Nonconformists are supreme. It is not long since that the present chairman of the Congregational Union, Dr. R. F. Horton, publicly gave it as his opinion that people who did not believe in a future life should be ostracised from human society. So much for his notion of liberty. And wherever Nonconformists can exert influence as to the renting of

halls, or the selling of literature, the prospects of fair play for the Freethinker or his literature are poor indeed. And from a domestic point of view it is hard to see any vital distinction between the heresy hunts of the dissenting and other churches.

In what way is the attitude of Christian Nonconformity towards science and criticism better than that of the older churches? In the lump it is rather worse. If anyone takes up Dr. White's *Warfare of Science with Theology* it will be seen that of the opposition to scientific discoveries some of the most ignorant manifestations came from dissenting circles. And I think it may fairly be said that even to-day, class for class, the teachings of science receive far less recognition among dissenters than they do among Episcopalians. The lesson is the same if we take biblical criticism. Notoriously this receives less recognition among dissenters than among others. And to give the devil his due, it is only fair to recognise that, in spite of many reservations and qualifications, the work done in the shape of biblical criticism by dissenters is small compared to that done by members of the Established Church.

Next to the cant of liberty in the mouth of the dissenter is that of citizenship and social leadership. He is the friend of the people, the creator and preserver of our political and social liberties—at least, *he* says so, and the authority is therefore first hand. It may be granted, as a mere statement of fact, that the Dissenters have been more often in opposition to the Government than have the Episcopalians. But this was due to sheer expediency, not principle. The Established Church is the church of the governing classes—or has been, until very recently. Consequently the Dissenter in attacking that church was forced to appeal to the people as the only source from which he could expect assistance. It was a political accident that placed him on the one side rather than the other; but the root motive of his conduct is sectarian hatred, not a sense of social or political justice.

Dismissing all the current "blather" of Nonconformist preachers on this subject, let one ask in what manner can Nonconformist Christianity lead the way in social reform. The prime condition, an all round liberty of opinion, we have seen they are clearly not willing to give. Their present cowardly attitude on the Education question, where under the pretence of wishing to abolish sectarian religious instruction in schools they are trying to get a form of religious belief that suits *them* taught at the public expense, should alone be enough to damn them in the eyes of all intelligent persons. A policy of complete secular education they either will not accept, or they threaten the church party that if they cannot get their own way by other means they will advocate Secular Education and sweep *all* religion out of the schools. That is, they promise to try all other methods, and if they cannot win, will actually turn honest as a last desperate alternative. Oh, rare Nonconformist Conscience!

Take the question of land, or that of the relation of capital and labor. Can Nonconformist Christianity give a lead here? Whatever iniquities are existent in either direction are shared to the full by dissenters, and it is quite evident that no class would fight more strenuously against any really drastic measure of reform. It might favor land reform rather more than the Church of England would, for the reason that the Church is more closely bound up with the land. But, on the other hand, the Church would be likely to favor a change in the existing relations of capital and labor more, for the reason that the Nonconformists are more closely interested in the present capitalistic system. It is a question of self-interest on both sides.

Just now Nonconformists are shrieking themselves hoarse over Macedonia. Silent while Christian soldiers were outraging women and girls in China, and afterwards bundling their mutilated bodies into chests, mildly protestative while Christian Russians were butchering Jews in Russia, carving the symbol

of their faith on the stomachs of women, and stuffing with straw disembowelled bodies, they boil with indignation at a Mohammedan power that ventures to emulate Christian conduct in this direction. "Conscience," says Shakespeare, "is a blushing shamefast spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom." That was three hundred years ago. We have since developed a new variety—a variety that is kept well under control, to which mutiny is unknown, and which only expresses itself when sectarian interests are furthered by its activity.

What kind of leadership did the Nonconformists give the people during the South African War? None favored the war spirit more, none worked harder to keep it alive. Church and Chapel were unanimous in this, at least, and there was quite a touching exhibition of brotherly rivalry as to which could, in the name of Christianity, do most to rouse the more brutal instincts in human nature.

The whole lesson is, that the only kind of leadership one can expect from this quarter is a leadership of the prejudice of the moment, governed always by the interests of a sect. That sectarian interests will always come first is demonstrated by the present endeavor to form a Nonconformist political party, so that members of Parliament may be returned with sole regard to their willingness to subordinate all other interests to that of the chapel. It is a striking confirmation of Mathew Arnold's statement, now over thirty years old, that "a more full and harmonious development of their humanity is what the Nonconformists most want; narrowness, one-sidedness, and incompleteness is what they most suffer from.....in what we call *provinciality* they abound, but in what we may call *totality* they fall short."

But for Nonconformists to lose those characteristics that Arnold deploras, would be for them to lose their character as religious dissenters. For Christian Nonconformity is, above all things, narrow, exclusive, sectarian. All Christianity is narrow and exclusive, and these two qualities increase as we get away from the great churches into the region of the minor Protestant sects. Right through its history dissent has looked at life from the standpoint of the chapel, instead of the chapel from the standpoint of life. The English Church has been guilty of the same fault, in kind, but its very position as a national Church has saved it from so marked a development of this quality.

With genuine ethical and intellectual Nonconformity our Nonconformist leaders will, as I have said, have nothing to do. The freedom of thought that will attack a rival sect they applaud. The freedom of thought that rejects Christian beliefs, one of their leading speakers would banish from human society by force. It is this insincere use of good words that makes the Christian Nonconformist a genuine danger to the higher interests of life. Liberty, freedom of thought, justice, are good words, and connote valuable ideas when used by those who appreciate their value; but in the mouths of others they as certainly tend to become the condition of apathy, social injustice, and intellectual intolerance.

C. COHEN.

Hell.

"I WANT hell back," cried a popular preacher the other Sunday evening. But hell has vanished and cannot be brought back. It served the Church splendidly for hundreds of years; but its term of service has closed, and, in consequence, the Church has lost its sovereignty. Mr. Campbell, however, wishes to have hell rehabilitated again; but his wish will never blossom into fulfilment, any more than his wish for the rehabilitation of miracles. Of course, the Church cannot prosper without hell. If there is no punishment for unbelief in the hereafter, what need is there for preaching, and if there be no hereafter, with its two compartments, why should the Church continue to exist? But what Mr. Campbell

wants is to get his own conception of hell generally adopted. He cannot tolerate Dr. Parker's idea of it, nor yet that of the late Charles Spurgeon. Mr. Campbell preaches the Gospel of the Larger Hope, and his reason for advocating it is that man cannot resist God. But if man cannot resist God, how is it that anybody dies in unbelief? If the Sovereign of the Universe is omnipotent love, why does he allow a single one of his children to go to hell at all? If there is a place or state of torment beyond the tomb, it necessarily follows that man both can and does resist his Maker and Father. Hell is a proof at once of man's strength and God's impotence. To send an impenitent sinner to Gehenna is like putting an obstinate prisoner to the torture to force a confession out of him. On earth, the overwhelming majority of people recklessly refuse the offer of salvation, and positively decline to bow the knee to the Almighty; but when they die they are committed to the flames of punishment that their wills may be broken. And yet Mr. Campbell asserts that man cannot resist God. In the strangest and most self-contradictory sermon I ever read, he says:—"Our dear Redeemer must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. I cannot believe that the Master's victory will be partial and incomplete. Sin is not eternal. We have no defeated Redeemer. Christ is the victor in the far ages, no matter what seems to be the truth now." Is not this one way of surrendering the case? The Christian ministry is a gigantic failure on earth. Out of every ten people nine reject God and his Christ, and the proportion of rejectors is steadily increasing. That is quite true, admits the City Temple dogmatist; but after death all will yield up their wills, and become gladly submissive and beautifully loyal to our dear Redeemer. Hell will succeed where the Gospel miserably fails.

Such is Mr. Campbell's idea of the utility of hell. That it is an utterly absurd conception goes without saying; but its absurdity reaches its very climax when we are coolly told that it is contained in the Bible. The preacher said: "I will solemnly and earnestly try to set before you what I take to be the teaching of the Word of God upon this great subject." He cites no passages, however, in which salvation after death is clearly taught. I challenge him to produce a single verse or chapter in which such teaching is to be unmistakably found. Interpreted naturally, without any theological bias, the New Testament holds out no hope for those who die in their sins. There may be doubtful passages; but they are so *very* doubtful that no two theologians put the same construction upon them. Of course, the Word of God is proverbially elastic and accommodating. Even the late Edward White claimed that his Annihilation Theory was thoroughly Biblical; and it was with texts of Scripture that the great Spurgeon used to terrify his spellbound hearers. Now, inasmuch as it is perfectly evident that these conflicting theories of hell cannot be all true, and inasmuch as the champions of each one of them maintain that it alone has the sanction of Scripture, how are we to decide between them? *By rejecting them all alike.* Mr. Campbell knows absolutely nothing about the dreadful subject, and has no right to dogmatise concerning it. The writers of the Bible were equally ignorant, and the same ignorance is universal. We do not know that we shall survive death; and both heaven and hell are the creations of man's imagination.

A short time before his death John Fiske delivered a lecture, entitled "Everlasting Life," in which he endeavored, in a particularly ingenious manner, to break the force of materialistic arguments against Immortality. That lecture was hailed by the religious world as a timely godsend. But John Fiske could frame no argument to prove that death does not end all. He frankly admitted that there can be no demonstrative evidence of a future life. Here is a sample of his reasoning: "Suppose the dictum had been, 'No thought without a brain.' The obvious answer would have been, 'If you refer to the

present life, most erudite professor, your remark is true, but hardly novel or startling; if you refer to any condition of things subsequent to death, pray where did you obtain your information?" But the professor's obvious retort would have been, "I am speaking only of the present life, and I know nothing of any other; but I *do* know that in this life consciousness is a function of the nervous system." If the soul is an entity distinct from the body, as many assert, what becomes of it in delirium or sleep? What happens to it when the brain is injured and cannot act? If, as the materialists hold, the relation of the conscious intelligence to the brain is like that of music to the harp, I can understand that when the harp is broken there can be no more music; but if the relation of the soul to the brain is like that of the harper to the harp, how is it that the musician loses self-consciousness the moment any serious accident befalls his instrument? At the end of his lecture Mr. Fiske says: "Upon these conclusions we cannot directly base an argument sustaining man's immortality." But if upon the cleverest conclusions, worked out with perfect logic, no direct argument sustaining immortality can be based, what culpable waste of time it must be to speculate about the fate of the wicked after death! Would it not be wiser to leave heaven and hell alone, and concentrate attention on the duties and responsibilities of the present life? It is nothing less than a crime to transfer the rectification of existing anomalies to an imaginary Future State. Now is the time and this is the world in which to make all rectifications. It is the quintessence of cruelty to comfort Lazarus, as he lies full of festering sores, at the rich man's door, the recipient of an occasional crumb from the sumptuous table, by assuring him that at death he will wing his way straight into Abraham's bosom in Paradise, while the rich man shall go down into the torments of hell. What poor Lazarus needs is fair wages when in health and able to work, and brotherly sympathy when disease overtakes him. And what the rich man, who made his fortune dishonestly, deserves is to be in torments now.

JOHN LLOYD.

The "Freethinker" Boycott.

THERE was a brief leader in our issue of September 20 on the trade boycott of the *Freethinker*. Incidentally we observed that Smith and Son's monopoly—to take a leading instance—stood in the way of the circulation of thousands of copies of this journal weekly. We also stated that when we started the *Pioneer* we expected it would have a better chance, but unfortunately the boycott against it was just as bad as the boycott against the older paper with the more aggressive name and reputation.

In the same issue of the *Freethinker* the following appeared in the column of Answers to Correspondents:—

"M. BLISS.—Copies forwarded as desired. We regret that your Dublin newsagents—Eason and Son—had to return your money, because, to use their own words, 'our London agent will not supply us with the *Freethinker*.' This is a further illustration of our 'Special' this week."

Mr. M. Bliss thereupon wrote to Smith and Son himself. He does not send us a copy of his letter, but he sends us their reply. It runs as follows:—

"Dear Sir,—In reply to your letter, it has always been our rule not to sell copies of the *Freethinker*, but we do not know why Messrs. Eason and Son should have given this to you as an excuse for not fulfilling your order. If they had wished to supply you, they could easily have obtained the copies direct from the office of the paper."

In sending us Smith and Son's letter, Mr. Bliss writes us a letter on his own account, in which he says:—

"I think Smith and Son's answer shows very clearly that there are no 'trade reasons'—the point one of your correspondents raised. Note the words 'always been our rule.'"

Mr. Bliss's letter simply shows—what is, of course, very natural—that he does not understand the facts of the case. Smith and Son's letter is sheer nonsense—or something worse.

It is the custom of retail newsagents to place their order for *all* literature with some wholesale agent in London, acting as a general distributor. If that wholesale distributing agent refuses to supply a particular paper, the retail newsagent must do one of two things; either drop that paper off his own list, or insist on being supplied with it, and, if there is continued refusal, transfer his order to some other firm. Now the latter course is not always feasible, and always involves a good deal of bother; and, as the *Freethinker* is not at present an important paper—from the point of view of its circulation—the retail newsagent generally takes no further trouble, and simply reports that he "cannot supply" it.

Smith & Son talk great nonsense, and must (or ought to) know it, when they say that a Dublin customer of theirs could "easily" obtain copies direct from the *Freethinker* office.

In the first place, retail newsagents place their total order with a wholesale agent, chiefly to avoid the cost of ordering each item direct from the publishing office. This is, indeed, the principal reason why the wholesale (distributing) agent exists.

In the next place, the word "easily" is a perfect travesty of the facts. Eason & Son were willing to supply Mr. Bliss with the *Freethinker*, if they could do so in the ordinary way of business; but they had no reason for incurring special trouble and expense. A retail newsagent often begins with *one copy* of a paper like the *Freethinker*. If he places it on his weekly order list, it comes with other papers, and he gets a *pro rata* profit on the transaction. But how on earth is he to order that *one copy* direct from London? He must by letter order it, remit for it, and pay the postage upon it. Setting the trouble aside, the paper would cost him at least *threepence* by the time he handled it, and he has to supply it to his customer at *twopence*. Such is the process which Smith & Son describe as "easy." And they are in the trade, too!

It would be better for Smith & Son, and other such firms, to say plainly and honestly, "We object to the *Freethinker* on religious grounds; the case is one in which our private feelings must be brought into public business; we therefore refuse to supply this paper, and we take the consequences of our action."

Mr. Bliss is right in one sense. There is no "trade reason" in this matter. The refusal to supply the *Freethinker* is simply an act of religious bigotry.

This act of religious bigotry does not cost very much. Smith & Son, and other such firms, can afford it. But if the *Freethinker* had the circulation of (say) the *Daily Mail*, they would have to reconsider their position.

Finally, we did not represent Smith & Son's refusal to supply the *Freethinker* as a new thing. They mentioned this paper in replying to the letter from our publishing office; but they did so gratuitously, perhaps to confuse the issue. They were written to solely in relation to the *Pioneer*. It was they who dragged in the *Freethinker* in this connexion, and the fact shows the nature of their animus.

The matter just stands where it did when we wrote the "Special" for September 20. The fact remains, and we can prove it by figures at our office, that the trade boycott of the *Freethinker* by several important distributing agencies is the one great obstacle to a wide circulation that would make it a good property instead of a financial burden. And in these circumstances we do right, we think, in appealing to our friends all over the country. We ask them to do their best to push the circulation of this journal privately. This can be done in several ways. An extra copy or copies could be taken weekly, and passed round to friends and acquaintances, or otherwise judiciously distributed. Newsagents who already supply the *Freethinker* "to order" might be induced to show a copy somewhere, and to have some extra

copies for possible new customers, on condition that they are relieved of unsold copies. Occasionally we hear of friends who post copies of the *Freethinker* to persons in the neighborhood who ought to see it, or might be glad to see it. Other methods will doubtless suggest themselves in special circumstances.

We may add that newsagents who object to the trade boycott of papers on religious grounds, and are willing to take a little trouble to break it down, might write to our publishing office and see what arrangement could be made for a direct supply. They will be met a good deal more than half way. For this is not merely a weekly publication; it is the organ of an apostolate; and we have more than a common business reason for getting it into the hands of the largest possible number of readers.

G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

The *Daily News* blossomed out into sixteen pages on Monday morning, the shape being somewhat altered, and the paper of inferior quality. This new departure was marked by an article in the literary columns on Giordano Bruno, affecting to be a review of Professor McIntyre's book on that great heretic and martyr, but really being an attack on the philosopher who was burnt to death by Christians. On the whole, we cannot say that we regret this; we rather like to see the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience displaying itself in its true colors. It serves to point the moral that we have lately been impressing upon our readers.

Bruno is represented in this article as a "charlatan and poseur," as inspiring "pity rather than enthusiasm," as showing "no trace" of the noble qualities of the English reformers, as guilty of "bravado" in thinking for himself against all authority, as exhibiting "colossal egotism," and as being "equally distrusted by Catholics and Protestants alike." This is our contemporary's own grammar. Finally, we are treated to the following tit-bit: "It is difficult for a biographer with the best intentions to evoke enthusiasm for Bruno himself, whose tragic death redeems 'with a touch of nobleness' the record of a career singularly destitute of attractive personal qualities and altruistic aims."

Thus does the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience make mouths at that sublime spirit. Thus does the organ of the Passive Resisters—with their distraised tables, purchased back by themselves, and their occasional few days' imprisonment—spit at the memory of the supreme martyr of Freethought, who spent seven years in a Christian dungeon, suffered torture many times, and yet had resolution enough at the end to die in the flames of the stake, despising, detesting, and defying the faith of his murderers.

The Nonconformist writer of this wonderful article finds it difficult to get up any enthusiasm for Bruno. Very likely. Valets are proverbially blind to the virtues of heroes. Tennyson and Swinburne did feel enthusiasm for Bruno. But they belong to a different gallery.

What a singular observation that both Catholics and Protestants "distrusted" Bruno! The word should have been "persecuted." They drove him from place to place, until at last they drove him into the bloody jaws of the Inquisition. Bruno had to flee from the city of John Calvin as well as from the city of the Pope.

Bruno's "light-hearted scepticism" is a rare joke. One would think he was always cracking jests. He who was pursued by the beagles of superstition! He who said "If God touch thee thou shalt become a consuming fire."! He who cried for the light of Truth, and exclaimed, "the outrage of the rabble, the storms of Time, the slings and arrows of Fortune, shall fall upon this tender body, and shall weld it to steel"! He who drank his cup of anguish to the dregs with a proud calm face, telling his judges that they passed his sentence with more fear than he heard it, and saying in sight of the pyre where he was to be burnt to ashes that he died a martyr and willingly!

Bruno had no "attractive qualities." What then made him welcome to the society of men like Fulke Greville and Sir Philip Sidney? How are we to explain that beautiful and noble head of his on such a theory? Do the possessors of no attractive qualities carry about the brow, the eyes, the mouth of Apollo? And if Bruno had no "altruistic aims," how came he to live a hunted life and die a fiery death?

Go to! thou *Daily News* reviewer. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

The *Manchester Evening Chronicle* has turned on Sir Lewis Morris to answer the question "Is religious influence declining?" Of course he answers it in the negative, as he was expected to. He also assures our contemporary's readers that the belief in God is ineradicable—which is not true, for there are many Atheists. He likewise declares that Science confirms belief in God. But who made Sir Lewis Morris an authority on this point? He is not a man of science. He is a poet—and an indifferent one at that. We fancy he had better sing religion, as well as he can, and leave reasoning to harder heads.

A correspondent has favored us with a newspaper report of the Bishop of Ripon's lecture on "What is Christianity?" in the St. George's Hall, Bradford. We have read it through and tried to find something tangible in it. But we can find nothing. It is just like thimble-rigging. You can never find the pea.

Sunday bands in the park are strongly condemned by the Darwen Congregational Sunday-Schools Association. There is wailing over the fact that a letter from Lower Chapel to the Town Council received no reply except a formal acknowledgment. How sad! But the godly were always persecuted.

While the Nonconformist Conscience, aided this time by the still more wonderful Church Conscience, is busying itself over the subject of Turkish atrocities, it might as well pluck up courage enough to denounce Russia and Austria for their complicity in the massacres. This is what Mr. Arthur J. Evans said in a recent letter to the *Times* :—

"The thinning down of the Slavonic population of Old Servia (the Kossovo vilayet) has already been watched for years by Austria-Hungary with cynical inaction. The wholesale disappearance of the Bulgar population from Macedonia would considerably facilitate the realisation of certain ambitions. From the Russian point of view also the weakening of the Bulgarian element outside the Principality has obvious advantages, while insurrection, even against the Great Assassin, is a crime against Divine right deserving of exemplary chastisement."

What is this but a parliamentary way of saying that the Turkish butcher is instigated or winked at by the Christian governments of Russia and Austria?

Dear good Christian *Passive Resisters* continue to give auctioneers a high old time. At Belvedere, Kent, an auctioneer had to be brought over from Bexley-heath. A Nonconformist mob so hooted and abused him—all, we suppose, for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ—that he had to conduct the sale (for safety) from a first floor window. When the sale was over the *Passive Resisters* became so threatening that he had to escape through a first-floor window on the other side of the building. By hurrying away he escaped the tender mercies of the humble disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake writes to the *Daily News* on behalf of the *Passive Resisters* at Brighton. They are apparently made fun of by a local weekly paper, and as they are not Secularists they have Mr. Holyoake's active sympathy. The following passage in his letter is perhaps worth reproducing :—

"We had until lately a weekly journal in Brighton which stood for principle, but now follows Mr. Balfour, and has an 'open mind' upon things so trifling as principle, and is quite gay over the prosecution of those of its readers who object to public money being extorted to pay for sectarian teaching, over which the public have no control. If the editor and his readers were taxed to support the tenets of a rival paper, intended to supersede his, as Nonconformists are taxed to support a rival Church intended to supersede theirs, the editor might discover that he had a conscience himself, not at present apparent or suspected."

Are we to conclude that "sectarian teaching" would be quite unobjectionable if it were only under "public control"? Or that a Nonconformist grievance is above all others intolerable? Nonconformists may be taxed to support a rival church, but have not Secularists been always taxed in precisely the same manner to support both Churches? And when did Mr. Holyoake suggest that it was a matter of principle for Secularists to refuse to pay their rates? Has he ever refused to pay his own?

Mr. Parker, of Sutton, was the first *Passive Resister* to go to prison. Although over seventy years of age, he was braver than most of the Nonconformist agitators. He settled all his goods upon his wife, and the distraint warrant was therefore returned marked "no effects." Consequently

he was sent to Wandsworth Gaol—we believe for a week. This was a very brief "martyrdom," but Mr. Parker came out of prison almost broken up, and was too ill to address the pious crowd waiting to welcome him, who were obliged to console themselves by singing "O God, our help in ages past." One of Mr. Parker's greatest grievances was that the prison authorities did not let him have his own Bible in their establishment. What on earth did he expect? Would it not be well if the leaders of this Passive Resistance were to explain to their enthusiastic followers what imprisonment actually means?

Good Lord! What a lark! The Passive Resisters are teaching a lesson—and it is being learnt. Mr. M. O'Connell has been summoned at Finsbury for non-payment of rates. He explained to the magistrate that he was willing to pay the rate less the amount ear-marked for the School Board. As a Catholic he objected to School Board religion; it suited the Nonconformists, but it did not suit him, and he declined to pay for it. Why, the very Bible they read in the Board schools was not *his* Bible. It was the Protestant Bible, not the Catholic Bible, and he declined to pay for the reading of the wrong book. At this point the magistrate told him to state his *legal* objections. Whereupon he said that he was giving a hint to the Passive Resistance agitators. If they succeeded in repealing the Education Act, and setting up their own form of religious teaching at the public expense, they might find that passive resistance was a game that others could play at, and witness a combination of Catholics and Anglicans to resist payment of a School Board rate. Mr. O'Connell added that he didn't see why he shouldn't be a martyr for the ridiculously low sum of 3s. 6d. as well as any Nonconformist minister in the kingdom, and he would wait for the distraint.

Oh the little rift within the Nonconformist lute! The Rev. R. J. Campbell and the *Daily News* are at loggerheads. Mr. Campbell complains of pro-Boerism being introduced into the discussions and demonstrations on the Macedonian question, and begs the Bouverie-street oracle to advise the supporters of its own view of the South African question to "refrain from intolerance and innuendo towards those who differ from them." "Unless," he adds, "a better and more courteous feeling is exhibited, it will become increasingly difficult for us to act together in the great issues which are now before us." The *Daily News* replies, with assumed dignity, that it "makes no comment on the tone of this letter"—which is a comment in itself. For the rest, it throws upon Mr. Campbell the responsibility of rousing up the sleeping South African dogs. But the cruel thing was the printing of another letter immediately under this by some brave Nonconformist who kept his name back and signed himself "Pity All Round," in which it was suggested that Dr. Clifford, and not Mr. Campbell, ought to have been invited to speak on behalf of the Free Churches at the great St. James's Hall protest.

New brooms sweep well—sometimes *too* well. Captain Hamilton, the new chief of the London Fire Brigade, issued certain orders respecting the use of the recreation rooms on Sundays and the playing of billiards, which gave rise to such dissatisfaction amongst the officers and men, and such disgust amongst the general public, that it has been deemed advisable to withdraw them. Captain Hamilton says they were issued by mistake. Very likely.

Charles Wesley Dean, of Chicago, has a big thing on hand. He has produced a work entitled *The Book of Books*, which he says has been dictated and revised by spirits. Three times over they made him burn the manuscript because it was unsatisfactory, so we suppose it is all right now. About a hundred spirits—none of them disembodied—collaborated on it, including Adam and Eve, Methuselah, Noah, Moses, and Lot's wife—who probably contributed the salt. Let us hope so, anyhow, for these spirit productions are generally very insipid.

Mr. Dean's wonderful revelation refers to a "spirit government of love on the world," which is to be established shortly, with Hadden City as the seat of authority—and Mr. Dean, we expect, somewhere upon it. The list of spirit officers is already completed. There is a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer—all ghosts. The committee includes D. L. Moody and Charles Darwin, and (oh ye gods and little fishes!) St. Peter and Robert G. Ingersoll. We cannot hold the pen any longer for laughing.

Mr. William Faux, who has just retired from his post as chief of Smith's Library, after fifty years' service, contributes an article to the new *Book Monthly*, in which he

explains how books were excluded. He says there was a "settled policy," and he thus describes it:—

"My attitude has simply been this: not to give our readers books the head of a family would dislike to see in his house. People subscribe to a circulating library on the understanding that they are to be supplied with books of a tone they would approve. If the library fails in that it fails in its duty to the subscribers; and so if a volume seemed to me, after it had been carefully read, to be of quite a doubtful character, I declined to circulate it. No other attitude would be possible for an institution appealing to the public."

Fancy the gentleman who wrote that deciding for all the subscribers to Smith's Library what they should read! Note the quiet way in which he assumes his own perfect fitness for deciding such a question. Also the assumption that all the subscribers were of one common degree of "respectability," or at least that the exceptional ones should not be allowed to read what the rest would not choose to read themselves. How appalling is the Philistinism of this literary Faux!

With regard to the railway bookstalls, at any rate, Smith & Son have no moral right, and should have no legal right, to set up an arbitrary censorship. Railways are monopolies, railway bookstalls are public conveniences, and the contractors who run them should be obliged to sell everything in demand, as long as it is not interfered with by the police.

Another censorship is that of the Lord Chamberlain who licenses plays—acting on the professional advice of Mr. Redford. Under this censorship, Shelley's *Cenci*—probably the finest drama since the age of Shakespeare—has never been allowed to be played as a public performance. We may be quite sure, also, that some of Shakespeare's plays would be tabooed if they had not been so long in possession of the field—or rather of the stage. *Othello* would not stand a chance of being licensed nowadays.

The Lord Chamberlain, acting on Mr. Redford's advice, has refused to let Signora Duse place D'Annunzio's *La Città Morta* ("The Dead City") on a London stage. She has played in it for three years in Italy, Austria, Germany, and the United States; but she has to count with a sterner virtue, or a sourer puritanism, in England. Piccadilly remains as it was, but La Duse must not appear in an Italian play which some consider a masterpiece.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has made the Macedonians a splendid present—the prayers of all the congregations in the diocese. We hope it will be valued at its true worth.

The Rev. R. H. Kennedy, of Hillsborough Congregational Church, Washington County, U. S. A., is a man of many accomplishments—and pursuits. Besides being a very "acceptable" preacher, and very attentive to the ladies, he was also fond of burgling. One night he tried to burgle the house of a wealthy member of his own congregation. He is now out of employment—in Hillsborough Gaol.

We believe the *Daily News* has taken the religious census of Croydon. We wish it would also take a census of the fools there. They seem to be pretty numerous. Crowds of them have assembled nightly in Whitehorse-road to see a ghost.

The London statistics of lunacy are distressing. There are over 22,000 lunatics under restraint. The report calls them persons of "unsound mind." But this is misleading. There are far more than 22,000 persons in London of unsound mind.

According to a *Morning Leader* report, there has been another massacre of Jews at Mohileff, surpassing that of Kischineff in horror. We see that the report is denied from St. Petersburg. So was the previous report—but it proved to be only too true.

There were no Christian demonstrations in England against the Kischineff massacre. Such demonstrations only take place when the victims are Christians. Besides, it is one thing to lecture the Sultan, and another thing to lecture the Czar.

A Dalziel telegram reports "a curious development of the anti-Clerical agitation" at Saint-Savin, near Troyes. The Municipal Council of the town, which consists largely of anti-Clericals, has resolved that the "Saint" shall be eliminated, and the town be henceforth called "Savin." But is this so "curious" after all, when you come to think of it? Why should people who don't believe in Church nonsense go on perpetuating it in the names of their localities?

We have already referred to the case of Frank Knowles Butterworth, a master printer, and Zionite, who was committed for trial at Manchester for "cruelty" to his little daughter Elizabeth; the said cruelty consisting in praying over the child, instead of calling in a doctor, when she fell and broke her collar bone. Since then the trial has taken place, and Butterworth has been sentenced to a month's imprisonment. The case was very simple. It was admitted that Butterworth was a kind father: his offence was believing the Bible and acting on his belief. For this he was prosecuted by a Society whose secretary is a clergyman; a jury, composed probably of Christians, found him guilty; and a judge, probably a Christian, sentenced him to imprisonment. Such is the present state of the controversy over the Bible and Science. Religion says you must believe the Bible; the law of the land says you must believe Science; and if you reply, in a court of justice, that you prefer to believe the Bible, the law says "Take a month"—and you get it.

The *Manchester Guardian* devoted an article to this Butterworth case. It declared that he had no right to sacrifice his children's welfare to his own beliefs. But are not "his beliefs" the beliefs taught in the Bible and professed by the very people who send him to prison and say "Serve him right"? We agree with our contemporary that "Folly will flourish in the face of all evidence." The churches and chapels in Manchester are a proof of it. Nay, they prove something darker than folly; for while Butterworth is "doing time" for praying and meaning it, the churches and chapels of Manchester will echo prayers for Macedonia—which are all humbug.

"Boko," who writes the "Democratic View" in the *Manchester Weekly Chronicle*, thinks that the faith-healers are about right if the Bible is the Word of God. After quoting the well-known text in St. James, he says: "Those words to my mind are conclusive, and therefore, although I agree that the doctrine is dangerous, as has been exemplified only recently in Manchester, and though I believe that in the interests of the community at large, it is well that we should use all legitimate means to overcome this superstition, yet at the same time I recognise that the faith of these believers is quite consistent, quite logical, and it seems to me that those so-called Christians who are so vehement in condemning those of their brethren who have the courage of their faith and dare to put it into practice, are illogical, and only half-hearted in their belief and in their profession of Christianity."

"We can point to our Garibaldi," said the Rev. J. H. Dickie in a sermon at Springburn extolling the achievements of Christianity. Mr. Dickie evidently fancies that Garibaldi was a Christian. Garibaldi was an Atheist.

According to the newspapers, a well-known Passive Resister at Penge offered his wife to the warrant officer who came to distrain for 2s. 10d. Perhaps this was a joke. But what a joke! Wives used to be practically their husbands' property, and this facetious offer was reminiscent of the old barbarism.

Suppose that Passive Resister's wife could have been distrained: would he have bought her himself at the auction? We wonder.

"Providence" is active in China. Two thousand deaths from plague have occurred in two months at Pietang, "He doeth all things well."

Mr. H. C. Shackleton has successfully brought the Rev. T. L. Withington, of Keighley, to book over that pulpit story of Charles Bradlaugh having been frightened and cried out to God during a storm on a voyage to the Channel Islands. Bradlaugh only went to the Channel Islands once to lecture. It was in 1861. He wrote an account of his visit in the *National Reformer*. Mrs. Bonner looked that account up, and found that he "had a beautiful clear moonlight night, a smooth sea, and a thoroughly pleasant passage." So the storm goes, and all the yarn that hangs on it. Mr. Withington promises Mr. Shackleton that he will inform his congregation of the contents of Mrs. Bonner's letter. He does not promise more. But why not make a clean breast of it? Repentance and confession are good for the soul.

"Goodness! I do hope our young minister won't marry that Miss Strongmind." "I didn't think you took so much interest in him as to care very much." "I'm thinking of myself, that's all. If he marries her he'll never have a chance to talk except from the pulpit, and then we'll suffer."
—*Philadelphia Press*.

The Cohen Presentation Fund.

THERE are N. S. S. Branches that have not as yet contributed to this Fund, and I understand that some have subscriptions in hand. Will they kindly forward them to me for acknowledgment in these columns? Every acknowledgment is encouraging.

All who intend to subscribe should now be as prompt as possible. The holiday season is over; indeed, the winter is striding upon us rapidly; and several "saints" who have informed me that they "mean to give something" should remember that I am waiting to hear from them.

I have been waiting till the last minute to include the missing memorandum I referred to last week. It contained a list of a few subscriptions, not very many; and it has not turned up yet. I am pretty sure these few subscriptions came through Miss Vance; and, if that is the case, we can get the matter straightened by next week. In the meanwhile anyone who has seen no acknowledgment of his (or her) subscription is requested to let me know at once.

The following fresh subscriptions are acknowledged:—The Secular Society, Limited, £25, George Payne (*per Victor Roger*) £3 3s., G. J. Finlay 10s., M. Christopher 10s., J. Martin 7s. 6d.; *Glasgow*—Collected at Lecture £1 4s. 2½d., J. W. 2s. 6d., W. Smith 2s., Mrs. Black 5s., A Scotch Friend, £2; *West Ham*—E. Parker 5s., H. Pittman 1s., J. Gallery 1s., F. Goulding 1s., W. Manley 1s., C. Ivatts 2s. 6d., W. Taylor 1s., J. Morris 1s., A. Stevenson 1s., E. Pankhurst 1s., C. Curtis 1s., Mrs. High 1s., R. High 1s., (Ross, Wood, Tranter, Green, Laud, Riches, 6d. each) 2s. 6d. G. W. FOOTE.

JOHN WESLEY ON WITCHCRAFT.

"With my latest breath will I bear my testimony against giving up to Infidels one great proof of the invisible world; I mean that of witchcraft and apparitions, confirmed by the testimony of all ages. The English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment, which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them no such service. I take knowledge, these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised and with such insolence spread through the nation, in direct opposition not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up witchcraft is, in fact, giving up the Bible; and they know, on the other hand, that if but one account of the intercourse of men with separate spirits be admitted—their whole castle in the air—Deism, Theism, Materialism—falls to the ground."

SUNNY SHAKESPEARE.

Homer lies in sunshine; Chaucer is glad and erect; and Saadi says, "It was rumored abroad that I was penitent; but what had I to do with repentance?" Not less sovereign and cheerful—much more sovereign and cheerful, is the tone of Shakespeare. His name suggests joy and emancipation to the heart of men. If he should appear in any company of human souls, who would not march in his troop? He touches nothing that does not borrow health and longevity from his festal style.—*Emerson*.

GODS: OLD AND NEW.

I have never loved you, O ye Gods!
For not at all to my mind are the Greeks,
And the Romans I thoroughly hate;
Yet holy compassion and shuddering sympathy
Stream through my heart,
When I see you there above,
Desolate Gods,
Dead, night-wandering Shadows,
Frail clouds driven by the wind;
And when I reflect how dastardly, how windy
Are the Gods who vanquished you,
The new-reigning melancholy Gods,
The malignants in sheep's-clothing of humility,
Oh then I am seized with a sombre rage,
And would tear down the new temples.

—*Heine (James Thomson's translation),
"The Gods of Greece."*

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, October 11 (Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow): 12 noon, "How to Save the World"; 6.30, "The Doom of Religion: with Reference to Mr. Robert Blatchford's *Clarion* Articles."
 October 18, Camberwell; 25, Liverpool.
 November 1, Birmingham; 8, Queen's Hall, London; 15, South Shields.
 December 6, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton. Oct. 11, Camberwell; 25, Leicester.
- W. FERGUSSON.—(1) You ask who sells the *Pioneer* in Glasgow, and say you have tried several of the leading newsagents without being able to get a copy. You ought to be able to get it at Love's. You can always get it at Baxter's, 126 Trongate. (2) You ask for information as to the following, told you by a Christian:—"A reporter of the *Freethinker*, in an English town, having gone into one of Mr. Cutting's (Plymouth Brethren) evangelical meetings, for the purpose of getting material for an article, was so impressed by the preacher's words, that he stayed for the after-meeting and was converted." The story is an absolute fabrication. No writer in the *Freethinker* has ever been converted, in that or any other way. Moreover, the *Freethinker* never had a reporter. Ask that Christian to ask Mr. Cutting for the name of that remarkable convert, and the time and place of his conversion. Pious conversions, without name, place, or date, are as plentiful as blackberries. The trouble, always, is verification.
- J. G.—You misread the passage you query. The meeting was called to consider the population question, not Atheism, and our own speech—we hope as usual—dealt strictly with the subject. We never said that Professor Bain called himself an Atheist. He might easily have been one, though, for all that.
- W. SIMONS.—The article, a very good one, seems taken entirely from *Reynolds'*; still, we are glad to see it in a paper like the *Railway Times* (Bombay). Trade Unionism appears to be more outspoken in India than it is in England.
- G. WEIR.—Your letter shall have consideration. See "Sugar Plums" also.
- N. D.—Thanks for papers. See "Acid Drops." We read your letter with pleasure.
- F. S.—Accept our best thanks for cuttings.
- E. REDWOOD.—Mr. Foote's pamphlet, *Atheism and Morality*, might help you; also Mr. Cohen's *Outline of Evolutionary Ethics*. The first is 2d., the second 6d. You can obtain the N. S. S. manifesto on Secular Education from 2 Newcastle-street.
- D. L.—Thanks for the Poe extract, which may prove useful.
- J. W. GOTTE.—Stand firm. Let us know how it goes. Secularists should all unite to oppose sheer bigotry. Hope you are in health again.
- J. E. P.—Thanks for cuttings.
- C. D. THOMSON.—We are obliged.
- H. R. CLIFTON.—Noted. Thanks for kind offer, which shall be borne in mind.
- W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always welcome.
- M. B.—Absolutely literal translation is not always the best. "Appease" would be nearest, but "satisfy" is the classic term in atonement theology.
- WHITMORE LEDGER.—It is not easy to accede to your request. We hope some fellow-Freethinkers will make themselves known to you as you tour in Scotland with Rusbury's *Beautiful Fiend*. Best wishes.
- A. NOTLEY.—We don't see much difference. Would a few of the local "saints" be prepared to see to the arrangements if the hall you refer to were taken?
- J. HERRINGTON.—The progress of Freethought is not to be judged merely by the progress of Freethought organisation. It is a permeating influence, and is infecting the Churches.
- 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.
- 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.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectures twice to-day (Oct. 11), at 12 o'clock noon and 6.30 in the evening, at the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow, and will doubtless meet with his usual hearty reception there.

Mr. John Lloyd, having travelled from Presbyterianism to Secularism, appeared for the first time on a Secular platform last Sunday evening at Queen's Hall, London, and was introduced to the party by the President of the National Secular

Society. Mr. Foote explained from the chair why he devoted a Sunday evening to that object. He felt that Mr. Lloyd was doing a brave thing in leaving the security of a Christian pulpit for the precariousness of Freethought platforms. The change would entail upon him, not only financial loss, but the loss of friendships; and it was well, therefore, that the party he was now throwing in his lot with should give him the most generous welcome. Mr. Foote was there to do his own share, and he was glad to see so fine an audience evidently bent on the same object. He believed Mr. Lloyd was made of the right stuff, and he expected to be delighted by Mr. Lloyd's lecture. With that he called on the new lecturer to address the meeting. Mr. Lloyd, who was evidently a little nervous—as any man might be in such unusual circumstances—rose from his seat amidst a perfect storm of applause. When he was able to make a beginning, he did so in a voice that was tremulous with emotion; but he gathered confidence and strength as he proceeded, and long before the end he was speaking in the strong and moving tones of a natural orator. A very slight accent, due to his Welsh origin, only lent a certain *piquant* charm to his delivery. We cannot give a report of his lecture. We can only say that it was a capital effort, and we hope it will be repeated in many towns in Great Britain. There was a striking demonstration when Mr. Lloyd resumed his seat.

We earnestly hope the N. S. S. Branches will keep Mr. Lloyd busy during the present winter. They may take it from us—for it is a matter on which we know what we are talking about—that he is extremely well worth hearing; that he is no mere echo, but has a thoroughly individual style; that he has a gratifying mastery of his theme; and that those who hear him once will be anxious to hear him again. We state plainly and earnestly that we rejoice at this fresh accession to the strength of the Freethought platform.

Mr. Cohen opens the ball this evening (Oct. 11) at the Camberwell Secular Hall, where a course of three Sunday evening meetings are to take place under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. We hope the South London "saints" will do their best to get the hall filled. The second lecture will be delivered by Mr. Foote, and the third by Mr. John Lloyd.

The Queen's (Minor) Hall has been engaged by the Secular Society, Limited, for another course of Sunday evening lectures in November. Bills and other forms of announcement will be issued in due course. Efforts are also being made to obtain a suitable hall for a course of lectures in East London before Christmas. As it is impossible to secure a hall, at present, for Sunday evening lectures at West Ham, a week-night Demonstration is being arranged at the Stratford Town Hall. A course of Sunday evening lectures is being arranged for at South Shields. It is not intended to confine these propagandist efforts to the metropolis.

The South Shields lectures will be a considerable enterprise. The big Empire Music Hall has been engaged for three Sunday evenings at a heavy cost in rent, which will have to be supplemented by expensive advertising. The dates are November 15, 22, and 29, and the lecturers will be Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, and Mr. John Lloyd. Full details will appear shortly. In the meanwhile, Tyneside Freethinkers are desired to make a note of these meetings, with a view to giving them the greatest possible publicity, and thus helping to make them a grand success.

Mr. Cohen had capital audiences at Glasgow on Sunday, the evening meeting being the best he has yet had there. Some discussion was highly relished, and a number of new members were enrolled by the secretary. It was a good opening of the new season's work.

We have received a copy of the Annual Report for 1902-3 of the Glasgow Branch. It is a very healthy document. Thanks chiefly to a large subscription from an anonymous sympathiser there is a balance of £218 in hand. We note, too, that the work has been carried on with great vigor and success, and that the membership is now larger than it has ever been before. Money has been spent on introducing instrumental music before the lectures, and this has proved an attractive feature of the program. Outdoor propaganda was carried on during the summer, and Mr. Baxter, the Branch bookseller, attended all the meetings, and sold and distributed a large quantity of literature. Other N. S. S. Branches that would like to see the Glasgow Branch's report in full, could obtain one, we believe, by writing to the honorary secretary, Mr. T. Robertson, Battlefield-crescent, Langside, Glasgow. Perhaps, as Mr. Robertson's name is mentioned, we may say that much of the Branch's prosperity is due to his zeal and intelligence.

The Leeds Secularists do not mean to put up with the bigotry of the Town Council, which "refuses" them the "right" to sell literature at their meetings on Woodhouse Moor, while "granting" it to all other bodies—especially religious bodies. On Sunday last they just acted like other citizens. The consequence was a visit from detectives who demanded the name and address of the "person" who was selling Freethought literature. This was Mr. George Weir, who will be remembered by some of the Edinburgh "saints." We understand that a prosecution is threatened. But will it come off? We have no doubts. If it does, we hope the Leeds Secularists will stand as firm as a rock, and we shall be glad to render them any possible assistance.

Mr. J. W. de Caux ought to feel proud. It takes such a lot of Christians to answer him in the *Yarmouth Mercury*. Last week's issue of that impartial paper contained nothing from Mr. de Caux's pen, but five Christians took their turns in the discussion. One of them, an anonymous person, does not attempt to argue, but haughtily rebukes Mr. de Caux for shaking the faith of his fellow-creatures in God. Which God is not stated. Another Christian, called Marriott, seems capable of no greater intellectual effort than praying that Mr. de Caux may be led to find the blessed truth. The third Christian, signing himself W. T. G., simply quotes a chapter in the late Dean Farrar's book on *The Bible* without a word of acknowledgment. For the most part his letter consists of tributes to Christianity by more or less well-known Christians, which he appears to think ought to have great weight with Freethinkers. The fourth Christian, called Pearson, reminds Mr. de Caux that "where knowledge ends, God begins"; and it is evident that Mr. Pearson's God begins soon. The fifth Christian is the Rev. C. Lloyd Engström, formerly paid secretary, and now honorary secretary, of the Christian Evidence Society. Mr. Engström mentions the *Freethinker*, so we venture to favor him with a few plain words.

Mr. Engström is a very peculiar gentleman. It would require a Dickens to do him justice. He is the greatest professor of humility we ever met; at the same time he assumes, perhaps unconsciously, the most ridiculous airs of moral superiority. Although he is apt to speak of the feebleness of his own intellect, he is not slow to imply that he must be right and his opponents must be wrong; and he seldom scruples to affirm or suggest that those who do not see eye to eye with him are practically blind. It is impossible for him to write much on any subject without saying a good deal about himself; but he is so far impartial that he also makes gratuitous personal observations on his controversial antagonists. Indeed, he is rather fond of preaching at them; which is partly, perhaps, a professional weakness. He is not satisfied with carrying on his own side of a debate in his own way, but will also give advice how the other side should be carried on; which is the silliest (or most ill-mannered) thing a controversialist can do. It seems to us, likewise, that, while he almost flaunts his delicacy, he is capable of gross indelicacy.

When the *Yarmouth Mercury* arena was entered by Mr. Engström, in the soft, milky style he affects at first, we warned our friend Mr. de Caux against being too much off his guard. Mr. de Caux is a man of very open and sincere nature, and perfectly incapable of being anything but straightforward in act or speech. Many would seek his counsel in difficulty and his help in distress: no one would ever think of asking his assistance or connivance in anything dirty or mean. Now it is the natural tendency of such a man to be unsuspecting; and, when we saw from a public letter in the *Yarmouth Mercury* that he was likely to hear through the post from Mr. Engström, we quietly warned him against that gentleman's plausibilities. Our warning did not produce much effect; warnings seldom do; but we daresay the course of events has taught the lesson we wished to convey.

Mr. Engström did write to Mr. de Caux privately. We believe he was answered, and that several long letters passed between them. Presently it became Mr. Engström's policy to send another communication to the *Yarmouth Mercury*, and the first thing he said in it was that he had been having a private correspondence with Mr. de Caux. When we saw this we smiled. It was so like Mr. Engström—so delicate—so Christian! To a mere plain man of the world it would have been obvious that a private correspondence should be kept private. The mere mention of it in public destroys its privacy. Moreover, it may do a great deal of harm; for a partial truth is often very dangerous. It was open for anyone to infer, for instance, that Mr. de Caux had initiated the "private" correspondence, and to wonder whether he was confiding to Mr. Engström what he hesitated to publish. And the "delicacy" was still more

apparent when Mr. Engström referred in his public letter to things he had said, and arguments he had used, in his "private" communications.

Mr. Engström, in mentioning the *Freethinker*, refers to the "sweeping statements constantly made about Christians in that journal." This is what he regards as a proper reply to our statement that some of his own references to Mr. de Caux were "simply insolent." But at the most it simply amounts to "You're another," and is no sort of decent self-defence. Mr. Engström does, indeed, add that he "meant nothing offensive"—which is generally what a man *does* say when he *has* said something offensive. He only meant that Mr. de Caux was "Christian evidence blind." Yet in the very next sentence he disclaims "setting himself up as a standard"! But this "blind" talk, which is bad enough—since it is for the readers to judge the disputants, and not for the disputants to judge each other—is not the worst of Mr. Engström's offences. Mr. de Caux asked him, in perfectly courteous, gentlemanly language, to say what it was (if Adam never lived and therefore never fell) that he (Mr. de Caux) required to be saved from. Instead of answering that question honestly, Mr. Engström said this:—

"In conclusion, I answer his final question, 'From what do I need to be saved?'—At any rate from the spirit in which he writes letters to the *Yarmouth Mercury*." There the letter ended, and (we say again) the last sentence was "simply insolent." If Mr. Engström cannot see it, so much the worse for him—his case is hopeless.

Another of Mr. Engström's little indulgences was not only insolent, but contemptibly silly. Mr. de Caux had given a certain quotation (what it was doesn't matter) from Tertullian; and Mr. Engström replied, "I do not see the bearing of the quotation from Tertullian on my mode of reasoning." That was fair enough, if Mr. Engström had ended there. He could not help adding: "But I do see that Mr. de Caux's position is that of a *parti pris*." A grain of gumption would have saved Mr. Engström from such folly—and dangerous folly too. Mr. de Caux *has* taken a side; every man takes a side on such matters if he has the brains to think them out. But how about Mr. Engström? Has *he* not taken a side? The only difference we can see is this. Mr. de Caux loses, from a worldly point of view, by taking the side he does. Mr. Engström gets his living by taking the side *he* does. That is all.

The *Humanitarian* (organ of the Humanitarian League) for October reproduces what it calls some "pertinent remarks" on the beating of school children from the *Pioneer*. We thank our contemporary for its courtesy—perhaps we should say for its courage. It is a curious fact—or rather it is not so curious, when you think over it—that the *Pioneer* has been studiously ignored by all sorts and conditions of "organs." With the exception of a brief extract some months ago in *Reynolds'*, and this longer extract in the *Humanitarian*, we do not know of a single reference to any of the nine numbers of the *Pioneer*. Those who oppose *all* superstitions ought not, perhaps, to expect more recognition than this.

We see by the *Humanitarian* that Mr. Henry S. Salt, the honorary secretary of the Humanitarian League, tried to take part in the discussion raised in the *Daily News* by Mr. William Watson's lecture on Vivisection. Mr. Salt's disinterested services to the cause of humanity are appreciated by all who know him; and, if he has not earned the right to speak on humanitarian subjects, we should like to know who has. Yet the letter he wrote to the *Daily News* was refused insertion. Why? Probably because he protested, in passing, against Miss Cobbo's association of "atheism" with vivisection. The *Daily News* printed Miss Cobbo's libel, but would not print Mr. Salt's reply.

The Leicester Secular Society's second Bazaar closed on Wednesday, September 30, with a clear profit of over £150; and the sale of remaining stock will add to that welcome sum. Very considerable aid came from friends beyond the Leicester town boundary, e.g., London, Birmingham, Bristol, Tynemouth, Scotland, Bury, Bolton, Alston, Failsworth, Cheltenham, Newark, Brighton, Liscard, Stockport, Yarmouth, Peterborough, St. Neot's, Oldham, Cape Colony, etc. The secretary, Mr. F. J. Gould, reports that the Society feels greatly encouraged by this support from many quarters, and that the gift of £20 from the Secular Society, Ltd., was highly appreciated.

The Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, at its last meeting, voted a grant of £20 to the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society, which has upheld the Freethought flag in that city in the face of bitter persecution and great difficulties.

Are We Materialists?

WE who are Atheists in the negative portion of our beliefs and Secularists in the positive portion are commonly called Materialists. Ought we to accept the designation?

Whether we are Materialists or not will, of course, depend entirely on the meaning assigned to the term. According to various dictionaries, Materialism *denies* the independent existence of spirit. If so, a prudent Atheist cannot well be a Materialist, since he does not undertake to *deny* the existence of God, and God is alleged to be a spirit. The Atheist is simply without evidence or knowledge of the existence of such a being as God; and similarly he is without evidence of the existence of other spirits. But he will not *deny* the existence of immaterial beings, since he cannot undertake to prove their non-existence in every possible corner of the universe and at all periods of time, past, present and future. He leaves the burden of proof, and of definition of the meaning of their assertion, with those who allege that spirit exists.

Correcting this error concerning the *denial* of spirit, but otherwise adhering to the ordinary use of the term, we shall find that the essential feature of Materialism is disbelief in spirit, or, in other words, the rejection of Animism—the latter term signifying the doctrine of spirits or souls, which are alleged to be capable of existing independently of bodies, as in the case of ghosts, devils, gods, etc. If the word Materialism were fairly and honestly used in this sense, and in this sense only, I for one should feel no hesitation in calling myself a Materialist. But the word is *not* honestly and fairly used in this sense by our opponents, who, being in the majority, naturally have great influence in determining the practical significance of a term they apply to an unpopular minority whose protests and explanations are unheeded. And there are also other objections which may be urged against the unqualified adoption or acceptance of the term.

One objection to the word is that it is not properly distinctive. It refers to belief in matter. Now the Christian believes in matter quite as much as the Atheist does. He even intrudes his "gross materialism" into his "spiritual" world by making the "resurrection of the body" an essential doctrine of Christianity. Seeing that Christians and Atheists equally believe in matter, they are equally Materialists, unless we add some further meaning not expressed by the word itself. The addition of an unexpressed (and therefore more or less doubtful or disputable) meaning is undesirable. Making the word Materialism mean disbelief in spirit is like making the word Spiritualism signify disbelief in matter.

If the meaning of the word Materialism, moreover, were strictly limited to that which is actually embodied in the word, that is, to the belief in matter *only*, the term would apply to no one, since all who believe in matter believe equally in force and motion, together, of course, with consciousness, emotion, and mental phenomena in general. All these we regard as properties of matter, and not as separable entities, since we have never known them to exist apart from matter. But mental phenomena are identical with those that the Christian assigns to spirit. "Mind" is, in fact, the same as "spirit," except that the Christian more especially uses the latter term to convey the animistic assumption that the mind or soul or spirit of man is an independent or separable entity, which merely uses the body as its tool and temporary tabernacle.* If what we all

* The supposed action of soul or spirit on the brain or body is commonly compared to that of an organist playing on the keys of a complex mechanical organ. This comparison assumes a ludicrous aspect if we follow it up. For an organist playing on a keyboard is a *man*, and consequently (by the terms of the comparison) he consists in his turn of an organ and a player, and this player again consists of an organ and a player, and so on *ad infinitum*. We are merely presented with an infinite series of organs playing on each other, and there is no possibility of arriving at a final player.

speak of as "mind" is not spirit or soul, there is no part of human nature left which can be called spirit or soul. The supposed immortal part of man would therefore be simply nothing, or would be reduced to some vague and imaginary essence so divorced from all human senses and feelings and faculties and memories as to be indistinguishable from nothing except in name. The identity of mind and spirit is so far recognised by our opponents that they usually define Materialism as the denial or rejection of belief in the *independent* existence of spirit apart from body. Such definitions imply that Materialists believe in spirit in association with living bodies; and if mind is spirit, Materialists must, of course, believe in spirit. Spirit (from the Latin *spiro*, I breathe) was originally breath, life, mind, not necessarily surviving the body, though such a belief arose in course of time and developed into belief in personal immortality. As we believe in life, mind, etc. (but not necessarily that these are separable from organism), so we must believe in spirit so far as spirit is identical with mind, life, emotion, etc. All this tends to make the word Materialist an inadequate and unsatisfactory term, since it appears that we Anti-Animists are also Spiritualists in a certain degree.

On the other hand, Spiritualists are in a sense Materialists. Matter, we read, is "substance," and spirit is "spiritual substance"—being a finer, subtler kind of substance. Substance (from *sub*, under, and *sto*, I stand) is that which underlies phenomena or appearances. Matter (originally from *mater*, mother) has, of course, a similar significance. It is the source, or mother, of phenomena.

The gravest objection to the unqualified acceptance of the term Materialist is that an evil significance is attached to the term by religious persons and by the community in general. Human pride looks down upon matter as so much dirt or dross, and flatters itself that its own higher emotions and faculties are "spiritual" in their nature. Matter being thus contrasted with "spirit," and regarded as inherently base and contemptible, Materialism is supposed to mean the suppression or exclusion of the finer and loftier portions of human nature, and the Materialist is depicted as gross, earthy, sensual in his views and desires. This inexcusably malignant but almost universally accepted slander serves to cover the Materialist with odium in the eyes of the public, and so becomes an all-important means of preserving the superstitions of the multitude from the fatal dangers of a fair and open contest with the forces of reason. The association of the term with the lower motives of self-interest or appetite is current in our language and literature to such an extent that it really provides the chief meaning conveyed to the minds of ordinary hearers. Even where there is not the slightest intention to insult Materialists, the word "materialistic" is made to include only the less noble and less refined tendencies of human nature. This use or misuse of the term is supported by the similar use of the word "material" to signify "physical," as opposed to "moral and intellectual," as well as to "spiritual."

I have been assuming that "Materialism" signifies disbelief in spiritual or mental phenomena apart from material organism, and that it is therefore the converse of Animism or belief in spirit apart from body. But the word Materialism is also used in philosophical discussions as the converse of Idealism, which latter is by no means identical with Animism or Spiritualism. Christians and other believers in spirit are not usually Idealists; for they do not doubt the reality of matter, and they mostly have no belief in any of the theories which resolve the universe into ideas as the only existences. So far as the philosophical or metaphysical contrast

* Mr. Holyoake's teaching that Secularism relies *only* upon "material" means is as unfortunate as it is untrue. Secularism, as we all know, relies upon moral and intellectual means *as well as* "material" or physical means of improving human character and social conditions. In employing the term "material" to signify non-spiritual or non-theological, Mr. Holyoake forgot that the word equally serves as the converse of moral or mental.

between Materialism and Idealism is concerned, ordinary Christians are just as much Materialists as those at whom they fling the name as a term of abuse. On the other hand, Materialists have to admit that the ultimate nature of matter is unknown to us, and apparently unknowable, since we only recognise phenomena or appearances that appeal to the senses, while the *noumenon* or thing-in-itself eludes investigation. If we do not know what matter really is, how can we undertake to affirm that there can be no truth in any of the Idealistic views of matter? To affirm this would be to say that we *do* know something of the ultimate nature of matter. From reasons of this kind Huxley, for one, distinctly refused to call himself a Materialist. He preferred to assume the Agnostic position in metaphysics as in theology. I cannot agree that his decision is based on a mere quibble, as a writer in the *Reformer* alleges. While I acknowledge that we are all naturally and fundamentally Materialists (or Realists, as I should prefer to say) in practice, and that Idealistic theories are apparently only afterthoughts or fanciful fads rather than real or vital beliefs, I do not see that there is any necessity that a philosopher should *commit* himself to anything beyond the fact of our profound ignorance concerning the metaphysical problem of the ultimate nature and reality of matter. The "mystery of matter" may be impenetrable. The latest theories of the structure of atoms, such as those propounded by Sir Oliver Lodge,* seem only to deepen that mystery both in its physical and metaphysical aspects. Our intelligence is limited and not always to be trusted in such abstruse inquiries. The ultimate truth may possibly be something undreamt of in the philosophy of either party. It might even be incomprehensible and unrepresentable to human intellects.

To prevent possible misunderstanding, I may say that I do not believe in the slightest degree in the unreality of matter. I find myself unable to accept either idealistic or immaterialistic theories or explanations of the material universe. I cannot imagine that things are only ideas or "thinks," and I cannot conceive that motion or energy can be the basis of matter any more than I can suppose that spiritual energy can create or destroy matter. Neither can I believe in Professor Clifford's "mind-stuff," of which a little was supposed to be attached to every atom. Such conceptions, like that which gives life to all matter, are amusing to me without being in the least convincing. But, at the same time, I am not satisfied with the kind of Materialism which asserts that the Universe consists only of matter and force. I cannot classify consciousness in either category: it is to me as much a mystery as the ultimate nature of matter. Forces, such as heat, light, electricity, etc., being modes of motion, are convertible into each other in constant and exact proportions. Consciousness *depends* on expenditure of force supplied by the food consumed. It thus represents an equivalent in physical forces, which to all appearance are transformed into psychical forces or feelings as a temporary phase or special form of their activity. Nevertheless, I find myself no more able to regard consciousness as a mode of motion than I am able to believe that it is a finer or subtler kind of substance or matter or "mind-stuff." I agree, however, that consciousness, like life, is a property of matter, or rather of certain special arrangements and conditions of matter. If this view constitutes Materialism, then I and those who think with me are, of course, Materialists.

Haeckel, who is thoroughly Atheistic in his views, rejects "Materialism," and adopts the term "Monism." He identifies Spirit with Energy, and regards the

universe as one universal substance or essence, of which Matter and Spirit (or Energy) are the two fundamental attributes or principal properties.

The various considerations I have mentioned lead me to the conclusion that "Materialism" is not a word to be welcomed by us. I think it ought never to be accepted without due qualifications and reservations; and, as these will almost inevitably be ignored by our opponents, the term will still remain an unsafe and unsatisfactory one. Our wisest policy, I think, will be to avoid using the term as far as possible. If we admit the word in discussion or otherwise, we should rigidly insist on its use being confined to a definition which must be agreed upon before we commit ourselves even to a temporary acceptance of a term so liable to abuse.

W. P. BALL.

Correspondence.

THE EDUCATION QUESTION AND MUNICIPAL POLITICS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—At the close of your lecture at the Manchester Secular Hall last Sunday afternoon I offered the opinion that the handing over of the Board School system to the various Town Councils was a dangerous step, inasmuch as a disturbing element was now introduced into the selection of representatives on municipal bodies.

In the *Daily Dispatch* of to-day I read that the Free Church Council of South Manchester has appointed a deputation of four to submit certain specified questions to candidates for municipal honors. Free Churchmen are authorised to *withhold support from candidates who did not give affirmative replies*. This is a "disturbing element" with a vengeance. Apparently, the test of a would-be Councillor is not his capacity for beneficial civic administration. He must stand or fall by his willingness or otherwise to support the interests of a particular phase of religious belief. Under the present arrangement it is quite possible for me to be called upon to support a candidate who is in favor of secular education, but is utterly reactionary upon the housing question (which I regard as being equally vital); or to reject another candidate who is "sectarian" on religious matters, but favors my ideas upon housing and similar municipal topics.

I submit, Mr. Editor, that the present Act "makes confusion worse confounded."

W. SANDERS.

Manchester, Sept. 28.

[The chief aim of life is not quietude—even in English municipalities. These "disturbing influences" are bound to occur when great principles are being fought out. Moreover, to end a thing you must make a beginning; and we are rather glad that religious education in the public schools has ceased to be a family arrangement between Christians, to the detriment of all other parties. We conceive it possible that, in the long run, the forcing of the religious difficulty into the open will tend to make the general public disgusted with it. And that will mean a victory for Secular Education.—EDITOR.]

TIT FOR TAT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—When the Christians invite you to return to religion you say "No! I will have my own way." The Christians reply, "Oh! then *we* will have our own way;" consequently, whilst the battle is raging, it is futile and illogical to expect that they will carry your dispatches.

My plan to win over newsagents is easy and not unpleasant. Go to a shop for four or five nights and buy a paper; have something to say each time to the person serving, then inquire, "Do you sell the *Freethinker*?" No! is the invariable answer; generally they have never heard of the *Freethinker*; one lady in South Molton-street said, "Is it a bicycle paper?" Hitherto she had been open and "chatty," but when I described the publication she looked down her nose, and spoke not another word.

A man in Chadwell-street, who praised the good intentions of Mr. Bradlaugh and yourself, upon my offering to give him six copies per week for a fortnight if he would exhibit a contents sheet, changed his tone directly, and mumbled, "I wouldn't have the thing in my place." Another shopkeeper said, "I shouldn't like my children to see a paper of that description." It is similar when travelling, or at an hotel, people will converse freely, but the slightest indication of unbelief scares them at once—both educated and ignorant.

* He suggests that each chemical "atom" consists of a large number (some 700 in the case of the hydrogen atom, and 160,000 in the case of radium) of "electrons" in rapid revolution round each other. These electrons he further supposes to be concentrated charges of electricity *without any material basis*. However incredible this latter suggestion may seem to us, it may perhaps be as well to keep an open and hospitable mind, and not to feel absolutely certain that our present ideas of matter may never be revolutionised.

At Salisbury I met a young gentleman who was fishing in the River Avon; after my exchanging a few words with him re angling, he told me that he was a curate at Fisherton Church. I quickly offered a few puzzling questions, to which he listened attentively, and then said, "Dear me! Are you an Atheist?" "I am!" (*ecce homo*). "Well, now, this is remarkable; of course, I have heard of Atheists, but have never seen one [*rara avis*, following the dodo] before, to my knowledge. I'll not attempt to answer your questions, but, if you could call at the vicarage at five o'clock this afternoon, I shall be there, and would gladly introduce you to the vicar, who is so much more capable and experienced than myself." Not desiring a sermon I did not go.

GEORGE JACOB.

[We have previously replied to the point in the first paragraph of this letter. A newsagent, in his shop, is not a Christian apostle, but a man of business. There should be something to indicate the fact, if he only sells what he likes reading himself.—EDITOR.]

OUTDOOR PROPAGANDA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On the 27th ult., the Bethnal Green Branch, of which I have the honor to be chairman, closed its season's outdoor propaganda with a lecture by Mr. E. B. Rose. He drew a fairly large audience in spite of the inclement weather, and had obviously succeeded in interesting his auditors. Just towards the close, a Midland Freethinker, whose name I need not mention, came up to our platform, bought a copy of the *Freethinker* and practically walked away with the audience by commencing on "his own" a little way down. I do not say he did no good in his own way, or that he had no right to do what he did, but I do think it was ungenerous not to wait until our meeting was over. After all, an outdoor speaker must have his wits about him to be able to hold an audience for an hour, especially when the weather is far from satisfactory; he also labors to bring home to his auditors the point of his address which is usually at the close; moreover, and I do not hesitate to mention it, the collection to the Branch, which is supported by working-men, is an important item to be reckoned with, and to have all this frustrated by one of "our own" is far from pleasing. I do hope the gentleman in question did this thoughtlessly, and, if so, he has my forgiveness; but I sincerely trust that Freethinkers generally will refrain in future from "holding forth" to circles of people, at least, in the immediate vicinity of the platform. I admit that haphazard discussion does good, but regard should be had for those of us who help to carry on our propaganda systematically, and very often under trying and discouraging circumstances.

HY. SILVERSTEIN.

TORREY AND INGERSOLL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Dr. Torrey, in his course of evangelistic entertainments in this city, included two addresses to business men, on the causes and cure of "infidelity."

I attended at the City Hall, Eberle-street, on Tuesday and Wednesday last to hear the Yankee savior's views on this subject, and learned that almost all cases of "infidelity" might be attributed to one at least of the following five causes, viz., misrepresentation (either of biblical teaching and interpretation, or of true Christianity by the inconsistent conduct of professed Christians), ignorance of the Bible, conceit, sin, resistance to the spirit of God.

On Tuesday evening I wrote to Dr. Torrey a letter, in which I gave the names of several men whose life records I thought would justify us in seeking elsewhere than in the above list for an explanation of their "infidelity." The names were—John Morley, Charles Bradlaugh, Professor Haeckel, Charles Darwin, Professor Huxley, Colonel Ingersoll, and Thomas Paine.

On Wednesday Dr. Torrey read out my letter, and replying to it, made reference first to Haeckel, whose writings, he said, indicated the Professor's complete ignorance of the Bible. Then of Darwin, he stated that this great man had declared that at one time he resisted the spirit of God lest it should interfere with his scientific labors. Huxley, we were told, was not remarkable for candor, as anyone reading his works would discover. Ingersoll also, was found guilty of complete ignorance of the Bible, whilst Thomas Paine, according to the wonderful Doctor, "ran away to Paris with another man's wife, and eventually died in America, leaving her deprived of all hope."

It is significant that the names of Bradlaugh and Morley were passed over without any remark, perhaps because their

reputations are too popularly known in England to be tampered with.

Proceeding with his lecture Dr. Torrey made a further statement regarding Ingersoll, who, he said, had been charged with assisting in the dissemination of obscene literature in America, and having instituted an action for libel, wished the case to be tried in private. On his request being refused, said Dr. Torrey, Ingersoll withdrew the case.

It would be a great pleasure and advantage to myself, and doubtless to others, to read any remarks you may make upon these utterances, throughout the whole of which no instance was quoted, nor reference to any authority given. Simply bald statement and nothing else. Of the story of Ingersoll and the libel case, will you state the true facts of the case, if such case there was?

Perhaps you will devote at least a good, substantial "acid drop" to this matter.

WILLIAM CAIN.

[Evangelist Torrey's lie about Thomas Paine is characteristic of his profession. We have not the slightest doubt that he also lies about Ingersoll. If what he says were true, we should have heard of it before; certainly the story looks ridiculous. Ingersoll was a lawyer himself, and when were libel actions tried in private? We advise Mr. Cain to write Evangelist Torrey another letter and ask him for particulars. If he does not supply them, we will try to carry the matter further.—EDITOR.]

The Ways of Piety.

(By the Paris Correspondent of the "Daily News.")

A SENSATIONAL case of embezzlement by nuns has come to light. I am not alluding to the malversations at the Naval hospitals of Toulon discovered last week, when M. Camille Pelletan learned that for years the nursing nuns had been in the habit of carrying off to their convent bales of new goods, the property of the State.

The case I wish to speak of has occurred in the private hospital of the famous Paris surgeon, Professor Doyen—a name which ranks in modern surgery along with those of Sir Morell Mackenzie, Péan, Bergmann, Esmarch, etc. Professor Doyen had handed over the whole administration of his clinic to the nuns, the cares of his profession leaving him no time to look after his own accounts.

Some months ago, he noticed that, although his practice kept increasing every year, his profits kept decreasing. He appointed a professional accountant to go over his books. After a week's investigation, this accountant demonstrated by "a plus b," as the French say, that within the last five years a sum of at least £12,000 had been embezzled. He satisfied himself, moreover, that a further £12,000 was unaccounted for, but the proof of this could not be established mathematically.

Professor Doyen, enraged at the manner in which the nuns had abused his confidence, and still more angry with them, possibly, for having shattered some of his fondest beliefs, was about to prosecute them. But he was stopped by the fear of scandal (the Professor could hardly afford to offend his aristocratic patients). Some days ago, he wrote to the "Mother" Superior of the nuns a curt and peremptory letter declaring that if "within forty-eight hours the stolen £12,000 about the embezzlement of which no manner of doubt was possible were not returned, he would institute criminal proceedings." Two days later the Professor received a registered letter containing a cheque for £8,000, but the nuns have undertaken to pay him the balance as soon as they can raise the money.

Professor Doyen, afraid of incurring the animadversions of the Clerical Party, has replied to all interviewers that "the particulars about the Nuns of the Holy Family were not supplied to the papers by him." He adds that "the nuns have ceased to have the management of his clinic for some time, and that his accounts with them have not yet been settled in full."

The Nuns of the Holy Family are a wealthy Order, their chief establishment being at Bordeaux. They nurse wealthy patients and a few poor ones. The Mother Superior, interviewed, gives an "explanation" which is a confession. She begins by stating that the nuns left Dr. Doyen's service as poor as when they entered it. This vow of poverty enables nuns to thieve with a clear conscience, since they do it for their Order. Any member of an Italian "Mafia" might use the same argument.

The "Mother" admits that the accounts were somewhat loosely kept. "But," she says, "in order to avoid actions at law, which are always to be deplored, she sent Professor Doyen a cheque for 200,000 francs."

She adds, with true Christian charity, "that she is not angry with the Professor for what has happened, and that the nuns are ready to return to his service if wanted."

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.

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, Chapman Cohen, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?"

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Stanley's Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney): 7.30, R. P. Edwards, "The Triumph of Rationalism."

FINSBURY PARK DEBATING SOCIETY (Hope Coffee Tavern, Font-hill-road, N.): 7, J. McNichol, "Nonconformist Humbug and the Eastern Question."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, W. Sanders, "Life and Labor in London."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. W. Sullivan, "Julian the Apostate."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Jeremy Bentham."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Harringay Park Station): 7, Arthur B. Moss, "The Gospel of Evolution."

OUTDOOR

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

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, E. B. Rose.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, G. Parsons will lecture.

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (Town Hall-square): Sunday, October 11, at 11, Ernest Pack, "Our New Fight in Leeds." Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, October 15, 16, and 17, at 7, Ernest Pack.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, J. D. Crawford, "Charles Darwin."

FALLSWORTH (Secular Sunday-school): 6.30, H. Percy Ward, "Immortality and Science." Monday night, at 8, "Joseph's Dream: a Criticism of Chamberlain's Fiscal Policy."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): G. W. Foote, 12, "How to Save the World"; 6.30, "The Doom of Religion: with Reference to Mr. Robert Blatchford's *Clarion* Articles."

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): Ernest Pack, 3, "Free Speech and a Free Press"; 6, "Is Our Literature Indecent?"

LEEDS (Vicar's Croft): Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, 12, 13, 14, Ernest Pack, 7.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, Percy Redfern, "Socialism: its Strength and Weakness."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Reading; 7.30, Lectures.

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