

THE
Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*The vilest thing must be less vile than Thou
From whom it had its being, God and Lord!
Creator of all woe and sin! abhorred,
Malignant and implacable! I vow*

*That not for all Thy power furl'd and unfurl'd,
For all the temples to Thy glory built,
Would I assume the ignominious guilt
Of having made such men in such a world.*

JAMES THOMSON ("B.V.") "The City
of Dreadful Night."

Gladstone and Ingersoll.

THE wisest motto in the world for Freethinkers is "Never trust a Christian." We mean, of course, as a Christian. As a man—a son, a husband, a father, a friend, a neighbor, a citizen—he may be above reproach; but as a Christian, and in relation to a Freethinker as a Freethinker, he is not to be trusted; or, rather, he is to be trusted to act meanly, shabbily, and treacherously. There is a point where the very best Christian's manhood will break down under the pressure of his faith. Men of the finest personal character have been known to lie and rob and murder for the sake of their religion. It is said that some of the Spanish Inquisitors, who ordered and supervised the most terrible torture of heretics, were humane, benevolent men in the ordinary affairs of life.

Having for many years laid this truth to heart, we are not surprised to hear that the late Mr. Gladstone—the Grand Old Man of British Liberalism—was capable of disgusting insolence and hypocrisy in regard to the late Colonel Ingersoll. This may sound strong language, but its strength will probably not seem excessive by the time we have finished.

The October number of the *New York Critic* contains an article on Mr. Gladstone. Reference is made to the passage of arms between Gladstone and Ingersoll in the *North American Review*, and then the writer proceeds as follows:—

"Some time afterwards Mr. Gladstone said to me: 'I wish I had not written that article on Mr. Ingersoll. I feel as if I had had a tussle with a chimney-sweep. I understand that he has been sent to gaol for sending improper books through the mails.' I hastened to correct him, and to assure him of 'the Colonel's' blameless moral character. He listened, and with a sweep of emphatic magnanimity which was amusing, declared: 'Then I shall never say another word about it.'"

Before we criticise this remarkable outburst of Christian virtue on Mr. Gladstone's part, let us see what were the real facts of that passage of arms in the *North American Review*.

Ingersoll had written several articles for that review, which was, and still is, of the first distinction in America; and his contributions had excited such interest that one of them sent the number in which it appeared into ten editions. It was felt that something should be done to stop his victorious career. Judge Black stepped forward to oppose him, fought one round, and did not stand up for a second. Subsequently the Rev. Dr. Field entered the lists; he was a personal acquaintance of Ingersoll's, and

was delicately, yet firmly, handled. Excitement ran high. What was to be done next; if the resources of America were exhausted, there still remained the resources of England. Mr. Gladstone and Cardinal Manning both joined in the fray. We do not know whether they volunteered or were enlisted. It was publicly stated, however, that Mr. Gladstone was paid £100 for his article, and we dare say Cardinal Manning did not work for nothing.

Ingersoll replied to both these distinguished opponents. His replies were republished at the *Freethinker* office, and are still obtainable there. They are masterly pieces of controversial literature. From an intellectual and artistic point of view their superiority to the articles of his opponents is incontestable. We would even say it is obvious. Ingersoll laid himself out and let himself go. It was, in one sense, the opportunity of his life, and he made the most of it. He was then in the prime of his powers, and he poured forth argument, philosophy, wit, sarcasm, irony, pathos, beautiful rhetoric, and something higher than the most beautiful rhetoric, in exuberant profusion. There are purple patches in his reply to Gladstone that would have made the fortune of a dozen orthodox writers. The great English statesman and the great English cardinal looked poor and starved in comparison with him. Gladstone had a reputation for eloquence; but, in that encounter—and we need not go beyond it—his eloquence was to Ingersoll's as a pump to a fountain. Here the water was brought up laboriously; there it leapt forth like a living thing rejoicing in the daylight.

So much for the controversy itself. And now let it be recollected that Ingersoll did not challenge Gladstone, did not invite him, did not offer a suggestion that he should enter the debate. He never referred to him, never alluded to him. Gladstone entered the debate, as the saying is, of his own free will. He wanted to slay the infidel or to earn that £100. In either case, Ingersoll did not seek out Gladstone; Gladstone sought out Ingersoll; and, how mean it was to speak of him with extravagant contempt afterwards!

But this is not all, nor even the worst. Mr. Gladstone said, in the *North American Review* article, that "Colonel Ingersoll writes with a rare and enviable brilliance." That is what he said of Ingersoll publicly. Privately, it appears, he compared Ingersoll to a chimney-sweep. Yet there are millions of people who will go on calling Mr. Gladstone a perfect Christian gentleman. And perhaps he was.

Gladstone had the impudence to say he "understood" that Ingersoll had "been sent to gaol for sending improper books through the mails." This was going one better than Evangelist Torrey, whose defamatory statement about Ingersoll we dealt with last week. Gladstone "understood" that Ingersoll had been sent to gaol. *Understood!* Could he not ascertain? It would not have been difficult to obtain information, for men like Ingersoll are not sent to gaol in haste and obscurity. Why did not Gladstone make inquiries? The only answer we can think of is this: it was easy for Gladstone, like other Christians, to believe any tale to the discredit of a Freethinker.

When the American visitor disabused Gladstone, and told him of Ingersoll's blameless moral character,

there was a fine opportunity for regret and reparation. But all that the Christian gentleman could find to say was: "Then I shall never say another word about it." The American visitor found this "magnanimity" of Gladstone "amusing." So it was. But it was also contemptible.

Personally, we are not astonished at this "magnanimity." Gladstone assumed a superior tone in his discussion with Ingersoll. He seemed to think that he had a right to lecture his opponent. Perhaps he presumed on his age, perhaps he presumed on his position, perhaps he presumed on his British birth. Perhaps he only presumed on his Christianity. He forgot that eminent Freethinkers, who do not happen to be tuft-hunters, are no longer flattered by Christian condescension. He overlooked the fact that Ingersoll had a great position in America, that he stood out from and above the crowd of politicians and preachers, that he was indebted to nothing adventitious, that he was an institution in himself.

Now let the editorial "we" be dropped. Let me address my readers in the first person singular, as what I am now going to say is personal.

I do not think I have ever said it before, at least publicly; but I will say it publicly now, since I hear that Gladstone spoke of Ingersoll as "a chimney-sweep." For I loved Ingersoll, and do love him, and shall love him while I can remember and feel.

Gladstone was the person most of all responsible for my being kept in prison, twenty years ago, until the whole of Judge North's sentence expired. Had it not been for Mr. Gladstone I should in all probability have been released at the end of the first three months of my sentence, instead of "serving," as they call it, the whole twelve months.

Let me explain this matter. There was a great outcry against my trial and sentence. It was felt that Mr. Justice North had acted on the bench less as a judge than as a Roman Catholic. He could not conceal his delight at having me in his power. It is well known that Lord Chief Justice Coleridge was very angry at the way in which my trial had been conducted, and shocked to learn, as he did from Colonel Milman, the Governor of Holloway Prison, that I was ordered to be treated like a common felon. And it is an indisputable fact that Mr. Justice North never tried another prisoner. He was shifted immediately to the Chancery division. Nor was this all. It was widely felt that the Blasphemy Laws were an anachronism, and that I ought not to remain in prison another day. A memorial for my immediate release was signed by many of the leaders of science, philosophy, art, and literature in England. But no reply was vouchsafed to it; and when at last the matter was raised in the House of Commons the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, had the impudence to say that I was in prison for "obscenity," although I was indicted, tried, and sentenced for "blasphemy," and although Lord Coleridge had gone out of his way to second my protest against the application of such terms as "indecent" and "obscene" to my case. Sir William Harcourt, however, chose to take the position that I was sent to prison for one offence, and should be kept there for another; he himself filling the rôle of prosecutor, witness, jury, judge and gaoler. And be it said, to their infamy, that there were millions of Christians in England who saw nothing wrong in such a proceeding.

Now the question arose, why did Sir William Harcourt act in that way? He was not reputed to be a religious fanatic; and when, before my prosecution, he was asked in the House of Commons why the authorities did not take steps to suppress the *Freethinker*, he replied that press offences of that kind should be left to the tribunal of public opinion. What then was the explanation of Sir William Harcourt's amazing attitude? I could not understand it. I thought he might be pandering to the bigotry of others, for I had no high opinion of his character. By "others" I mean the mob of Christians of all Churches. Little did I think, at the

time, that it was one man's bigotry he was pandering to. I subsequently learnt that Gladstone was implacably opposed to my release. I had attacked Christianity as other publicists attacked Conservatism, Liberalism, or Socialism, and he considered it terribly shocking. He would not hear of my sentence being reduced by a single day. So I was assured by Charles Bradlaugh, and afterwards by others, who represented it as an open secret in the House of Commons lobbies. And I confess it filled me with ineffable disdain. I should have had more respect for Gladstone if he had spoken out and taken the public odium of his intolerance. It seemed a mean thing to strike at a man without any personal provocation, and to strike at him from a secret place of shelter while he was helpless, unable to defend himself, and even unaware of the identity of his assailant.

I am quite willing to believe that Gladstone was a gentleman in the common business and pleasures of life. His sense of justice and fair play broke down under the pressure of his religious faith. I understand it, and I have more pity than anger for him now. I have even a feeling of satisfaction that I was indebted to the Christians for nothing, that I received no favor at their hands, and that I bore my sentence to the very last hour. But I also feel that I have a right to close this article with the word of warning I commenced with. And I repeat that the wisest of all mottoes for a Freethinker is: "Never trust a Christian."

G. W. FOOTE.

Has Christianity Failed?

PRESUMABLY the Bishop of London prays. In public he does, of course, and it will be charitable to assume that he also prays in private. And, on that assumption, one may paraphrase a passage of Sir Thomas Browne's, and advise him that, in thanking Providence for its manifold blessings, not the least for which he should return thanks is the East-end of London. For this really appears to be his chief topic, and principal claim to notice. A few years' residence in the East-end, a solitary, and by no means successful, appearance on a Secular platform, has enabled him to go through the country dilating upon his *almost* unique experience among the poor, and to pose as a terrible antagonist to East-end Secularism, which however appears to bear his absence with the same equanimity as it did his presence.

The Church Congress at Bristol held a meeting for working-men, and the gathering was addressed by such stalwart proletariats as Colonel Seton Churchill, the Rev. T. Boughton, the Bishop of Bristol, and the Bishop of London. As the last two gentlemen receive an annual stipend of £3,000 and £10,000, only their interest in such questions as old-age pensions is probably not untouched by some anxiety concerning the declining years of their own lives.

Being a working-man, the Bishop of London took as his text the question, "Has Christianity Failed?" And this certainly *was* of interest—to him. With a fine stroke of humor he remarked that the meeting, with its liberal sprinkling of clergy, made him feel that he was back again in East London; which reminds one of what a wit said of the somnolent appearance of the House of Lords—that he would have fancied himself in heaven had it not been for the bench of bishops.

The Bishop pictures to himself "some keen, intelligent Secularist," such as he used to meet in the East-end, advancing arguments to prove that Christianity had failed, and then he is thoughtful enough to provide his fellow-bishops and brother clergy with a reply. The questions put by the Bishop into this "keen, intelligent" Secularist's mouth might have been better framed, for, as Mr. Ingram puts them, they are anything but incontestible proofs of either keenness or intelligence. In the first, the Secularist is assumed to point to the fact of Christian Europe permitting the Turk to butcher Macedonians as one

proof of Christianity's failure, and the Bishop admits he has scored a point here. I imagine a Secularist's comment would be of a very different kind. So far as the religion of the Mohammedan leads him to hate and ill-treat the Christian, the Secularist *would* point to this as a clear proof of the demoralising effect of religious beliefs, whether they be Christian or non-Christian. And, having done this, he would proceed to point out that, if it comes to a question of savagery resulting from religious convictions, there is nothing to choose between the Mohammedan and the Christian. The fact of the Greek Exarchists welcoming the Turk when they are killing the members of a rival Christian body, seems to show that, if the Turk is removed, pretty much the same thing would occur with the rival Christians. And at least the record of the Mohammedan for religious toleration is infinitely better than that of the Christian. And the Secularist might also point out that, seeing that millions of Jews are experiencing outrage and murder in a neighboring Christian country *without* their being in armed rebellion, and that in other neighboring Christian countries Jews are ill-treated and deprived of civil and political rights, without these things stirring up the indignation of Christian leaders, it would seem that religious hatred and the love of advertising has far more to do with the outcry than a pure sense of justice or love of humanity.

Next the bishop thinks that the quarrel between Churchmen and Nonconformists over the Education Act is a further proof of the failure of the Gospel. And here I can assure the bishop that no Secularist would ever dream of making such an absurd statement; and really the bishop's *extensive* acquaintance with Secularists (one almost suspects it has no existence outside his imagination) ought to have told him better than this. This is not a proof of the failure of Christianity, but of its intense activity. No Secularist expects Christianity to stop people quarrelling; quite the reverse. So long as Christians have existed they have quarrelled, and they will only cease when their numbers no longer admit of division. And the row over what is facetiously called education is quite what every Secularist expects. For this is only a row as to which shall capture the children, and so train up adult customers for their respective spiritual emporiums. The point the Secularist would make would be that this religious squabble obstructs the real education and development of the country, it forces teachers to do what the clergy are too lazy or unable to do, and it obtrudes State action into a sphere where it has no right to operate. And he might add that in forcing upon children religious dogmas that at best rest upon uncertain grounds, and may be thrown overboard altogether in the course of a few generations, even parents are hardly discharging their obligations in the most intelligent manner. The bishop's Secularist, in short, talks—like the bishop—which is anything but a compliment, to the Secularist.

Mr. Ingram came very near touching a genuine point in instancing the results of Mr. Charles Booth's investigations as furnishing an argument against Christianity. But here, again, with his customary dexterity in avoiding a wholly sensible statement, it resolves itself into the figures of church attendance. The bishop's interest is obviously a business one.

Now it is quite probable that the small attendance at Christian places of worship would be used as an argument to prove that people were not, in the mass, impressed with the importance of Christianity. But a "keen, intelligent" Secularist would hardly be likely to stop at this point. He would go on to point out that Mr. Booth's books demonstrate the absolute helplessness of Christianity to banish distress and misery from our midst, and the necessity of turning to other sources for help and improvement. A Secularist would point out that all the misery depicted by Mr. Booth is the product of a society that has been under Christian influences for centuries, that this religion has enjoyed the possession of huge sums of money, of great influence, and still the

misery remains. He would point out that in any matter of reform or of scientific advancement, the strongest enemy has always been organised Christianity. That the Church of which Mr. Ingram is a member, by its own vested interests in land, mining royalties, and the like, is helping to preserve the ultimate source of much of the people's embarrassment. And, lastly, that the whole game of religion, from an economic or social standpoint, is to withdraw attention and energy from social matters, and so conserve and perpetuate all the sinister interests of the country.

And he might even go further, and point out that what the Churches understand by social improvement is not improvement at all. It is not social improvement to open soup kitchens, to distribute coals and blankets, or to found numerous "charitable" agencies for the maintenance of missionaries and armies of district visitors. Nor is it social improvement that a Bishop in the chrysalis stage can live for awhile in the East-end—but not like the East-end—and afterwards parade the wonderful discovery that the people who inhabit that quarter are actually human beings! If the Bishop had pointed out for the Secularist—or had enabled some Secularist to do it for himself—that in his opinion social reform could only come by a heightening of the national intelligence and an economising of the national energy, by spending upon earth what is now spent on heaven, and that these religious charities were only so many commercial agencies touting for customers, with charity as a bribe—if all this had been pointed out, he would really have said what a Secularist would say, and have uttered something sensible. But that would have spoilt his record, and doubtless disappointed his admirers.

After having put the objections of the Secularist in his own peculiar manner, the Bishop of London proceeds to advance one or two proofs (?) that Christianity has *not* failed. The principal point here is that Christianity satisfies the conscience. Whose conscience? It does not satisfy that of the "keen, intelligent" Secularists whom he met for "several years," or they would not have remained outside the Church. It did not, and does not, satisfy the many hundreds of thousands of people who are not Christians in this country, to say nothing of those outside. Who, then, does it satisfy? Well, it satisfies—those whom it satisfies! And who on earth ever questioned this? And the man who can parade this piece of unmitigated stupidity is one of the leading representatives of English Christianity, with a salary of ten thousand a year!

If this is not enough, Mr. Ingram would take the Secularist to the case of a man—an actual case, so he says—whose three children died during the half hour the Bishop was with him. He seems as fatal as a pestilence. "What would you do in this case?" he asks. He could not talk to them of the philosophy of Plato or Aristotle, but he told the parents of the Good Shepherd who had picked up the lambs in his arms and carried them to heaven. Well, one is quite willing to believe that men and women who had been nurtured on this kind of stuff would be pleased at hearing it on such an occasion. But, case for case, I think I could introduce Mr. Ingram to parents who would tell him that this reiteration of an old-world fable could give them no kind of comfort whatever; that their consolation lay, if anywhere, in the thought that they had striven their best to make their children bright and intelligent and happy while they were alive, and, whatever their own sorrow might be, their philosophy of life enabled them to see that life was not robbed of its duties because death had taken from them one they loved, and that to them the living world of men and women, the silent hand-clasp and gentle word of help, did more than all the forms of religion could hope to do. And one would like to know what the Bishop makes of these cases? Surely anyone but a bishop could see that in each case there is an accommodation of feelings to beliefs,

and their value as evidence of accuracy of belief is positively *nil*.

Finally, the Bishop wound up his discourse with a discovery. The way to get rid of all difficulties in religion was to believe in Jesus. If all the people in Bristol believed in Christianity, Bristol would be a great Christian city. Exactly. The only difficulty in the way is that all the people in Bristol do not, and will not, believe in Christianity, and there are difficulties—insuperable difficulties—in the way of people believing in Jesus. The Bishop either does not, or will not, know what these difficulties are. But the world at large knows them, and becomes increasingly alive to their weight. They are latent in our literature, our art, our science, in the very air we breathe. And the combined efforts of the Christian clergy are powerless in the face of a force all the more powerful because so largely impalpable.

C. COHEN.

Pluralism and Nepotism.

THE leading article in the *Freethinker* for October 25 was in the highest degree suggestive. Some might resent the title, "Paying Imposture"; but it is incontrovertible that the statements made are only too true. There are good men in prominent positions in the various denominations; but that their goodness is the outcome of Christianity is open to serious doubt. History furnishes us with a long list of thoroughly good and noble men and women who were not Christians, while it leaves no doubt of the fact that myriads of the worst people that ever lived held high and distinguished offices in the Christian Church. One is sometimes tempted to suggest that many are virtuous and honorable *in spite* of their profession of religion. At any rate, it is beyond controversy that high-placed ecclesiastics do sometimes condescend to extremely unworthy and reprehensible conduct. Numerous instances occur to one simultaneously; but I will only notice one, which belongs to the first half of the last century. From 1815 to 1830, the throne of St. Asaph was occupied by the Right Reverend Dr. Luxmore. This gentleman owed his promotions to the fact that he had once acted as tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch. There is no evidence that he possessed superior gifts; but in those days ducal influence could have lifted the feeblest man to the giddiest official height.

Dr. Luxmore's passionate love of money was the load-star of his life. "Money, money, at any cost; I must have money," was his constant cry. Before going to St. Asaph, he filled successively the Sees of Bristol and Hereford; but it was at St. Asaph that he achieved the supreme success of his life. The legitimate salary was not large, but this holy man, as soon as the reins were in his hands, resolved to make substantial additions to it. He coolly took the tithes of twenty-four parishes, and, in consequence, received an annual income of £11,761, which he enjoyed for about fifteen years. And he said his prayers every day like a saint. But this is not the end of the chapter of this good Bishop's insatiable cupidity. He had two sons and a nephew whom he dearly loved. The moment the Deanery of St. Asaph fell vacant, he hastened to bestow it on his eldest son, to whom it brought the tidy sum of £1,988 a year. This same son, through the affectionate devotion of his father, held nine benefices, valued at from £50 to £1,400 each, which enabled him to nourish his piety on an annual income of £9,872. Another son of this exemplary Bishop drew £2,234 a year in the same fashion, while the nephew waxed valiant on the more modest amount of £1,038.

This story of ecclesiastical plundering is told by Mr. Arthur G. Bradley, son of the late Dean of Westminster Abbey, in his most interesting book, entitled *Highways and Byways in North Wales*. Mr. Bradley calls Bishop Luxmore "a prince of pluralists and nepotists." This is how he concludes: "The

four Luxmores received almost exactly £25,000 a year. The average net income of all the parochial clergy of the Diocese of St. Asaph averaged, at this time, about £38,000. Of this £20,000 went away to habitual absentees or recognised sinecurists. The resident and working clergy received the balance of £18,000; or, to put it another way, the Bishop and his family, together with the drones who lived on the Diocese, but not in it, helped themselves to £45,000 a year, while £18,000 was left to those who did, or were supposed to do, its work." Surely this is a specimen of "paying imposture" with a vengeance. But my point is that, if a man is by temperament or instinct selfish or wicked, his profession of the Christian Religion will not prevent him from giving full vent to his disposition; and that, on the contrary, if a man is naturally noble and generous, his good qualities will shine forth in spite of his religious professions. It is easy to praise virtue with the tongue while assiduously practising iniquity for a living. It is easy to pray fervently at a church gathering in less than four hours after swindling a poor widow in a business transaction.

From the beginning fraud has been a conspicuous element in the history of the Church. It has been abundantly verified that, for many centuries, the Papacy dominated the world, politically as well as religiously, by virtue of a gigantic lie, "a portentous falsehood," or "the most stupendous of all the mediæval forgeries." I refer, of course, to the infamous document called the Donation of Constantine. That I am not exaggerating is clear from the following quotation from Bryce's *The Holy Roman Empire*:—

"This document is the most unimpeachable evidence of the thoughts and beliefs of the priesthood which framed it, sometime between the middle of the eighth and the middle of the tenth century. It tells how Constantine the Great, cured of his leprosy by the prayers of Sylvester, resolved, on the fourth day from his baptism, to forsake the ancient seat for a new capital on the Bosphorus, lest the continuance of the secular government should cramp the freedom of the spiritual, and how he bestowed therewith upon the Pope and his successors, the sovereignty over Italy and the countries of the West. But this is not all, although this is what historians, in admiration of its splendid audacity, have chiefly dwelt upon. The edict proceeds to grant to the Roman pontiff and his clergy a series of dignities and privileges, all of them enjoyed by the Emperor and his Senate, all of them showing the same desire to make the pontifical a copy of the imperial office. The Pope is to inhabit the Lateran palace, to wear the diadem, the collar, the purple cloak, to carry the sceptre, and to be attended by a body of Chamberlains. Similarly his clergy are to ride on white horses and receive the honors and immunities of the senate and patricians."

There was also a series of upwards of sixty forged Decretals of the Popes, containing the most explicit assertion of clerical independence, which no Romanist now ventures to pronounce genuine. "But we are Protestants," someone angrily exclaims, "and consequently incapable of committing such abominable crimes; and, furthermore, those forgeries belong to the blackest of the Dark Ages." But what about the scandalous plunderings of the Luxmores in North Wales less than a hundred years ago? What about the merry-andrew performances of Dr. Dowie, Elijah II., who in some fifteen years has blossomed into a multi-millionaire? What about hundreds of other instances which could be gathered from modern as well as from ancient history?

I am not denouncing Christianity because of crimes and follies perpetrated in its name, or under its cloak; but I am firmly convinced that they justify the conclusion that Supernatural Religion has been a hindrance rather than an encouragement to human progress. The Christian Religion has failed to cure its professors of inherited and acquired evil tendencies and open vices; and it has failed to make rogues of naturally good men. All virtues are of a distinctly human origin; and so are all vices as well. If a drunkard becomes sober, or a thief honest on joining the Church, nothing is easier than to give

a satisfactory explanation of the change apart from the intervention of supernatural agents. I know of a medical student who was apparently a hopeless inebriate. All efforts to reclaim him were utterly fruitless. But a self-sacrificing friend went to live with him, and devoted his whole strength to saving him. The experiment turned out a complete success. It was personal influence, strength of will, and brotherly love that accomplished the noble work. I personally knew a man who gloried in the alleged fact that Christ had delivered him from the awful curse of drunkenness; and yet two years later he died of acute alcoholism. I was told that when he died he "could read his title clear to mansions in the sky;" but the salvation of which he had stood in supreme need during his earthly life was never his, except for the brief period of six years. What Christ was supposed to have done for him during those six years was really done by the friends with whom he was led to associate. Soon after he had lost them through his removal to another country, the inherited craving for drink, strengthened by many years of indulgence, reasserted itself, and gained the final victory.

JOHN LLOYD.

A Proposed Freethought Excursion to Rome.

IN September, 1904, an International Freethought Congress is to be held at Rome, the scene of Bruno's martyrdom in the first year of the seventeenth century. At the last Annual Conference of the National Secular Society a desire was expressed by several of the delegates present that a party of British Freethinkers might be formed, thus achieving the threefold object of representing British Freethought in a worthy manner, of securing congenial travelling companions during the whole of the journey, and minimising the cost of a rather expensive journey. A letter was afterwards sent to the Executive in connection with the suggested excursion, and Mr. C. Quinton and myself were appointed to make inquiries as to travelling, accommodation, etc. After conferring with the gentleman who first raised the subject, and getting what information was available, the Committee was able to report that a party of not less than thirty persons, travelling on special terms, could travel to Rome and back, taking ten days during the whole of the journey—six of which would be spent in Rome, and passing through some of the principal Continental cities on the journey out and home—for about £13 per head, including full board from the time of leaving London until the party lands in London again. Without board the mere travelling would run to about £7, the ticket being available for forty-five days.

Unquestionably a large number of Freethinkers would like to visit Rome on this occasion; but it is equally certain that many of these would not feel equal to paying a sum of £7 or £13 at one payment. The Committee therefore suggested that some arrangement might be made whereby those who wish to do so could pay the money by instalments of, say, 20s. or 25s. per month.

The cost of the journey as given above represents the maximum. It may be less, but this will depend upon the number who decide to form the party. As the Executive is necessarily in the dark on this point, I have been asked to write this brief statement of the project, and ask all those who would like to visit Rome in September next to say so *at once*. There is no need at present to say more, the chief thing is to find out who will go, although I may add that it is extremely probable that a reduction may be made on the inclusive cost of £13.

At present no decisive steps can be taken until the number of the party is ascertained. And as good notice has to be given for the accommodation of a party, all who think of going will kindly communicate at once, either with Miss Vance or myself.

241 High-road, Leyton

C. COHEN.

Pars. from the New York "Truthseeker."

Hinman Barney, a specialist on temperance, was forced to suspend his sermon recently, in a church at Elkhart, Ind., because he was too drunk to proceed. Mr. Barney is a very eloquent Prohibitionist.

The new pope, Pius X, has issued a prayer to the Virgin, and it begins this way: "Most Holy Virgin, who pleased our Lord and became his mother." That is to say Our Lord looked his mother over before he condescended to be born of her. We suppose the doctrine of the Trinity is responsible for that fool sentence.

Professor Penny, the name seems singularly appropriate, of Washburn College, Topeka, Kan., says that twenty-five hymns in the hymnal are immoral because set to waltz, two-step, and polka music. Hereafter music of that order will be ruled out in his college. Mr. Penny is a Christian moralist certainly, and it will amaze some of the brethren to know that the song "Shall We Gather at the River?" is immoral, as is also that touching melody "God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

Here are some Methodists to match Patton of Princeton. Speaking to the delegates of the East Ohio conference, Bishop Mallalieu said: "Stick to the old Bible. Don't be fooled by the rag-carpet Bible. There is another thing I want to say to you. Don't go visiting on Sunday. Stay at home that day and read the Bible. Don't read novels, and by all means do not read Sunday newspapers." The Rev. Burt, following, said that the time is here for the unsheathing of the sword against "the world, the flesh, and the devil." We trust that these Methodists are not as bad as they talk.

A new Hampshire Supreme Court judge has decided that Christian Science healing is legal in that state. A healer was sued for malpractice and fraud, and the court holds that there was no malpractice, but on the fraud charge he thinks there may be something said, and orders a new trial on exceptions taken by the plaintiff. The Mormon church, however, has just condemned the "science" as wicked teaching, and ordered the Mormons not to listen to it. The church also condemned Spiritualism and hypnotism. That is almost an extreme case of the pot calling the kettle black. Why is not a Spiritualist's faith in his medium as reasonable as a Mormon's faith in his preacher? All supernaturalism depends upon one man's faith in another. And alas! that other too often deceives.

The *Cincinnati Times-Star* tells this: "'And the rain came down as in the days of the Deluge,' read the little schoolgirl. 'What was the Deluge?' asked Miss Lucy Ambrose, teacher in the Fourth Intermediate School, of the little reader. 'How many in the class know the answer?' questioned the teacher. Out of 150 pupils only three could tell about the Deluge. And when one had told, the teacher said in surprise, 'Why, children, don't you remember that story?' 'Oh, yes,' said several, 'but that's just a Sunday-school story. 'Tisn't really true, is it?' questioned several, and they explained that they thought it was a fairy tale. These children knew more than their teacher, who, besides being a public school instructress, was also employed in a Methodist Sunday-school (which accounts for it). But there ought to be something done to stop public school teachers who are also Christians from teaching the children myths as truths."

A distinguished Roman Catholic theologian, the Rev. Edward McSweeney, of Mount St. Mary's, Md., in writing of religion and education, says the proper study of mankind is first God, then man, then matter. It appears to be impossible for a religious person to get anything right. The first study man made was of matter, and that properly, for matter affects man materially, in fact it has all to do with him, and to adjust himself to material conditions was necessary in order to live. Studying matter, he studied himself. Then he began to waste his thoughts on God, and a pretty mess he made of it. When one tribe of savages went forth to kill another tribe they had some reason for their action. They were brutes and were hungry. But the God-worshippers who went out and killed others at the supposed command of their God were brutes without a redeeming trait. Man is a part of the universe, of nature, as much as the ox and the grass he eats. We have some conception of matter, and of its form which we call man. But God—what is that?

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive Meeting held at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. Mr. G. W. Foote in the chair. There were also present:—E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. How, W. Leat, J. Neate, E. Parker, C. Quinton, S. Samuels, F. Schaller, T. Thurlowe, F. Wood, and the Secretary.

The minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted.

One new member was admitted for the Bethnal Green Branch.

Mr. Cohen reported on behalf of the sub-committee appointed to make arrangements for the delegates and visitors to the International Congress at Rome, and was asked to draw up a statement for the *Freethinker*.

At the President's suggestion, and on the motion of Mr. Samuels, seconded by Mr. Leat, it was resolved: "That this Executive issue, in pamphlet form, Mr. Lloyd's narrative of his conversion to Freethought."

Several matters of correspondence were dealt with, and the meeting closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

Acid Drops.

Mr. W. Willmot Dixon, in *T.P.'s Weekly*, tells two Bradlaugh anecdotes. One he vouches for himself, and we can believe it. During the course of his lecture on "Perpetual Pensions," someone in the body of the hall cried out: "This is all ancient history; why don't you tell us something about the present generation?" Bradlaugh turned to the interrupter, and exclaimed: "Sir, the present generation has to pay."

Mr. Dixon's second Bradlaugh story is evidently mere hearsay, and we do not believe it. Here it is in Mr. Dixon's own words:—"But Bradlaugh once, at any rate, met more than his match. He was engaged in a discussion with a Dissenting minister, and insisted on the latter answering a question he had asked him by a simple 'Yes' or 'No,' without any more circumlocution, asserting that every question could be replied to in that manner. The reverend gentleman rose, and in a quiet manner said: 'Mr. Bradlaugh, will you allow me to ask you a question on those terms?' 'Certainly,' said Bradlaugh. 'Then, may I ask you, have you given up beating your wife?' This was a poser, for if the answer were 'Yes' it would imply he had previously beaten her; and if 'No,' that he continued to do so. There was a roar of laughter at Bradlaugh's expense, in which, seeing that there was no other way out of the dilemma, he himself reluctantly joined."

We don't think anybody who knew Bradlaugh will believe that story. A great many yarns were afloat about men of God who got the better of Bradlaugh in controversial encounters, but it was always impossible to fix one of them to a definite time and place. Moreover, Bradlaugh had a powerful forensic mind, and was not easily caught tripping in debate—especially in questions and answers. For our part, we are unable to conceive that he would have felt any difficulty in answering the question in this story with a plain "Yes" or "No." Everybody knows that in a Socratic debate nothing is implied, nor is anything left to implication in a skilful legal examination, the object of which is really to get explicit answers to explicit questions. "Have you left off beating your wife?" is a question that Bradlaugh could easily have answered with a "No." He had not left off beating his wife. True, he had not begun beating her; but neither that nor the opposite is implied in the answer. The opponent could not, either in logic or in a court of law, found anything upon it in anyway discreditable to the answerer. He would be bound to put another question if he meant business and wanted to go further. On the whole, indeed, we should say that the plain answer of "No" to the question "Have you left off beating your wife?" would considerably embarrass the interrogator. And it must also be remembered that while you can only print "No" in two or three ways, there are a hundred different ways of saying it; and a man might say it, in such a case, in a way that would simply annihilate his adversary.

But the greatest objection to this Bradlaugh story is its antiquity. "Have you left off beating your father"—the change to "wife" makes no practical difference—is a very

old trick question. We believe it antedates the Christian era. It is something like the "watch story" told of Bradlaugh, as it was also told of some of his contemporaries. That "watch story" had been told of Freethinkers long before Bradlaugh was born.

The *Church Times* has discovered a reason why church people do not take a warm interest in social reforms. It is because they "shrink from the petty, often ignoble, strife which local affairs unhappily engender." Now this is funny. Questions such as the right kind of candles to be burned in church, or where the candlestick is to be placed in relation to the altar, what kind of millinery ought to be worn by parsons, or whether people should be sprinkled with holy water when they are infants, or soused bodily when they are grown up, are questions that excite the warm interest of good Christians. But when it comes to such petty affairs as sanitation, or housing, or the proper employment of labour—well, their spiritual sense shrinks from such "petty and ignoble" matters. Poor sensitive creatures!

Mr. W. J. Meyberry, of Llanely, North Wales, claimed from the Carmarthenshire County Council £74 17s. 6d. for damage done to his motor car by the subsidence of the main road. The surveyor said he thought the accident was due to an act of God. The Council agreed with the surveyor, so Mr. Mayberry's next course should be to bring an action against the guilty party as indicated by the Council.

The Rev. J. Thomas, Independent minister, of Capel Isaac, near Llandilo, committed suicide on Thursday by hanging himself in a shed adjoining his residence in that place. He had been minister at Capel Isaac for over thirty years, and has for many years acted as local postmaster.

Rev. Henry Edward Smith, vicar of Weston, near Crewo, having been found guilty at a Consistory Court, under the Clergy Discipline Act, of acts of drunkenness and attempting to obtain money by false pretences, has been deprived of his living by order of the Bishop of Chester. We referred to this matter some weeks ago, and we only make it the subject of a second paragraph in order to draw attention to the difference between Ecclesiastical and Police Courts. Had this peccant man of God been found guilty in a Police Court he would have been in safe custody pending his sentence. The Ecclesiastical Court let him go on preaching for three Sundays in his church, and we hear that he had an increased and very curious congregation. Perhaps if they had let him go on he might have worked up a Christian revival in the parish.

The dear old *Family Herald* replies to a correspondent who can see no difference between the *Encyclopædia Biblica* and the *Freethinker*, and who therefore rejects old-fashioned Christian beliefs altogether. "We think that course," our contemporary says, "is a grave error, and that it is bound to drive studious young men into freethinking, with entirely lamentable results." This is a terrifying expression; but would it not be well to mention at least one of these results? Would the studious young men who take to freethinking run off with their neighbors' wives, commit forgery, burgle houses, or what? We should really like to know.

The President of the Princeton Theological Seminary has no faith in that form of Christianity which drops the miraculous element while preaching a "mere" morality. "In a last analysis," he says, "this is not a religion, but a moral philosophy in competition with other moral philosophies, and defended by Atheistic metaphysics that has to cope with another metaphysics which denies God." From the Christian standpoint, this is essentially a sound position. Eliminate the supernatural element from the Gospels, and all that remains must be of a purely Secular character. And, once the defence of Christianity is taken upon a Secular basis, the issue cannot be long undecided. The truth is, however, that the talk of the "moral character of Christianity" is more or less a blind. It is a mere concession to the time spirit. Finding that people will no longer swallow the supernaturalism of Christianity undisguised, preachers fancy that, by giving it a coating of Secular morality, the dose may be taken freely. It is not a new trick by any means, and it is one that a growing number of people are beginning to see through.

The following is from the *Glasgow Evening News*;—"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good"—and this old

saw was well illustrated on Sunday night. A well-known local secularist orator was busily engaged cleaving the general ear at the corner of Virginia street and Argyle-street when a Salvation Army band passed. Immediately afterwards the Fire Brigade came tearing along Argyle-street. Here was an opportunity for the Freethought orator, and he was not slow to take advantage of it. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'the Salvation Army are trying to save you from fire in the next world, but the Fire Brigade are practical Secularists. They are galloping full speed to save, perhaps, for all we know, some people in this world. And I am convinced that the people of Glasgow are more afraid of a single spark in this world touching them than any prospective sparks which are likely to be heaped on to them in another world.' And the crowd grinned.

The *Daily News* of October 30 contains an account of the people inhabiting the Highland region of the Southern States of America, that serves as a curious comment upon the civilising influence of Christianity. The people, the writer says, have simply reverted to the barbarism of the Scottish Highlands during the Middle Ages. "Illegitimacy and murder are common. The assassination of a Federal excise-man is regarded as a vindication of personal liberty. Fatal feuds rage between families, and the duty of blood revenge is held to devolve on the next of kin. The singular thing is that the Bible is the *best known book—almost the only book—among these people.*" There are seven denominations of Baptists, four of Methodists, with Presbyterians, amongst them. The Baptists go to church equipped with shot guns. Theologians are careful to carry on their discussions with back to the wall, face towards the door, and the right hand never too far from the hip-pocket"—within reach, that is, of their revolver.

Now all this is *very* interesting. These people are not "Infidels," they do not read Freethought literature nor attend Freethought meetings. About the only book they have is the Bible. And the Bible, the clergy are always telling us, is all important. The nation would decay without it, and you can't train up children properly in its absence. Well, these people have nothing else, and the picture drawn of them by a Christian writer shows what people become with Christianity when they are isolated from really civilising influences. Of course, the secret of their degeneracy is that they are shut off from the general stream of secular civilisation. So long as people are not shut off from this, they may develop, even with a belief in the Bible. Give them Christianity alone, and they sink into savages. Voltaire said that prayer *might* cure disease, if it was taken with the proper quantity of physic. One might paraphrase this, and say that Christianity *may* civilise a people, provided it is taken with the proper amount of scientific knowledge and secular common sense.

Mr. Balfour has raised afresh the ire of the Dissenters by pointing out in his last letter that these people *do* receive State support, in the shape of remission of taxes, and therefore their objections of State help for religion is so much humbug. The fact is perfectly obvious, and it has been dwelt on in these columns times out of number. At a meeting held in the City Temple on October 29, Mr. R. J. Campbell, amid great applause, said he would reply to Mr. Balfour in a sentence: "When you put St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey on the rates, I am prepared to begin to pay for the City Temple."

The statement was cheered rapturously; but let us see what it is worth. In the first place, the members of the Church of England do not object to the State supporting religion. Rightly or wrongly, they believe that the State ought to be religious, and ought to profess and maintain some form of religion. Well, this is at least a straightforward position for anyone to take up, and the man who holds that position cannot be accused of inconsistency if he accepts State help. Now, the Dissenter says he does not believe that the State, as a State, should profess and maintain a particular form of religion. He even goes so far as to say he prefers imprisonment to assisting such a monstrous act of injustice. This is also a straightforward position. But when the Dissenter, concurrently with his protest *against* the State supporting religion, claims State help for his own religious beliefs, one would think that the inconsistency and insincerity of the profession would be plain for even Mr. Campbell's congregation to appreciate.

In the next place Mr. Campbell says, "When you tax these people you tax me." But Mr. Campbell believes that, in helping these other people, the State is inflicting an injustice upon the rest of the community. This injustice is certainly

not lessened by Mr. Campbell sharing in the plunder. He is, in fact, conniving at what he denounces as an act of robbery, because he is getting a share of the spoils. He says: "I believe the Episcopalian is acting dishonestly in taking money from others for the support of his Church, but until he chooses to act honestly I will join him in what I believe to be a dishonest transaction." Surely it would be well if this preacher of righteousness began by setting his less developed Christian brethren an example in honesty and consistency. A few moments before Dr. Clifford had declared that "loyalty to principle was the best of all policies at the present juncture." What a pity that Dr. Clifford can't make Mr. Campbell see this; and what a pity Mr. Campbell can't make Dr. Clifford act up to it. Cant, more cant, and yet again cant, seems to be the order of the day.

Passive Resistance is assuming some strange forms. At Poole, a Mr. Thomas Budden refused to pay any Education rate until such time as the Government had re-established the School Boards. Presently we shall hear of some large manufacturers refusing to pay a Poor rate until the Government repeals the Factory Acts. There seems opportunities for endless development of this kind of thing.

We have received a copy of a paper called *Famous Crimes*—not a very cheerful sort of title, but doubtless interesting to people with a morbid taste for reading columns of brutal murders, and the like. The copy has been sent us, apparently, for the reason that it contains an article on "Atheism and Crime." On the whole, the article is not unfairly written—at least, it is not what it might have been in an ordinary periodical. But the way in which some of the things are put is a little curious. The writer leads off with the remark, "Strange as it may appear, few of the unfortunate beings who find their way into our prisons profess atheism." The statement is true, but why should it be "strange"? There is nothing on the face of it why a man's disbelief in God should lead him to become a criminal. If only people would set themselves to work out the logical connection between, say, a belief in the Trinity and avoidance of train-wrecking, they would see at once how perfectly idiotic is the connecting of immorality with unbelief. The use of such an expression as "Strange as it may appear" shows what the writer thinks *ought* to be, and with equal clearness what actually *is*.

The writer of the article goes on to say, "Every one who enters a prison is asked on admission what religion he or she professes, and from the registers kept by the authorities it should not be difficult to determine what headway Atheism is making among the black sheep of the community. In one year alone 28,351 persons were admitted into three of the great Metropolitan gaols, and of this vast number only fifty-seven described themselves as Atheists, and this number must be further discounted inasmuch as Orientals of every kind are entered under this heading by the prison officials."

These figures, we believe, were furnished by the Rev. J. W. Horsley, a prison chaplain, and we have no reason to question their accuracy. Nor, considering the number of people who are indiscriminately labelled and described as Atheists, is the number a large one. After all, Christians must not expect a monopoly of criminality. But Mr. Horsley went on to point out that on taking twelve of the fifty-seven and asking what they meant by calling themselves Atheists, one said he meant he never attended church; another that he had a Jewish father who became a Christian. And Mr. Horsley concluded that only about three or four could reasonably be classed as Atheists. And three or four out of over 28,000 is not a very large proportion after all.

The Free Churchmen have brought out their Education program. They are like the Bourbons, they learn not, neither can they forget. Their solution of the Education difficulty is still "Biblical teaching" in the State schools. Nothing could be sillier, and nothing could be more hypocritical. Even an old Nonconformist warrior like Dr. J. Guinness Rogers feels bound to write to the *Daily News* regretting that the Free Church Council "thinks it necessary to issue such a document at the present stage of the controversy." Dr. Rogers protests against "compulsory undenominationalism." How is it any better than compulsory undenominationalism? In other words, how is compulsory Dr. Cliffordism better than compulsory Archbishop Davidsonism? We pause for a reply.

The writer, in conclusion, explains the paucity of Atheistic criminals in a curious manner. "Agnostics and

sceptics," he says, "have made much of the small number of their followers who become amenable to the laws of the land, but they forget that few criminals have the mental faculties to understand the Secularist arguments." As an explanation, meant to satisfy Christians, this is good. Criminals have not the mental faculties to understand the Secularist argument, therefore they remain Christians. If they could understand and appreciate the Secularist position would they remain criminals? That seems the next question to be answered; and for our part we are of opinion the answer should be in the negative.

There is no telling what may come out of this religious squabble over the National schools. Dr. R. F. Horton has made the remarkable discovery that "the discussion is not between educationalists and non-educationalists, but to our shame and sorrow the conflict is between Christian men who take different views of what education should be." Well, we have said all along that education, proper, has nothing to do with the row; it is just a fight as to which sect shall be permitted to prostitute the child's mind for sectarian interests. But Dr. Horton's sorrow is not, apparently, over he neglected education, but because the outcome may be the loss of "the inestimable blessings of the Gospel, the teaching of the Bible, and the chief means of moral and spiritual teaching." To put it plainly, Dr. Horton regrets the row because it may lead to secular education, that is to justice to all, without any sectarian favoritism. It is astonishing how the clergy dread common sense and justice, and how sorrowful they feel when both these qualities begin to make headway.

Mr. John M. Robertson has done a very indiscreet thing, and has to pay the penalty. He allowed his feelings, or a mistaken sense of his interests, to lead him into starting an action for libel, when he ought to have known that he had not the slightest prospect of success. We do not mean that his character is a tarnished one; on the contrary, we believe he can hold his head up, as a man of honor, with his fellow citizens. What we mean is that a militant Freethinker can never expect to obtain justice at the hands of an English jury. He is a marked man; prejudice is strong against him, and bigoted Christians will "pay him one" if they can. Even one obstinate jurymen of this sort is enough to prevent an honest verdict. Mr. Foote has been libelled by Christians. He has even been libelled, we regret to say, by Freethinkers. But he has always refused to commit the folly of taking his reputation into a so-called court of justice. It would be a waste of time and money—ay, and worse—with bigots on the bench as well as bigots on the jury, and a vicious atmosphere from one end of the place to the other. Soldiers of progress must expect calumny; it is part of the price they have to pay; and the most effective soldiers get the most of it. The wisest policy is to cherish a calm disdain of calumniators, and to trust to one's life and work to set one right with sensible sincere-minded people.

The Rev. Stanley Parker, a Wesleyan minister of much notoriety in Barrow, recently devoted a Sunday evening to a lecture in the Town Hall on "Atheists at the Bar." We hear that he gave the *Freethinker* a good advertisement. The rest of his lecture seems to have dealt chiefly with the question of the lack of Secular Hospitals and Sunday Schools. The reverend gentleman forgets that Secularism has more Sunday Schools now than Christianity could boast for the first seventeen hundred years of its existence. He also forgets that Secularists do not aim at setting up sectarian charities. He further forgets that the Hospitals in England are not nominally Christian institutions, however much the Christians (as usual) may try to appropriate them. Hospitals invite and receive subscriptions from all sections of the community. No Hospital has ever been known to return a subscription because the donor was suspected of not being a Christian.

Mr. Parker seems fond of trying *absent* Atheists at the bar. Why does he not pluck up the courage to have a two-sided debate with a *present* Atheist? If he is game for a public discussion he can easily be provided with an opponent.

The Rev. Stanley Parker, who has been bringing up "Atheism at the Bar" in the Barrow Town Hall, appears to have some very curious ideas of Evolution. He is reported in the local *Herald* as saying: "Well, if the Universe sprang from a tiny speck of protoplasm, they had not got rid of a creator." We never heard of this theory of Evolution before. The idea of the universe springing from a speck of protoplasm is enough to make Huxley turn and laugh in his

grave. Perhaps the reverend gentleman is only joking. We hope so.

Mr. Parker told his audience that Colonel Ingersoll "petitioned the American Parliament" to let obscene writings, indecent pictures, lewd books, and instruments of vice be carried by the Post Office. The answer to this statement is that Mr. Parker lies. We should be glad to tell him so to his face.

Dr. Eden, Bishop of Wakefield, has just been declaring that to ask children to believe in the literal accuracy of the Bible was to put a strain upon the intelligence which it would not easily bear, and it was a strain to which children ought not to be subjected. When we hear Bishops talking in this way we may be sure that the Bible is nearly on its last legs. It must be admitted, though, that "literal accuracy" is a very pretty phrase. Honest people take literal accuracy as saying precisely what you mean, and meaning precisely what you say. But the Bishop of Wakefield argues that the Bible must not be read in that way. You must read as the gentleman had the cheque read to which he had added a figure or two. He admitted, in the dock, that it was not literally accurate, but no one could deny it was the same cheque.

The "progressive" *Daily News*, which would not give a paragraph to any Freethought function, however large or successful, devotes a column of big print to the maunderings of a Hindu Mahatma Chief who pretends to be able to stop his heart and let his spirit go out to commune with the spirit world "for some minutes."

It is the custom, as most of our readers are aware, for the mayors of various towns to march to church in state soon after their election. At a certain provincial town the mayor was late in reaching church, and to fill up the time, the choir sang "Hold the Fort, for I am coming." The hymn was proceeding when the procession reached the church, with the result that, as the mayor entered the building, he was greeted with—

See the mighty host advancing,
Satan leading on.

The roar of laughter that went up brought the hymn to an abrupt conclusion.

The November number of the *Humanitarian*, the monthly organ of the Humanitarian League, should engage the attention of all reformers who include the victims of injustice and cruelty, even amongst the so-called lower animals, within the pale of their sympathy. One very interesting article is by a Cambridge M.A. on "A College of 'Humanities.'" The writer observes that "the word *humanitas*, which, in its original use, meant simply civilisation, and also a certain degree of refinement of life and manners, was already used by the higher thinkers under the earlier Roman Empire, such as Seneca, Quintilian, Pliny the letter-writer, and Mausionius Rufus, in this better sense. And it is a most serious deduction to be made from the moral value of Christianity that the academic term, 'the humanities,' has hitherto, and always, excluded any idea of this higher ethics." We are pleased to add that the *Humanitarian* once more quotes a telling paragraph from the *Pioneer*—a paper which is generally ignored even by the "advanced" press.

The *St. James's Gazette* says: "The teetotal races are sinking more and more into subjection. Now, as ever, it is the drinking people that lead the progress of humanity. The Jews drank and gave us monotheism. The Greeks drank and gave us art and literature. The Romans drank and gave us law. The Teuton drank and gave us liberty. Britain has drunk (not always wisely) and established commerce. What have the teetotal races done for the betterment of the world?" This argument involves a fallacy that the *Truthseeker* has previously pointed out. If there is any relation between drinking and progress, its asserters should be able to show that of the drinking races the individuals who do the drinking, and, of the individuals who drink, those who drink most are the most progressive. Almost every characteristic, including the vices, of dominant races has been alleged as the secret of pre-eminence. Christians profess to think it is their religion that has sent them to the front. Colonel Ingersoll, in derision, cited plug hats and suspenders. Another might argue in favor of trousers. In countries where the highest civilisation obtains the men wear trousers and the women do not, at least not avowedly and as an exterior garment.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, November 8, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W., at 8; "The Last Christian Statesman: A Candid Study of Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*."
November 15, South Shields; 29, Queen's Hall.
December 6, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton. November 15, Queen's Hall, London; 22, South Shields.
- T. E. RHODES.—The fresh Liverpool list of subscriptions to the Cohen Presentation Fund is acknowledged this week. Thanks for your kind enquiry. Unfortunately the drenching Mr. Foote got after his evening lecture did not improve matters.
- W. BRADBURN.—Pleased to hear you formed such a good opinion of Mr. John Lloyd at Camberwell.
- E. V. S.—Very regrettable.
- R. BROOKS.—Your resolution was logically in order, but you could not expect the Hackney Nonconformists to let it be treated so practically. Having their own fish to fry, they did not want you to use the public fire while they were cooking. We dare say, however, that you did good by attending the meeting and showing that Secular Education was waiting in the background, and might not have to wait so very long, after all.
- A. WEBBER regrets that his subscription to the Cohen Presentation Fund is so small in comparison with the pleasure he derives from Mr. Cohen's articles. This correspondent is advised that his order has been attended to, and we hope the parcel reached him duly this time.
- T. R. J.—Pleased to hear from you at any time.
- R. T. FLETCHER.—Thanks. See paragraph. We laughed at your reference to "the carbuncle."
- T. FLINN.—We have dealt with the matter in "Acid Drops." Perhaps we ought to thank the reverend gentleman for his advertisement. We agree with you that if newsgagents were to take the *Freethinker* as readily as they do say the *Clarion* there would "soon be a difference in the circulation."
- J. G. ORCHART.—The safe rule is never to believe anything a Christian speaker says about a Freethinker. We do not know the Christian Evidence lecturer you refer to, but he is evidently "sealed of the tribe." There is no truth whatever in the statement that Mr. G. J. Holyoake had to be placed on the Civil List to keep him from the poor-house. In the first place, Mr. Holyoake is not, and never was, on the Civil List; in the second place, his friends subscribed and bought him an annuity for his old age.
- W. STANLEY.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks. Our readers do us a service by sending us useful cuttings.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks once more for your ever-welcome cuttings.
- G. VIGGARS.—We are obliged. See "Acid Drops."
- A. WEBBER.—Dr. Torrey's initials are certainly R. A. T., but he cannot help that. We are sorry to see the Mayor of Dartmouth speaking at Salvation Army meetings. He is a strange "democrat" to perceive any hope for the world through "Blood and Fire."
- T. FLINN.—Thanks for the cutting. Mr. Parker appears to be a Christian gentleman. This is a case in which Dr. Johnson's theory is correct, that the adjective is the natural enemy of the noun.
- MR. D. E. JONES forwards subscription to Cohen Presentation fund as a small return for the pleasure and profit of Mr. Cohen's "bright and trenchant" articles, and hopes that there will be a "good round sum" subscribed before the Fund is closed.
- S. C. HURFORD.—We are always pleased to hear from young disciples of the cause, not from any want of respect for older members, but because the future of any movement necessarily rests with its younger supporters. Getting into hot water is no new experience for those who are honest enough to think and brave enough to speak, but it has its compensations in the feeling that one is lifted above the crowd by so doing, and by the sense of integrity developed. You are right in supposing that there are a number of Freethinkers in Cardiff, and something ought to be done to secure their co-operation. This correspondent requests that all Cardiff Freethinkers who are willing to co-operate for the carrying on of an active propaganda will communicate with him at 8 Iron-street, Roath, Cardiff.
- CELSUS.—You are quite right in emphasising the point that the religion as taught in the Board schools was "the religion that suited Nonconformists." Whether this was *Nonconformist* religion or not is a subsidiary issue. The vital point is that Nonconformists did not object to taxing the general community for religious instruction so long as it was a form of religion they agreed with. The reference to moral instruction is a mere trick. Of course, Nonconformists believe in moral instruction; so do Churchmen, so does everybody else. But what dissenters want is moral instruction based on Christian theology, although they are not always honest enough to say so. Your suggestion *re* articles will be considered.
- A. ROUND.—Received rather too late for consideration this week. Will be dealt with in our next.

COHEN PRESENTATION FUND.—A. Webber 2s. 6d., E. V. S., 10s. 6d., Charles Pegg £1, E. Purchas 1s. *Liverpool Branch*: Collected at Mr. Foote's evening lecture £1 17s. 6d.; J. Hammond 10s., L. Small 10s., J. Billinger 2s. 6d., W. Dawson 1s. 6d. (total £3 1s. 6d.); D. E. Jones 5s., V. Ray 5s., W. and J. Briery £1, Two Pitchcombe Sinners 5s.

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

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

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

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

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Special.

MR. COHEN is seeing this number of the *Freethinker* through the press for me. And it happens in this way. I caught a nasty cold in the prolonged upset of shifting my residence, in the midst of wet, wet, wet; and I got this nasty cold intensified at Liverpool, where I had to face the storm after my evening lecture, no conveyance being then obtainable for love or money, so that I was literally soaked, in spite of an umbrella, by the time I reached my hotel. During the week I went on with my work as usual, but gradually got worse, and on Saturday I was really too unwell to travel to Birmingham. But I made up my mind to go if I could crawl, and I resolved to take Mr. Cohen with me, in order that if I broke down utterly the important meetings in the Town Hall might still go forward. Mr. Cohen was fortunately able to accompany me, and this was a great relief. When we arrived at Birmingham, and met Mr. Partridge at the station, they were both alarmed at my condition. Happily, however, I obtained some refreshing rest in the night, and was considerably better in the morning. I therefore decided to attempt the afternoon lecture, and by a great effort I went through with it. Councillor Fallows, M.A., presided, and there was a fine audience, with no lack of enthusiasm. The evening meeting, presided over by Mr. Fathers, was finer still. It was indeed a magnificent assembly, and showed what Freethought could do if it only had the same opportunities of propaganda as other bodies. By another effort I spoke for about twenty-five minutes, and then asked Mr. Cohen to finish the oratory. This he did with power and effect, and I was glad to see that he was so well-known and appreciated by the Birmingham folk. Altogether it was a most successful day, and the "saints" were delighted, although they were evidently anxious about me.

This visit to Birmingham has not laid me up, but I feel I must nurse myself for a few days and avoid unnecessary risks. By keeping out of London I shall, without the slightest doubt, be able to return to it for my Queen's Hall lecture on Gladstone in something like concert-pitch condition. I feel as certain as a mortal man ought to feel on that point.

I have now to thank Mr. Cohen, not simply as G. W. Foote the lecturer, but as President of the N.S.S., for answering my call so promptly, and so like a good soldier of Freethought. Of course he was in attendance on his superior officer, as they would say in the army; but, for all that, it was not exactly the pleasantest duty in the world, and a man who thought more of himself and less of the cause might have avoided it on some excuse or other. Mr. Cohen was willing and cheerful all the time, and pleased to do anything I wished.

Now I think this is a good occasion to mention the Cohen Presentation Fund again. I really do wish the party would show a keener (practical)

appreciation of a worker like Mr. Cohen. The Presentation Fund cannot be a fortune at the best. A little over £100 has been got together, and all I am asking is that this should be doubled by the end of the year. I should like to present Mr. Cohen with £200 at the Annual Dinner on the second Tuesday in January. Surely that modest sum might be made up easily. A Methodist chapel might manage it with a struggle. Cannot it be managed by the Freethinkers of Great Britain? I hope so; and I beg those who have not subscribed to send me a cheque, a postal order, or something, immediately.

It was not pleasant to see Mr. Cohen looking less well and fresh than he should be. Had we not better keep a good worker alive than fuss round his grave with an elegant tombstone?

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote opens the new course of Sunday meetings at the Queen's Hall this evening with a lecture on "The Last Christian Statesman," with reference to Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*. This ought to be a very interesting and instructive lecture to Freethinkers, and it is one to which they should try to bring some of their less heterodox friends. We hope the Queen's Hall will be crowded on this occasion. Indeed, it is the plain duty of Freethinkers to do their utmost to make the whole course of lectures a brilliant success. The Secular Society, Limited, is planking down money to bring our propaganda out into the open in the West end of London, and the "rank and file" of the party should contribute their share towards a highly gratifying result.

We are happy to state that the first course of Sunday evening lectures at the Queen's Hall very nearly paid for themselves; the bill of expenses including rent (six guineas per night), printing, advertising, and lecturers' fees. The few pounds' loss on the whole four meetings was far more than compensated by the good done. Such a slender loss on lectures in such a hall to such audiences may be reckoned as a substantial profit—to the Freethought cause. Better lose a few pounds in that way than lose the same money on ten times as many obscure and insignificant "side street" meetings.

Mr. C. Cohen occupies the platform of the Secular Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell, this evening, taking for his subject, "What is Man's Chance of a Future Life?" We hope South London Freethinkers will make a point of being present, and induce their Christian friends to attend likewise.

Busy places are to be desired as centres for bringing advanced literature under the notice of the man in the street. In all London, perhaps Liverpool-street is the busiest at certain parts of day. In a turning just off Bloomfield-street, in a windowless booksellers' stands prominently a huge pile of the Pioneer Press edition of Paine's masterpiece, bearing a large label—"TOM PAINE'S AGE OF REASON." Less than a hundred years ago such temerity on the part of a bookseller would have occasioned six months, at least. "The old order changeth."

Another work of Paine's gets a boom this week by the publication of Sir George Trevelyan's *American Revolution*. The following eloquent passage refers to *Common Sense*:—"It would be difficult to name any human composition which has had an effect at once so instant, so extended, and so lasting. It flew through numberless editions. It was pirated and parodied and imitated and translated into the language of every country.....Three months from its first appearance a hundred and twenty thousand copies had been sold in America alone, and before the demand ceased it was calculated that half a million had seen the light.

Sir George, in fine style, continues: "According to the contemporary newspapers, *Common Sense* turned thousands in New York to independence, who could not endure the idea before; in Pennsylvania and the Carolinas it was read by all, and few put it down unconvinced; it had done wonders in Maryland, for it had made Tories into Whigs; while even in Massachusetts, where the margin for conversion was small, it added a perceptible heat to the fire of patriotism."

Commenting on these excerpts, the *Daily Telegraph* familiarly observes: "Thus it was Tom Paine, the English-

man, who prepared the way for John Adam's great manifesto, the Declaration of Independence, which was adopted with enthusiasm by Congress just as the British transports came into sight." This admission by a great newspaper of Paine's influence on so momentous an event is striking as illustrating the adage, Truth in the end prevails. But, now, why "Tom" Paine? Was it "Bill" or "Ted" Lawson who had something to do with *A Light of Asia*?

Mr. John Lloyd, we are pleased to hear, had capital audiences at Glasgow on Sunday last. At the evening meeting a number had to be turned away, owing to there being no room in the hall. The Branch officials speak in the highest terms of Mr. Lloyd's lectures, both as to matter and style, and hope that he will be kept busy by Branches all over the country. One of Mr. Lloyd's opponents at the morning meeting said he had heard him preach in Johannesburg, and spoke as to his popularity there. A lady was also present at the evening meeting who had heard Mr. Lloyd in Pretoria, where he was also held in high estimation. We are highly pleased to hear such a gratifying account of Mr. Lloyd's meetings. Branches who have not yet engaged Mr. Lloyd should write at once, so as to secure his services before the winter passes.

Tyneside Freethinkers should be doing their best to advertise the course of Sunday evening meetings which are being organised at South Shields under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. The meetings will take place in the large, handsome Empire Palace Theatre, which is on the main thoroughfare; and the lecturers will be Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. C. Cohen, and Mr. John Lloyd (ex-Presbyterian minister). Seats will be charged for in some parts of the theatre; the rest, including the pit and gallery, will be free. The local arrangements are in the hands of the South Shields N. S. S. Branch. Tyneside "saints" who can circulate handbills, display posters, or sell tickets, should apply to the Secretary, Mr. E. Chapman, 32 James Mathor-terrace, South Shields. We hope they will apply.

The Leeds police will not take the Stipendiary's warning. They contemplate fresh proceedings against the Secularists for daring to do what other bodies are allowed to do on Woodhouse Moor. Mr. Pack's two summonses were dealt with by the Stipendiary on October 30. That gentleman was, as before, extremely impartial. When a detective witness was asked whether he had been instructed to take note of proceedings at any other than the Secularist meetings, and emitted a shuffling reply, the Stipendiary said that if a direct answer could not be given to a direct question he would dismiss the summonses. Mr. Atkinson told the police that, in considering the fine to be imposed, he should take into consideration, then and on any subsequent occasion, the fact that other bodies were freely allowed to sell literature and collect without interference. Instead of fining Mr. Pack 40s. for each offence, he fined him 10s. inclusive for selling and the costs (4s.) only for collecting.

Mr. Weir sold and collected for the Secularists on Sunday, and the Leeds police promised him another pair of summonses. These had not arrived at the time of our going to press.

Mr. Pack asked us to send a letter of sympathy and encouragement to Leeds so that it could be read out at the Sunday meetings. Of course we had pleasure in doing so; though we were in a hurry at the time and did not keep a copy. Mr. Pack writes: "I read your letter at last Sunday's meetings, and extracts from it in court to-day. I am sure your terse sentences had their effect."

Mr. James Neate, one of our valued vice-presidents and active worker in East-end Secularism, was elected on Monday last to the Bethnal Green Borough Council. Mr. Neate has been one of the representatives of Bethnal Green for some years now, so that the people of that district recognise at least one good public worker when they see him. As education now comes within the scope of the Council's duties, the presence of a militant Secularist is all the more welcome.

Mr. Gould, we much regret, has not succeeded in winning a seat on the Leicester Council. His opponent was a man who had represented the contested ward for many years, and a sentimental attachment to an old member may have decided many voters. Mr. Gould was, we believe, the only candidate before the people with a practical knowledge of school work, and with whom education was a primary object. The loss, therefore, is Leicester's, not Mr. Gould's. There is a bright side to most things, and the result of the polling will leave him quite free to devote his energies to Secular organisation.

Citizen Clifford's Views.

HERE are a few suggestions in regard to the Education controversy, which deserve further development than I am able to give them at present; but which I think are too important to be lost, or postponed until they become out of date. The Nonconformists in proposing that only the bible shall be read in schools in place of definite religious instruction, assume that that leaves the child unbiassed as to what is the truth; and with a free mind to draw knowledge from it for himself. This assumption disregards the fact that a conventional and traditional Christianity exists all around; which has never been combated from the bible in Europe—or, at any rate, within recorded knowledge. English children will not in the least be affected by anything in the bible opposed to the conventions of their environment. The boys will read Genesis without "lifting up their voices and weeping" when they fall in love. They will read Leviticus without dreaming of offering sirloins of beef and bins of wine to the Lord. They will know nothing of Sabbath years, nor that it is sinful to sit in the presence of a man with grey hair (Lev. 19, v. 31), and so on. The Episcopalian child will read the epistle of James and yet see that Dowcites and Peculiar people are "silly rotters," while the "Peculiar" will go through Paul's writings with no conception he is a "heathen" because he does not hear the Church! So the outcry of unsectarian teaching is hollow. Only among wholly unbiassed peoples is such a thing as an unsectarian reading of the bible possible, and then the consequences are disastrous, where they are not grotesque. Mrs. Bishop, in one of her books, tells of a missionary in the Himalayas who translated the Gospel of St. Matthew with enormous pains, and at last took a copy to the abbot of a large Llamist monastery. The abbot was most courteous, and promised to read it carefully. Some months after, the missionary returned and asked the abbot if he had read the book. The monk smiled and said, "Oh, yes, *Everyone* here has read it—we all think we never read anything so funny in all our lives." There is a book called *The Oriental Christ*, by a native of India, in which the writer gives as his reason for admiring Jesus that he was such an Oriental; a bather, and a friend of ladies, etc., etc., things which must be read in the author's exact words to be comprehended. But the most amazing instance of reading the bible without bias, was that which produced the tragic misconception which caused us to send Gordon to quell the Tae-ping rebellion in China, because the leader was running a burlesque of Christianity. Now this shocking and revolting burlesque consisted in the fact that the Chinese had found none of our modern Christianity in the book; but, like the Indian I have mentioned, a vast amount of Oriental Paganism. Yet we liberty-loving English, put the Chinese back under the barbarian rule of their Tartar conquerors because we were revolted at their not finding monogamy, anti-slavery, tectotalism and One God in a collection of Chaldean and Phœnician fragments. One would suppose every imaginable variation of doctrine had been extracted from the bible, but that would be a total misconception. The bible remains a mine practically only newly opened for future impostors. The reason it is so, is this very fact, that it is impossible for the young to read it without the traditional rendering of their environment. Dr. Clifford and his friends know this well enough. They make the young learn by heart that God is jealous and revengeful to the great great grandchildren of his enemies, yet those same children are horrified at a punch on the nose, done for spite to *them*, on their little brother! Nothing is more insisted on in the mechanical teaching of children; and, happily, nothing so absolutely fails to instruct them.

I will not touch on the point of what would happen here in England, were the children to read the bible without the influence of the preconceptions of the

society around them. I believe it impossible, but were it possible, the results would soon bring Dr. Clifford and the rest to the opinion of the Council of Trent, "that it is more harmful than of utility."

From a paragraph in a paper I read recently, but forgot to mark, it appears that each of the great Nonconformist sects, as well as the Roman Catholics and Jews, has a bible of its own. One uses that published by The Trinitarian Society, another that published by the Bible Society; one uses Scott's Bible; and others, those published by other societies, while the Church of England has those of the Universities. In this confusion what does Dr. Clifford purpose to do?

The great object of the present agitation is to prevent sectarian teaching by the simple reading of the bible. But the Roman Church, by a decree of the Council of Trent, has prohibited bible-reading, without the commentary of the Fathers and of learned Catholics. What is to be done? Are we to have to pay for bibles, according to the Catholic version, to be printed for the children, without sectarian notes, seeing that all the existing copies have those notes, and that Catholics are forbidden to produce copies without notes and commentaries under pain of excommunication? Then, should this be done, what is to happen when the priests protest that the reading of those copies by the mere act effects eternal damnation on the irresponsible children—or, at any rate, on their teachers?

Again, what would happen if we Atheists insisted on producing an exact and vernacular literal translation of the bible, and having it supplied to schools at the public expense? Even Freethinkers of the highest education, graduates at the universities, and ex-clergymen, cannot readily conceive how false and modern the translations of the bible are. What will be said when I assert that, of the seven words which form the very first sentence of the Bible, only five are translated at all, and, of those five, three are incorrect and one doubtful? That "In the beginning God created" is given for words which have nothing about "in" nor "the" nor "beginning" nor "God" nor "created" in regard to them? And that, "Gouging out, the chiefs gouged the sky and the land, is the nearest approach in English to the actual words? and that the wilful perversion, of which this is an instance, goes throughout the whole book? Surely, if we are to have this thing in the schools, we have a right to have the article genuine; for, if more of the garbage should become apparent, much of the adulterating poisons with which the Masorites and Christian theologians have "faked" it would be extracted from it.

Will Dr. Clifford consent to give us any but his bible if we conform to his intended legislation? Is he, and are his Passive Resisters, going to tax us, and are they themselves going to pay out for Korans and Books of Mormon, and the other sacred books required by the numerous Mahometans, Latterday Saints, Japanese and Parsees, Hindus and Chinese having families in Great Britain? Are all these respectable householders, taxpayers, and fathers of families, to be deprived of the right Dr. Clifford values so highly—that of having their children instructed in the scriptures they believe to be divine?

But Dr. Clifford's agitation is conducted with an ostentation of bad faith. At one time he calls himself a citizen, and says he is defending the rights of citizens. But when other citizens claim for themselves the right *he* claims for *himself*, he insolently tells them they have the privilege of doing without! He then drops the citizenship, and declares he wishes equality for *religious* bodies. While it suits him, he is "Citizen" Clifford. When the logic of citizenship is brought to him, he is then merely "Pastor" Clifford—to return to "Citizen" Clifford again to the first suitable audience. His conception that bodies whose bible is other than that current among Protestant Englishmen have no injustice done them by being made to pay for the general reading of a book they reject, so long as they are not compelled

by force to read it also, is a perfect specimen of that feminine puzzle-pated fanaticism, that purblind conceit of egoism and absence of reason universally existing among "believers." To Dr. Clifford, it is of vital necessity that the believers in the bible should have the engines of the State to force their beliefs on the generations rising around them—to him, and those he represents, this is a first and essential right; but they cannot conceive that any such right or necessity exists for believers in other scriptures, nor for eclectics who see some good in all scriptures. As long as these pay, and are free from intrusion, no wrong is done them by refusing them the same state force to mould the rising race around *them* which will be *their* future environment! Nothing but the brain-congesting folly of a "Faith" could possess men with so insolent and grotesque a conceit.

The central idea of unsectarian bible reading is, the possibility of giving the children a common instruction in religion similar to the common instruction in other subjects. But suppose the wild idea; that the leaders of all religions agree on one bible, and then on one translation; that all the shrieking sects around, amicably unite to accept one book. Will not the same difficulty arise as to what parts of that book shall be read? Let us assume the book is the bible in the authorised version—we should then be torn asunder on a great "selection" question—whether the bible should be read through from end to end consecutively; or should the teachers have the power of selection? To propose to put little children—and *big children*—to read the bible through, verse after verse—would raise a howl from every sect and party in the land to which this Passive Resistance craze is the merest bleating of lambs. Then, if the teachers be allowed the power of selection, the same dissensions would be forced into the schools; and we should have the big boys and girls stopping short in their lessons to make declarations of conscientious objections against the portions selected for their reading. What hypocrisy to protest against "sectarian" teaching when, by a simple manipulation of texts, any doctrines may be taught while apparently reading a straightforward chapter of the book. Will Dr. Clifford or anyone—the Archbishop of Canterbury or the last Salvationist corporal—deny that it is a common practice to read from the pulpit selected passages from all parts of the bible as one consecutive chapter? But even without this fraudulent perversion—I ask Dr. Clifford the question—would he allow children under his control to have the "This is my Body" and the "discerning not the Body of the Lord" chapters, and "he unto thee as a heathen and a publican" and "delivered him unto Satan" chapters, and the story of the assassination of the Revivalist Queen, Athalia, forced on them without his having the power to prevent their understanding these texts with unsophisticated literalness? Yet under the system he wishes to create this is what would happen to his children forced into Romanist and Anglican schools. And, moreover, would he himself refrain from putting his children to read the story of Elijah, the Book of Judges, or the Acts of the Apostles, even although their parents may be Church people?

But there is a further point. It is not the mass of the people who have to be dealt with, but the aggressive units whom no power can extinguish. It is these who produce the ferment. You may kill John the Baptist, but instantly Jesus throws his plane down and takes his place. Jesus is hanged—when Peter is seized with tongues of fire and rushes out and start preaching at nine o'clock in the morning. One suffices to keep the flame alive. In my own neighborhood there is a school of several hundreds of children, the majority of whom are unmistakably Hebrew; but the master, with great simplicity, told me he had only one Jewish boy in the school. The reality was, there was only one who claimed privileges on account of his religion. But that suffices to keep the religious question open and to create a caste feeling among his crypto-brethren. What would inevitably happen in addition to the

disunion caused by differences as to what should be read, would be religious conflicts caused by the concurrent hatreds of the sects. The imbecile spectacle of men who would unite to listen to an account of the Battle of Hastings in a club-room on the basement, but who would be burnt alive rather than sit on the same bench in the chapel overhead to hear an account of the Conquest of Canaan, would be repeated in the Infant school. In truth, the religious question is not a matter of a book. In France it is not the bible which is the bone of contention, but the crucifix. It is religion itself that is the evil—not its symbols. No matter in what way its presence is insisted on, it is that presence that is the irritant, not its mode. The multiplication table put forth as a litany of beliefs would create all the disunion and "martyrdoms" made by a grotesque, and so-so foreign book like the bible. Now, finally, what after all, is the religion? What is the dissolvent in its substance that sets human society in intestinal warfare? The irritant and poisonous principle in religion is the religion vendor; without the religion-monger and conscience exploiter there would be neither religion nor "persecution."

GEORGE TREBELLS.

Jesus: A Man Made from the Old Testament.

(A Lecture Delivered in Investigator Hall, Paine Memorial, Before the Ingersoll Secular Society).

BY L. K. WASHBURN.

(Continued from page 693.)

There is no historical warrant for the indelicate fable of Matthew; and it is a plain perversion of the meaning of language to make the simple words of Isaiah blush with the suggestions contained in the account of the origin of Jesus. The other passages which the gospel writer has used to help support the fictitious person of Jesus are given a meaning entirely foreign to their connection. Not one of the quotations which is employed by the author of Matthew's gospel in the first and second chapters but what is dishonestly quoted or perverted from its original intention.

It is not a part of my purpose now to verify this assertion, but my statement may be easily demonstrated to be true or false by an examination of the passages referred to. Our gospel-writer, who has made a man out of half-a-dozen texts of Scripture, discovered nothing in the Old Testament, whence he took his materials, that he could twist into a picture of the childhood of his hero, and so we leave Jesus in one chapter a baby and find him in the next a man, about thirty years of age, according to the best orthodox guesses. Not one single biographical fact is furnished of Jesus, up to the time he begins his public career. All that is adduced as evidence of his birth is a version of the Old Testament, said to have been written seven hundred and fifty years before his time. This passage of Scripture from Isaiah is about as much a prophecy of Jesus as the chariot of fire that took Elijah up into heaven is a prophecy of a locomotive. The third chapter of the gospel story introduces a person named John. This person is the forerunner of Jesus, as Elijah preceded Elisha. This John, our gospel-writer informs us, "is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Had John a "raiment of camel's hair?" Elijah is described as a hairy man. Had John a "leathern girdle about his loins?" Elijah was "girt with a girdle of leather about his loins." Did John put his hands of baptism upon Jesus? Elijah threw his prophet's mantle upon Elisha. The writer of Matthew found his character of "John the Baptist" in the book of Kings, where he also found many of the marvellous incidents which he uses in his story

of Jesus. This narrative of Jesus was written by some person who was familiar with the entire text of the ancient Jewish Scriptures, for there is scarcely a book of the Old Testament that he has not borrowed from in building up his hero. He not only finds therein his idea of a Messiah, which is the central figure of his work, but he finds almost every incident in his career, and nearly all the literary embellishment of his work. He has put the brains of the Jewish nation in the head of Jesus. He has put all the "loving kindness and tender mercy" of his race in the heart of Jesus, and has given to the world the ideal man of Israel. The Jesus of Matthew's gospel is a child of the intellect, a man of the imagination, and was never a real physical being any more than was Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean or Goldsmith's Gentleman in Black.

The Gospel of Matthew is the life of a person that never lived, the account of miracles that were never performed, the report of speeches that were never uttered, and the record of events that never transpired. The Christian Church has imposed upon the world a man that never breathed, that never spoke, that never walked the earth. Jesus is a creation of the mind, a fiction, a myth. The author of the Gospel story has added to Jesus the divine element, common to all the religious heroes of the past; but such an element is only further proof of the fraudulent character of the work. Any person who goes about clothed with divinity is entitled to suspicion. It is safe to say that any assumption of divine power or divine authority is a confession of imposition. Every person who has spoken in God's name on this earth has been guilty of imposture. The name of God has been generally employed to deceive man. Divine power is illusion, divine authority is tyranny.

It is time that a right estimate of the word God should be had. I wish to say that any individual who is made to speak or act in the divine name or in the divine behalf is not to be trusted. The church is no more a divine institution, than is a cotton factory. A priest is not doing God's work, but the work of his ecclesiastical superior, and sometimes it is contemptible work that he does. A minister is not speaking the word of God, but is preaching the doctrines of his denomination; and oftentimes such preaching is paltry and worthless. The basest thing in human life is deceit. The basest member of human society is the impostor. The basest man that woman ever bore is the deceiver, and the most contemptible wretch that ever disgraced the form of man is the pious hypocrite. There is too much pretence in the world, too much that is false and deceitful; and there is nothing falsier, nothing that is deceiving the world more, nothing that carries more imposition on its face, than the claim of divine inspiration for the Christian's Bible; of a divine calling for the priest and minister, and of divine authority for the teachings of Christianity.

The Christian superstition must be treated as we treat the Mohammedan superstition, the Mormon superstition, or any other pious delusion. It is time that we had a religion with some brains in it, time that we had respect for moral worth, and it is time that faith in Jesus was confined. The man who is preaching this faith is making a funeral of himself. Dying nations, like drowning men, catch at straws. The Jewish nation, two thousand years ago, was doomed to be destroyed; but when struggling in the giant arms of death it is believed that a miracle would be wrought to save it, and that a king would yet triumphantly hold the sceptre of Israel. The temple was destroyed, Jerusalem was levelled with the ground, and the Jews scattered over the earth. From that moment any notion of a Messiah was madness; and before that event history shows that no Christ appeared to save his people. The story of Jesus has not the power of fact, nor does it give the light of truth. It is a materialisation of the spirit of the Old Testament, in which the hand of the medium is too clearly seen.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

A STRONG EVANGELIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. and Mrs. Albert Harrison, the so-called evangelists of Birkenhead, have been holding a nine days' mission at the Primitive Methodist Chapel here (Bridlington), terminating to-day, October 27. On an evening these mad-brains and their followers have been parading the streets, halting in front of the public-houses and shouting, "Come out of the Devil's house," etc. The invitation, however, does not seem to have met with the same response at Bridlington as Mr. Harrison alleges was meted out to it during their recent visit to Cleethorpes, where (he told his Bridlington audience) his open-air meeting of 1,000 (?) (excuse the mark) strong had such influence over Cleethorpeans that not a drop of intoxicating liquor was sold in the public-houses from 10 to 11 on that particular night. Of course, we must not call Mr. Harrison a liar, as we did not happen to be present at the seaside resort named when this startling event occurred; but we can think what we like, and should respectfully like to have the statement confirmed by a line from some of the publicans who were so influenced by the "Devil-dodgers" howling outside as not to draw the customary pints of half-and-half, and the "wee drap o' Scotch." The absurdity of the story makes one disgusted with a man who would endeavor to push such a yarn down anyone's throat; although there would be those present simple-minded enough to swallow the story as easily as the whale is said to have done "Poor Jonah."

In a pamphlet the evangelists are selling, they allege that three hundred souls were converted during their recent visit to Hull. We don't suppose Mr. Harrison himself, if he returned to Hull, could see any difference for him having been there. He might just as well have said 3,000 or 30,000, we should believe him just as soon. Has Mr. Harrison obtained the exact numbers from the "Lamb's Book of Life," where his (Mr. H.'s) name must certainly be recorded? How is it these glorious life-saving or soul-saving apparatuses have not been awarded the Humane Society's Medal for valor? It must be an oversight.

T. R. J.

"WHY FREETHOUGHT?"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—When an educated apologist makes an attack upon his opponent under the pseudonym of an ordinary spectator it is a sure sign that the former's position is weak indeed. The letter by "A Mere Man in the Street," in last week's issue, savors of the usual Christian charity by designedly confusing and misconstruing our claims and principles. This correspondent knows very well that antagonists to religion adopted the name of "Freethinkers" because they asserted the natural right to think for themselves as opposed to being led on matters of speculation by professors of superstition, aiming to enslave the race, commonly called priests. Your correspondent is again well aware that no real Freethinker contends to be in possession of "final truth" on any matter, seeing that the chief reason of his persistent assailing orthodoxy is because of its dogmatic declarations in this direction.

The glorious work of combating that cancer, ever retarding progress, viz., superstition, is what the Freethinker is doing (in many instances at the risk of losing all that makes life happy) to make his fellow-men better in the future.

The noblest aspirations of mankind consist in not worshipping an unknowable God, whilst we can use our energies to alleviate Nature's bloodshed and carnage. I have yet to learn that by teaching the doctrine that every individual has a right to think, speak, and act as he likes, so long as by doing so it would not affect the liberties of others, that "we are shattering the basis of the highest ideals of mankind."

What we attack is faith, whose foundation, ignorance, has given rise to so many fiendish blots upon history, and to say that this faith is the "very fulcrum of existence" simply means that your correspondent either does not know what he is talking about, or that his veracity has overcome his reason.

It is not necessary here to enunciate "the constructive policy of modern Freethought," and I have no desire to waste time in trying to fit in a substitute for "faith in a Supreme Power," but I wish to tell "A Mere Man in the Street" that if he studies Freethought a little more than his letter attempts to indicate, he will find that it is based on objects which, when carried out, will far eclipse the present blighted, artificial, unequal state of civilisation.

H. W.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

QUEEN'S (Minor) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 8, G. W. Foote, "The Last Christian Statesman: A Candid Study of Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, C. Cohen, "What is Man's Chance of a Future Life?"

FINSBURY PARK DEBATING SOCIETY (Hope Coffee Tavern, Font-hill-road, N.): 7, Debate, "The Real Cause of Poverty." Open discussion.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Coventry I'Anson, "The Ethics of Shakespeare."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, C. Oliver, M.A., "Advance."

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

OUTDOOR

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): Monday, November 9, at 7.30, Debate between Rev. John Tuckwell and James Rowney; subject, "The Atonement."

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): John M. Robertson, 12 noon, "Mr. Chamberlain and his Policy"; 6.30, "Lord Kelvin on Providence."

LEEDS (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, Ernest Pack, "My Latest Fight in the Courts."

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): 3, Ernest Pack, "Christianity a Persecuting Religion."

LEEDS (Trades Hall): 7, Ernest Pack, "The Bible God."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Giordano Bruno"; 7, Ingersoll Memorial Lecture. Discussion Class, Monday evenings, at 8.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. L. Hare, "Some Indian Problems."

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, November 12, at 8, W. Wright, "Churchgoers' Cramp."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Charles Watts, 3, "Bible and Christianity: Mr. Blatchford's Crusade"; 7, "The Case for Rationalism."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Important Business Meeting: Final arrangements for Lectures.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane, Failsworth): 6.30, Concert by Mr. F. B. Grundy's Male Voice Choir.

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