

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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The world is not mad, only in ignorance—an interested ignorance, kept up by strenuous exertions, from which infernal darkness it will, in course of time emerge, marvelling at the past as a man wonders at and glories in the light who has escaped from darkness.—LORD CHATHAM.

The New Blasphemy Prosecution.

I.

READERS of the *Freethinker* will recollect that several paragraphs have been devoted, week after week, in "Sugar Plums" to the bigoted antics of the Leeds police, apparently under the impulsion of the Chief Constable. There is an open space of much public resort on the outskirts of the city, called Woodhouse Moor, which is under the control of the Town Council. All sorts of public meetings are held there, as in the London parks, and all sorts of movements are represented by more or less moving orators. Now it occurred to the Secularists that they might as well take advantage of this opportunity of progaganda. Freethought lectures were accordingly delivered to considerable audiences, at first by Mr. Ward and afterwards by Mr. Pack. This seems to have annoyed the Chief Constable, or persons instigating him, and a regular campaign of persecution was opened against the "infidels." At first they were accused of that vague offence "obstruction." But this was not found to be a very promising method of attack. A more effective one was therefore sought—and found. It was laid down in the Bye Laws that collections could not be taken up, nor literature sold, at the meetings on Woodhouse Moor without the Town Council's permission. This the Secularists applied for, and were met with a refusal. They were not content, however, to submit to this Russian despotism. They held that they were entitled to all the rights enjoyed by their fellow citizens. They could not recognise the right of the Leeds Town Council to wield an intellectual censorship over the inhabitants. They therefore took up collections and sold literature, precisely as was done by other bodies—with or without permission; for it was subsequently proved in court that the police had winked at the constant violation of the Bye Laws as long as the offenders were not Secularists.

Mr. Pack, Mr. Gott, and Mr. Weir were summoned again and again under these broken Bye Laws. The stipendiary magistrate acted with great impartiality, and did not burden the defendants with heavy fines. He said he was satisfied that discrimination had been shown, and that these men had really been prosecuted on account of their opinions. And as long as the magistrate held the scales of justice so evenly the Secularists felt that they stood a fair chance of winning the battle. At any rate, they were not to be tired or frightened; and, as an old campaigner myself, I was pleased to witness their courage and tenacity.

II.

For my own part, although I was very busy and not very well, I let it be known that I was interested in this struggle, and would do what I could to help the right side. Besides giving ample publicity in the

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Freethinker, I wrote to Mr. Pack and Mr. Gott; and when the former asked me to write a letter, as editor of this journal, which he might read to his meetings, I readily did so, although I was so unwell at the moment that I could hardly hold the pen in my hand. I also offered to go to Leeds and lecture or address a meeting indoors; and, of course, it was not my fault if a hall was not, or could not, be obtained for that purpose.

Personally, I wish the fight had continued on the lines chosen by the police; for one side had a good case, and the other side had no case at all; and the natural instinct of fairplay was gradually asserting itself in favor of the Secularists, who were really acting on the defensive, and protecting themselves as well as they could against wanton aggression. When you have a good case, and a winning case, it is a pity to complicate it; and when you are fighting a defensive battle, it is a mistake to multiply the points of attack.

Unfortunately, as I think, the fight has taken quite a new turn. The Freethought combatants laid themselves open to a fresh assault, and the police have seized their advantage. Mr. Pack, Mr. Gott, and Mr. Weir are prosecuted for "blasphemy."

It was the *Truthseeker* that was sold, almost exclusively, I believe, at the Woodhouse Moor meetings; and it is on account of that little monthly that the prosecution is initiated.

Now I wish I had only to say that this prosecution must be resisted, and to hope the Freethought party will do what is necessary to that end. As it is, I *do* say the one, and I *do* hope the other; for I cannot recognise "Blasphemy" as anything but an artificial crime, and all attempts to enforce the Blasphemy Laws, on whatever ground or whatever pretences, must be strenuously opposed. Unhappily, however, I have something more to say.

III.

Let me state, at once, that I am not going to criticise the *Truthseeker*. Others have done that—notably Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who did it with some vehemence a few months ago in the organ of his own party. My notion of the fitness of things has always kept me from such criticism. I take the responsibility of my own journal; let others take the responsibility of theirs; and let the Freethought public decide what it will support. Nothing, to my mind, is more distasteful than Freethought papers, in the same country, giving their candid opinion of each other. I may add that the *Truthseeker*, like all other Freethought periodicals—for we make no exception—has always been sold, and is still sold, at the *Freethinker* publishing office, and regularly sent out in the weekly parcels to customers in all parts of the country.

What I have to say is of a personal character, and I deeply regret the necessity of saying it. But I cannot help myself. I have avoided the task, and it has been forced upon me.

It appears that I bear a certain remote resemblance to Jack Falstaff. He was not only witty in himself, but the cause that wit was in others. And I am not only "blasphemous" in myself, but the cause that "blasphemy" is in others.

Mr. Gott—who, I find, is really responsible for the conduct of the *Truthseeker*—has not got into the

present trouble over his own "blasphemy." He has borrowed mine, without asking me to lend it. The cartoon and the letterpress, which are the sole subject of the present prosecution, were taken from an old number (January 29, 1888) of the *Freethinker*, without so much formality as a "by your leave."

I have referred to this proceeding already in "Sugar Plums," putting my view of it very mildly, because of the fight that was coming. And I hoped that mild protest would be sufficient, and that if Mr. Gott went on "blaspheming," as he had a right to do, he would see to it that his "blasphemy" was at least original. But I am sorry to say I am disappointed. Mr. Gott has lifted another cartoon from the *Freethinker* into the new number of his journal. He has also reprinted an article of mine. And I regret to add that he allows a fellow townsman of his, who ought to know better, to suggest that I "repent" of having printed my old *Freethinker* illustrations. Which is remarkably like adding insult to injury.

IV.

Now I have to say plainly that if Mr. Gott does not understand literary law, and literary etiquette, it is time that he learnt something of both.

The *Freethinker* cartoons cost money as well as mental effort. They are not free property like the atmosphere. Nor would Mr. Gott have dared to use one of them if they treated ordinary subjects and belonged to an ordinary proprietor.

My articles are the fruit of my labor. They are mine. No one has a legal right, no one has a moral right, to publish them without my sanction. And I will not allow anyone to do so. If I am asked for an article, I will say "Ay" or "No" as I please. It is nobody's concern but my own.

Even from the merely moral point of view, my right to the fruit of my labor should be respected—especially by Secularists. It is no easy matter to keep a Freethought paper going. I have kept the *Freethinker* going for nearly twenty-three years, and I hope to keep it going for many years yet. But the difficulty will be increased if those who wish to "read me" are not obliged to go to the *Freethinker* for what they want, but are able to obtain it elsewhere.

It is no answer to say that the reprint of old articles cannot much matter. If an article fifteen years old can be reprinted without my sanction, an article fifteen days old, or fifteen hours old, can be reprinted without my sanction. If I am not to draw the line myself, where on earth is it to be drawn? Anyhow, I intend to draw it myself, and I draw it precisely where my legal and moral rights begin.

I do not mean to remonstrate privately with Mr. Gott any more. I think it advisable to ventilate this matter publicly. There are many reasons for so doing, and one of them is that it minimises the chances of misrepresentation. I therefore say, in this public manner, that I am willing to let bygones be bygones from this moment, for the sake of domestic peace and quietness in the Freethought party, on condition that Mr. Gott gives me an undertaking that he will not repeat the offences complained of. If he does not comply with this condition, he must bear the responsibility of the result.

V.

Since so much has been wrung from me, I will take the opportunity of adding that I have a very serious objection to my work and my name—as a writer and the editor of the *Freethinker*—being paraded in Mr. Gott's journal. I do not wish him to suffer for my "blasphemy," and I do not want him to trade on my "blasphemy." Neither do I wish to appear as an accomplice in his "blasphemy." I desire, and I will have, an independent responsibility. I will help to defend his right to "blaspheme," when it is attacked; but I should be a fool to do more than that for any editor in the world.

When I think it necessary or advisable to reprint the old *Freethinker* illustrations I will reprint them

myself. When I think it necessary or advisable to reprint any old article of mine I will reprint it myself. Meanwhile they shall rest where they are.

VI.

Some people may fancy that I carried on a mere wild-cat attack on Christianity in former days. They are mistaken. I fought with a deliberate method. There was always much more than ridicule and jocosity in the *Freethinker*. My dear old friend and colleague, Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, and I both put the best of our brains into its columns. Ridicule was one of our weapons; it was not the only one. Moreover, we fought fiercely, some say bitterly, because we were profoundly disgusted at the treatment of Charles Bradlaugh by the Christians when he attempted to take his seat in the House of Commons. That outburst of persecution was a revelation to both of us. We clenched our teeth, though a smile was on our faces, and we went into the fight with the object of making the enemy feel our blows. I soon found myself in prison, and he found himself in a worse place, but neither of us "repented," though we were both sensible enough to see that what may be good tactics at one time may be bad tactics at another. Times change, and conditions change, and policies must change with them. It is the unoriginal people who always continue on one line, and fancy others are cowards or hypocrites (or something worse) who meet altered circumstances with a change of front; not a change of principle, but a change of attitude for action. But it is not the unoriginal people, after all, whatever noise they make, who win important victories for any movement.

VII.

Another thing may be said. Not only did I not trade on the "blasphemy" of other English Freethinkers, but I let no one bear the responsibility of mine. It is true that the *Freethinker* was bravely maintained by others while I was in prison, but it is also true that I left written instructions—which were made public—that on no account were illustrations, such as I had been prosecuted for, to be published in the paper during my absence. When I came out of prison I resumed the illustrations, for I never meant that the Christians should intimidate or dictate to me; and the first copy of the first re-illustrated *Freethinker* that was pulled from the press I placed in an envelope, with my card and my compliments, and delivered it personally at the residence of the Roman Catholic judge who sent me to gaol. While there was any danger I persisted in the policy for which I had been attacked. This I did for five years. I then felt, as everybody else did, that the danger had blown over, and that my triumph was complete. The Christians themselves were saying that my prosecution was a mistake, and that it should never be repeated. I was therefore free to modify my policy without the slightest suspicion of cowardice.

VIII.

Nevertheless it was obvious that the Blasphemy Laws could not be repealed. Charles Bradlaugh was strong enough to carry the Oaths Bill, but when he brought in a Bill to repeal the Blasphemy Laws only forty-five members followed him into the division lobby. What he could not do, no one else could hope to do. Mr. Holyoake started a Liberty of Bequest Committee, which I believe still haunts the shadows of Fleet-street, but it never did any practical good. And there is no need for it now, for I have solved the problem on other lines. I devised a scheme for doing all that was aimed at under the existing law. Nobody believed in it at first—perhaps on the principle that it was too good to be true. Everybody believes in it now. The Secular Society, Limited, stands as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar. It has even had the flattery of imitation. In the course of twenty years there may be twenty "advanced" Associations formed on the same model. And if there is any gratitude

left in the world, they may think kindly now and then of the man who found out the way for them.

But I did not suppose that the Blasphemy Laws were dead and done for. People sometimes talk of "obsolete" laws, but no law is obsolete until it is repealed. I often warned the Freethought party of this truth. They now see that I was right.

The stick to beat Freethinkers with still hung on the wall. Many Christians said it should never be used any more. But they left it there. And it was certain that, some day or other, a cowardly bigot would take it down and use it again.

IX.

I have said that I will help to defend any man's right to "blaspheme" when it is attacked. And I have done so in the present case. Mr. Gott advertised in last week's *Freethinker* that "Mr. Foote has already done all that he can to help me." All that could be given in the first instance was advice. I wrote long and careful letters to Mr. Pack, who would probably have to do the speaking for all three defendants. I invited Mr. Pack to come up to London and consult with me, at the expense of the N. S. S. Executive, which I am sure will endorse my action in the emergency. Mr. Pack came up on Monday. I had a long talk with him at my office. What was said, of course, is "not for publication." And I shall gladly be of assistance to him and his co-defendants, in this way, as long as they think it useful. For, I repeat, all prosecutions for "blasphemy" must be resisted, and every Freethinker is bound to take his share in resisting them. I shall not forget *this* duty, whatever happens. No personal grievance, or personal feeling, will be allowed to conflict with it.

I found Mr. Pack, if I may be allowed to say so, in an eminently proper frame of mind. He was far from anxious to go to prison, and equally far from wishing to avoid it by any weakness. He also recognised that the wisest policy was to beat the prosecution *this* side of the prison doors—as that would make it less tempting to the bigots to begin a future prosecution.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether the present summonses will come to anything. Certain weaknesses, indicated by the Stipendiary, and noted in the press reports, may prove fatal to the case. But if the present summonses prove abortive, the Leeds police will probably try fresh ones; for they are evidently annoyed, and the Chief Constable seems thirsting for vengeance. I will not pursue this speculation, however, for prophecy is always a risky business. Sufficient unto the day will be the evil thereof. Whatever it is it will not frighten Freethinkers.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Life.

SOME weeks ago I wrote an article dealing with the fact that religious discussions arouse more virulence than any other. I pointed out that this was so, first because, as religion originated in a condition of mind that the race is now outgrowing, and therefore depended more and more upon an appeal to passion and prejudice; and, secondly, as religious beliefs originated among savages, and as the human mind is governed by the principle of association, any stimulus applied to the religious feelings calls into activity other feelings that belong to the lower strata of human culture.

From a newspaper cutting sent me by a friend, I see that this article served as a text for the Rev. G. B. Theobald, of Bury, when preaching his sermon before the newly-elected mayor of that town. Mr. Theobald describes the article as "ably written," but "amazing." And the amazing thing about the article appears to be that, in describing the rivalries and threatenings and persecutions and slaughterings of the various religious bodies, I have attributed these to religion. "Any unprejudiced student of history," Mr. Theobald

says, "will discern the fact that the blame is not to be laid upon the pure and beautiful religion of Jesus Christ, but upon the imperfect apprehensions and faulty practice of it by many of its professors." Well, I hope that I am an unprejudiced student of history—unprejudiced in the sense of being able to appreciate all the facts that history presents one with, although not in the sense of being without convictions as to the lessons that history teaches—but the more I study history the more convinced I am that religion constitutes one of the greatest forces that stand in the way of an all-round development.

Mr. Theobald also states that my opinions about religion are "dogmatic statements, the burden of the proof of which lies with the man who makes them." Well, I agree that the onus of proof lies with the man who makes the statements, but not that they are dogmatic; for, as a matter of fact, proof was given in the article with which Mr. Theobald is dealing, and more will be given in what follows.

We will start with a few facts that Mr. Theobald will not dispute. It will not be denied that Christians have quarrelled, fought, and murdered each other owing to differences of religious opinion; and it will not be denied that the same cause has led to people of different religions doing the same. Nor will it be denied that people can usually discuss politics, or science, or literature without any of the ill-feeling and positive savagery aroused by religious discussion. And what cannot be questioned either is that, if religion has not been the cause of this savagery and brutality, it at all events has not been able to abolish it. And as it has not abolished it, is it not wide of the mark for Mr. Theobald to expatiate upon the refining influences of the Christian religion, particularly as people have learned to discuss other questions with a greater regard to decency and good behavior?

And here is another fact that will hardly admit of dispute. Not alone has Christianity failed to induce people to discuss a difference of opinion in religion as all other differences should be discussed, but intolerance and savage persecution flourished *more* under Christianity than under any other religion. Christians are fond of holding up Mohammedanism as the religion of persecution. But its history shows it to have been far more tolerant than Christianity. Jews and Christians were allowed to live in peace under Mohammedan rule—under certain restrictions—at a time when unbelievers were being hunted down like vermin by Christians, and Jews compelled to wear a distinguishing mark so that they might the more easily be slaughtered in the periodic massacres that broke out, and which were fomented by Christian priests. Moreover, it is well to remember that the laws against heresy were practically *Christian* creations. In the Roman Empire liberty of religion was universal. So long as one paid decent respect to the religion of the State religious worship was unfettered. And, as Gibbon points out, even when Christians were proceeded against under certain laws that were not primarily aimed at freedom of worship, the procedure was formal, judicial, time was given for defence, and the magistrates frequently suggested means of defence or declined to prosecute.

How was it with Christianity? Instead of persecution being spasmodic, it was persistent. Instead of it being taken up by the governing powers with diffidence, it was inculcated as the highest of all duties. One of the Roman Emperors had advised magistrates not to search for Christians, and not to take notice of anonymous accusations. Christians carried the search for heretics into a man's own household, enquired into his most secret thoughts to discover heresy, tortured witnesses to gain evidence, and placed boxes at Church doors in which anonymous accusations might be deposited. The Roman trial was open and in accordance with the established forms. The Christian trial was in secret; special forms were used in trials for heresy, and special punishments created. Let anyone read history with a really impartial mind and it will be

seen that in every point Christianity rendered persecution more savage, more insistent, and punished with a greater degree of barbarity.

Mr. Theobald will say that all this was due to people's misunderstanding of Christianity. Well, there must be something radically wrong with the presentation of a religion if it can be misunderstood in this manner. And not for a day or a generation only, but for hundreds of years. The greatest of Christian leaders, right up to modern times, upheld the punishment of heretics and the forcible suppression of heresy as one of the most solemn of all obligations. Is it not strange that this religion should be so misunderstood from its inception? This is not usually the case. Usually teachings become corrupted as they get old; Christianity, we are asked to believe, was never understood at all—it was corrupted in its infancy, misunderstood by every one of its exponents and followers, and only properly understood at a period when unbelievers were able to force upon believers a saner and more secular view of life. And, wonder of wonders! it is this religion that has always been corrupted, always misunderstood, that we are asked to believe has had such a refining and purifying influence upon the world.

But I do not believe that savagery and persecution sprang from a misunderstanding of Christianity. I believe it was inherent in it, as it is inherent in all religion. So long as people believe that salvation or damnation for eternity is dependent upon the holding or rejection of a certain belief, so long as people believe in a God who inflicts this punishment or who offers that reward, those disbelieve or believe certain unprovable doctrines, so long the heretic must assume the character of a social danger, a moral leper, one who is to be suppressed at all costs. And surely men who burn their fellows for a difference of opinion here are not worse than the God who, for the same offence, burns them hereafter? The two worst evils from which Europe suffered for centuries were intolerance and celibacy; and they could both claim examples in the persons of God the Father and God the Son.

Mr. Theobald refers to the massacres by Turks, the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, and the Boxer movement in China. Well, but so far as these things were religious they quite support my contention, which is, not that the Christian religion alone is bad, but that all are bad, although there are varying degrees of badness. Let us grant that Mohammedans hate Christians, because they are Christians; that Hindoos and Chinamen massacred Christians for the same reason. What is the legitimate inference? Surely this: that religious beliefs so distort men's judgments and so inflame their passions that social obligations are ignored, and human nature becomes bestialised in consequence.

Mr. Theobald also refers to the French Revolution as proof of the evils of Atheism; and I am bound to say that his history seems all taken from a religious leaflet, and not a good one at that. He speaks of the Jacobins, with Robespierre at their head, as Atheists. But the Jacobins were followers of Rousseau, and deists. Robespierre was always a firm believer in deity, and one of his first acts on getting chief power was to decree that the French people believed in God and the immortality of the soul. It is absurd to speak of the French people at this date as a nation of Atheists. The great work of Freethought in France was in preparing for the Revolution, which was for the whole of Europe a beneficent movement, and which would in all probability have completed its work without bloodshed had not Christian England, in concert with other Christian Powers, worked to plunge the French people back into the degradation from which they had just emerged.

Really the French Revolution, with or without its excesses, is evidence in favor of my main contention. For centuries the French people had been enjoying the "refining" influences of Christianity. Fourteen centuries of Christianity found a nation of twenty-five millions ruled by a dissolute clergy and nobility; found the land held by a few, the revenue of the country spent by a few; no man's life secure, no

woman's honor safe. The people had been treated like beasts by Christian rule, and whatever their behavior may have been, it was the outcome of the treatment they had endured for centuries. And, treated as they were, there was one thing worse than revolution—submission. Mr. Theobald only follows religious traditions in sorrowing for those who were killed by the outbreak of a nation struggling for freedom from intolerable wrongs, and passing by unnoticed the multitudes who were butchered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

C. COHEN.

Desperate Apologetics.

It has been known for some years that Christian Apologists are at their wits' ends, being fully aware that the old arguments for Christianity are no longer serviceable. The proof from Scripture and from miracle has been abandoned as utterly futile, and as yet no new proof has been duly matured. A new Apologia that will convince everybody has not been discovered. The only thing about which present-day defenders of the faith are absolutely positive is, that the former proofs cannot be employed. In the late Professor Bruce's great work on the subject, so many admissions and concessions are made in the interests of truth, and the utter difficulty of making *any* evidence intelligible to non-believers is so frankly stated, that one can easily see that honest Christian thinkers are deeply conscious of the essential vulnerableness of their position. Many of them still cling, however, to the belief that the Bible is the main seat of authority, and that to it the final appeal should always be made. That was the position of Dr. Bruce himself, even to the end of his life, although there were indications towards the close of his strenuous career that his faith in the Bible was under a cloud, but the majority of theologians to-day are casting about for some new argument by which to justify and fortify their faith. They are in a state of pitiable desperation. Sensible of the fact that the Higher Criticism has completely demolished the Bible as the Book of God, their endeavour is to find the Book of God written with invisible ink on the tablets of their own hearts, and to constitute their own Christian consciousness the supreme seat of authority, both for themselves and others. That the attempt will fail is as certain as that the sun will rise tomorrow morning. Let us briefly analyse the situation.

The central claim is that Christianity does not stand or fall by the Bible, but by the experience or consciousness of its professors. That is to say, if a man *feels* that the Christian Religion is true, that *feeling* is his proof that it is true. Surely there is no argument in so absurd an assertion. If I deeply *feel* that my brother died half an hour ago, can that be regarded by anybody as a sufficient evidence of his death? If I were to *feel* with vehemence that the City Temple was burnt to the ground last night, would that convince anyone that such a calamity actually occurred? And yet thousands of Christians aver that Christianity stands or falls by *feeling*. Archdeacon Wilson maintains "that the Christian Faith does not, and cannot, possibly stand or fall with the scientific and historic accuracy of the record of any event or transaction in history whatever." This strange statement was made in a public lecture which was supposed to be a reply to Mr. Blatchford's powerful articles against Christianity in the *Clarion*. The Rev. R. J. Campbell and other Nonconformist leaders have often indulged in similar expressions. Of course, until Criticism had exposed the glaring inaccuracies of the Bible, the orthodox Church would have unmercifully denounced such a ludicrous position; but now, in her parlous condition, she is ready to catch at any straw, and to be devoutly thankful for the opportunity. Now, I ask, what is the Christianity that is said to be so

beautifully independent of the Bible? What are its contents? What are its fundamental doctrines? Are the Virgin Birth, the Baptism, the Public Ministry, the atoning Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, among them? Can I be a Christian without believing in a single one of those alleged facts? If so, what else is there in which I can believe? I am told that I must believe in an idealised, spiritual Savior; but if the idealised, spiritual Christ never existed in actual fact, what is he but a dream, the creation of man's imagination? On this ground, Christianity comes before us as a *man-made* religion, quite as human in its origin and development as any other religion. The appeal to consciousness is thus fatal to the belief in the special divinity of Christianity.

But the strangest feature of this modern appeal to consciousness or experience is that it can renew its strength only by a constant reference to certain alleged facts or transactions in history. Go to any church or chapel you please, and you will find the Four Gospels treated as if they were a fourfold biography of a historical Christ, and the whole Bible referred to as the only rule of faith and conduct. Children are still taught that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he lived a benevolent, self-denying life, that he performed miracles, that his death was an acceptable atonement to God for the sins of the world, that he rose from the dead and went up to heaven in a luminous cloud; and I am certain that the only impression left on the minds of the scholars is that, in the opinion of their teachers, Jesus Christ actually lived and died on earth as the only begotten Son of God, and that salvation is impossible without believing such facts. From the pulpits the Resurrection of Christ is still presented as the corner stone of Christianity; this is incontrovertible; and yet when face-to-face with the unquestioned results of the Higher Criticism, the preachers say, "Christianity does not stand or fall with the Bible, but with the Christian Consciousness." But if the virgin birth, the expiatory death, and the resurrection, as described in the Gospels, are myths, common to most religions, on what is the Christian Consciousness based? On myths and legends? When the argument is presented in this form the only retort these modern apologists make is this: "You do not understand our position, because you lack spiritual discernment." That was what Archdeacon Wilson said of Mr. Blatchford. Dealing with the statement that "there is no past tense in the proper sphere of religion," this dignity of the Church of the Thirty-nine Articles said, referring to the editor of the *Clarion*: "I know—at least, I feel sure—that such an expression will bewilder him. If faith does not mean believing that something happened, what in the world can it mean?" In the first Epistle of John we read: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist." Does Archdeacon Wilson doubt the divine inspiration of that emphatic declaration? If he does not, then the Christian faith *does* mean believing that something happened; but if nothing *did* happen, if the events recorded in the Gospels as having happened in the person of Jesus of Nazareth are said to have happened, in a like manner, in the persons of a thousand pagan Christs, what is there left for a man to believe in order to be a Christian? On what does the Christian Consciousness rest if not on history? This is a plain question, and it is capable of a straightforward answer. Shall we get it? The Rev. Dr. Davison, as reported in the *Methodist Times*, told the Free Church ministers of Birmingham the other day that "within the Church were many who denied all the leading doctrines, such as the virgin-birth of our Lord, the atonement, the resurrection of Christ, and man's immortality, and yet claimed to be Christians." That is to say, there are many within the Church who already believe that the stories contained in the Gospels are myths and legends, and who virtually admit that the Christian Consciousness of

which they boast is the creation of their own fancy. The Free Church ministers of Birmingham, however, are not satisfied with that platform, for they avowed their firm belief in all the leading doctrines of the Gospel.

Thus the Church is now a house divided against itself even on the fundamentals of its faith. One section either has abandoned, or is prepared, if need be, to abandon the Bible. At any rate, it has already declared its independence of the Scriptures. The other section still adheres to the documents, and loudly declaims against the Higher Criticism. To this section belongs the *Guardian* which joins in the cry for "Popular Apologetics." It is out of sympathy with the advanced school, on the one side, and in mortal fear of the destructive school on the other, and it urges that some "mission preachers and lay workers," should be commissioned to answer "men like Huxley, Haeckel, Matthew Arnold, and Laing." The comicality of such a suggestion is irresistible. But the *Guardian* is quite right in its contention that unless something is done soon the situation will become hopeless. The Church is truly alarmed at the wonderful "recrudescence of Rationalism," and deeply sensible of the pressing need of doing something to counteract it. But a church divided against itself cannot long stand. Between the two divisions the people are slipping through into unbelief, and the Church is being deserted. Apologetics may be multiplied a hundred times, "mission preachers and lay workers" may spend and be spent in the attempt to answer Messrs. Foote and Blatchford, and the cheap reprints of the R.P.A., but let the *Guardian* and the *Methodist Times* bear in mind that the battle against Belief is only beginning, that the Iconoclasts are at present merely getting their big guns into position, as Mr. Frazer puts it in the Preface to the new edition of the *Golden Bough*, and that, as a rule, "mission preachers and lay workers" have neither guns nor ammunition. Hence gallant Mr. Ballard and his associates are quite justified in the statement that "the outlook is most serious," and that "everything in the modern atmosphere is tending away from Christianity." That is literally true. People are shaking off the cruel yoke of superstition and learning to recognise Reason as their sole guide in all matters, and pure, altruistic service as their supreme end.

JOHN LLOYD.

Why Dowie Failed.

THE reason for John Alexander Dowie's unpopularity in New York is somewhat obscure. I attribute his failure to beginning wrong. He should have come alone and begun in a small and modest way to enlist followers. With all his preliminary advertising he raised expectations that he couldn't fulfil, and with his abuse of the community he had us hostile in advance. It is rather silly to say that Dowie failed to attract us because New York does not welcome humbugs. It dotes on them. When "General" Booth of the Salvation Army was here New Yorkers swarmed about him like flies around something offensive. And to show that Manhattan is not provincial, and to convince the old gull that the love of humbug is a national sentiment, we had the President represented at Booth's meeting. Booth is in Dowie's class, and outside that class there are still more monumental frauds. I do not need to mention any but the Pope; he is the envy of them all.

Maybe Dowie is a blackguard, but he is not the original one. With the help of a concordance nine out of ten of his favorite epithets could be traced to the pages of Holy Writ, and it could be shown that Dowie is a persistent plagiarist of the prophets of the Old Testament and of the principal speaker in the four Gospels. He goes to these inspired blackguards for all that is richest in his vocabulary. Of course Dowie is a blackguard, and, lacking in originality, if called upon to characterise Paine and Ingersoll, he would probably adopt the language of a late historian. He would call Paine a "filthy little Atheist" (did anything ever sound more like a Dowieism than that phrase?), and allude to Ingersoll as a "shining light" among Freethinkers, who "deem a bladder of dirty water the most appropriate weapon with which to attack Christianity." And he would be as insensible as the man he copied from that he had just named his own favorite weapon.

—George Macdonald (New York "Truthseeker").

Acid Drops.

Miss Frances Power Cobbe, who some time ago mixed up Atheism with Vivisection, is now vexed because Mr. J. H. Levy, in the *Individualist*, protests too vehemently, and even bigotedly, as she says, against the mixing up of Atheism with Vivisection by the two Swedish ladies who wrote the *Shambles of Science*. Miss Cobbe must have her say, of course, but we are glad to see that she is penitent for her own offence. We judge so by the advice she now gives to others, not to use Atheist as a term of reproach. At the same time, she cannot help indulging in the old orthodox sentimentalism about good Atheists being good Christians without knowing it. She says that "in his attitude towards vivisection Colonel Bob Ingersoll is the orthodox Christian and Monsignor Vaughan the heretic." Very likely this is meant as a compliment to Ingersoll, but if he could read it he would no doubt smile at it as the mere silliness of bigotry turned inside out. Miss Cobbe is entitled to wear any label she pleases; she is not entitled to fix it on other people.

In the same number of the *Abolitionist*, which is the organ of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, there is an article (quite in Miss Cobbe's old vein) against the Utilitarian theory of morals. The writer is small-minded enough to think that morality will be lost altogether if his (or her) theory be not accepted. It is deliberately asserted in this article that if the views of the moral sense set forth in Darwin's *Descent of Man* were generally adopted, the "knell of the virtue of mankind would have been sounded." Fancy writing in this way of a theory held by such reformers as Bentham and Mill, and such thinkers as Darwin and (practically) Spencer! Miss Cobbe, or her contributor, might reflect that moral action precedes theories of morality as much as reasoning precedes logic or language precedes grammar. It might also be remembered that writing libels on Utilitarianism in an Anti-Vivisectionist journal is not exactly the way to secure the co-operation of Utilitarians.

It is reported that Mr. Stephen Coleridge has had to pay, not only the £2,000 damages in the Vivisection libel case, but about £3,000 more in the shape of costs. The pen of a Swift would be needed to do justice to such a scandal.

Mr. Josiah Nix, the gentleman who used to run a soul-saving show at the Derby, has been carrying on a ten days' mission at Kingston Chapel, Hull; and the *Daily News* gives a glowing account of its extraordinary success. It seems that special efforts were made to "capture the drunkards"—who, if they were drunk enough, must have been an easy prey. One night "the workers" gathered for a 10.15 prayer meeting; at 10.45 they sallied out with a brass band and a lot of lantern and torch bearers, with the object of "annexing the publicans, their potmen, and customers." We are not told how many publicans and potmen they annexed, but they are reported to have done fairly well with the customers. "Scores of these tipsy men and women," we read, "were induced to sign the pledge and begin a new life." How long they kept the pledge, and how many hours the new life lasted, are questions that, as usual, are not answered. "The rest is with the Lord"—and it often stays there.

Here you have the good old foolish method of Christian reform in a nutshell. "Conversion" they call it. They have been "converting" the world in this way for the best part of two thousand years, and the result is not encouraging. A punster might call it "Nix." You take a man in liquor, worry him, frighten him, and get him to sign the pledge. And you fancy you have made a tectotaller! But your fancy is not supported by figures. Drink statistics show that the religious conversion of drunkards has as much effect on the liquor trade as water has upon a duck's back. What else indeed could be expected? The world never was, and never will be, improved by the sensationalism of professional mountebanks.

This sort of thing is becoming pretty common now; the reason being that Christianity has to resort more and more to sensationalism to make up for its loss of intellectual hold upon the people. Gipsy Smith has just been conducting a "mission" at Highbury, and a principal feature of his work there has been late street processions and midnight meetings. The same thing obtained at his Northampton "mission." According to the *British Weekly*, from six to eight hundred people "mostly young, and more or less under the influence of drink" were present at one of his midnight

meetings. Now we believe the Northampton public-houses close at eleven o'clock, and if these young people were tipsy at twelve o'clock what must have been their condition an hour earlier? On the whole, we are inclined to say that getting "young people"—tipsy or otherwise—together at midnight meetings is an extremely curious way of promoting morality. Whether it promotes religion or not, is a question we leave to the Churches.

Jesus Christ has just received a valuable testimonial. The Rev. R. J. Campbell says, in the *British Weekly*, that he has been "greatly struck lately with the force and beauty of our Lord's teaching" on the theme of prayer. As the oracle of the City Temple is now recognised as a great authority in religious circles, we dare say Jesus Christ is sincerely thankful for this kind appreciation. We are aware, of course, that there are unfeeling sceptics who may suggest that only an Evangelical worm of the dust would venture to patronise his God in this way.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite"—but the verse is somewhat musty. A fight in a church recently occupied attention at the South-Western Police Court, London. David Grundy tried to get possession of a pew in St. Barnabas Church, Clapham-common, in which Robert Jones, another renter, had barricaded himself. Mr. Jones was not a passive resister, and ructions ensued, in the very House of God. For this pious display of muscular Christianity, Mr. Grundy had to pay five guineas costs, and find a surety in £10 to be of good behavior for twelve months.

The Church Missionary Society, through [the Rev. S. Baring Gould, states that human flesh was sold and eaten during the horrible famine in the Kwang-Si province of Southern China; the flesh being usually that of executed criminals. Very shocking, no doubt! But is it as bad as vivisection? And, after all, if the poor people were reduced to this extremity, it was "Providence" that sent the famine. It must be admitted, too, that if "Providence" is the same party as Jehovah, he or it is an old practitioner in this line. Jehovah promised to bring about famine, in the siege of cities, in which mothers should cook and devour their own children. Perhaps the Church Missionary Society will give this aspect of the matter its candid consideration.

In a Liverpool-street Station refreshment room the other day a clergyman asked for some brandy, and while drinking it he fell back dead. It was the Rev. William Fraser Nash, aged 68, assistant curate of a City church. According to medical evidence at the inquest, the unfortunate man of God suffered from heart disease, and we dare say he took the brandy to alleviate his distress. We are not blaming him for a moment. But suppose he had been a Secular lecturer instead of a Church curate, would the heart disease have interfered with the moralisings of the religious press? Would they not have made the most of the death of the "wretched infidel" struck down "with the fiery fluid in his wicked hand"?

Guy Middleton, a Lambeth mineral water manufacturer, being in the Bankruptcy Court, explained his insolvency by saying that he decided, ten years ago, to supply only those who did not sell alcoholic liquors, and who closed their premises on Sunday. Even his sublime Sabbatarianism was not blessed by "Providence," for his profits dwindled away, apparently to a vanishing point. The Christian temperance people, and the Lord's Day Societies, ought really to get up a handsome subscription for this martyr.

Now and then one does get a genuine home truth from the pulpit. Dr. John Watson (Ian Maclaren) told an audience the other day that success in the pulpit depended "not so much upon capacity as upon a certain fluency, together with a certain tone which seemed to give a pledge of piety, and a presence that is palatable to the congregation. They can be carried away by a windbag with two sermons full of apocryphal anecdotes and conventional arguments." This probably explains the popularity of several preachers whom we could name, and who are at present being boomed for all they are worth.

Some burglars broke into Mrs. Eddy's house the other day, and stole a number of articles of value, including many presents made to her by her followers from various parts of the States. Mrs. Eddy does not believe that there is any such thing as disease; she says it is all imagination. One has only got to think one is well, and disease vanishes. If this doctrine applies all round, Mrs. Eddy need only think

that the articles have *not* been stolen, and the case will be put right. Failing this, if the founder of Christian Science had only thought a policeman into the house as the burglar, or thought the burglar out of the house, or thought her property into some more secure place of deposit, she would not now be mourning the loss of her goods. Somehow "Christian Science" seems to break down in instances where it might be of value.

"The Nonconformist Conscience" has a curious case to deal with in Cambridgeshire. The Chesterton Board of Guardians placed a child, whose parents had been members of the Church of England, out to board with a Church of England family. After two years the foster parents left the Church, and joined the Baptists. The Local Government Board thereupon requested that the child should be handed over to a family belonging to the Church of England. The Guardians decided to "pass on to the next business." Now, we are far from saying that the Guardians were wrong in their action. If the child was with people who treated it well, the Guardians did the wisest thing in declining to risk the danger of a transfer. Still, we fancy if the circumstances had been of another kind, and the foster parents had joined the Church instead of leaving, there would have been a deal of shrieking about the unjust proselytising of the Church people. As it is the Nonconformist Conscience has said nothing about the matter.

The Rev. J. H. Jowett, the well-known Nonconformist, having sought the Lord and thought the matter over, has resolved to join the Passive Resisters. His conscience forbids him to "pay that portion of the education rate which is levied for sectarian religious teaching." On the other hand, of course, he is quite willing to compel his fellow-citizens to pay for what he and his like choose to call "unsectarian religious teaching." And the man talks about his "conscience"!

Our attention has been drawn to some correspondence which we overlooked in the *Morning Leader* on "Religion in Schools." Mr. Harold C. Morton, of Ilford, probably a reverend gentleman of the Nonconformist persuasion, replied to a letter by Mr. Arthur Elderkin in favor of Secular Education. Mr. Morton had the coolness to say that he had "never yet known the dogma of the Trinity, or even that part of it called by Mr. Elderkin the Deity of Christ, taught in a Board school." Indeed! Why everybody knows it has been taught under the London School Board, and by the Board's express order. A circular was sent by the Board to all the teachers in its schools, reminding them that they were expected, as part of their duty, to teach the doctrine of the Trinity, and that it was necessary to lay special emphasis on the deity of Christ. This circular was the result of an historic agitation. The Rev. Mr. Coxhead started it by informing the Board that a boy who had been asked "Who was the father of Jesus?" replied "Joseph." This awful heresy drove the Board wild, and its feelings had to be eased by issuing the aforesaid circular. Mr. Morton had better try again.

We have seen Board school syllabuses of religious instruction in which Jesus Christ is referred to as "Our Lord." Is not this a reference to his deity? Jesus Christ is surely not the "Lord" of those who believe he was only a man—if he ever existed at all.

Good old Passive Resistance! At a recent sale of goods belonging to a Baptist minister and two professors at the Memorial College, Brecon, the auctioneer's voice was drowned by the singing of hymns. When the sale was over he was favored with a paraffin lamp that struck him full in the chest. Such is *passive* resistance. What would it be if it became *active*?

The latest phase of Passive Resistance is Passive Resistance by proxy. It appears that some property is owned by the trustees of the Major-road Baptist Chapel, Stratford New Town, and the tenants pay their rates in their rent to the trustees. The trustees, however, declined to pay the Education rate, and the tenants were summoned at the West Ham Police Court as defaulters. The usual order of distress was made. But a loquacious gentleman, who really had nothing to do with the case—the Rev. Knight Chaplin, pastor of the Chapel—declared that if the tenants paid the rate under a distress warrant they would do so on their own responsibility. This is all very pretty—especially for the poor tenants, who are thus placed between the devil and the deep sea. We dare say Pastor Chaplin thinks it is a pure matter of conscience. That it affects the pockets of people who have nothing to do with his conscience is probably (in his opinion) a very trivial

matter. Ordinary persons, however, will have their own opinion about the morality of this proceeding.

The Rev. F. W. Aveling, of Christ's College, Blackheath, has made an agonising discovery. "Out of 31,315 elementary school departments," he says, "there are 16,410 wherein no head teacher may be appointed unless he is a member of the State Church, and 1,799 wherein no one may be appointed unless he is a Roman Catholic." How sad!—for Nonconformists who want to be head teachers, and feel they have not chance enough in the odd 13,896 school departments. But what about those who are neither Churchmen, Catholics, nor Nonconformists? There are 31,315 school departments in which they have no chance at all—unless they play the hypocrite or studiously keep their heresy to themselves. Of course there is nothing agonising to Mr. Aveling, at present, in this fact; but we invite him to give it a little attention, and to tell us what he thinks of it. We are in no hurry; his convenience will be ours; only we should like to hear from him before his funeral—or ours.

Dr. Macnamara, M.P., taking part in a debate at the Robert Browning Settlement, Walworth, on "The Future of the Education Problem," while welcoming the new Education Act in some respects—for it is a good thing financially for the members of the Teachers Union which Dr. Macnamara represents—he protested against its perpetuation of "a denominational religious test in respect of 20,000 head teachers." Apparently there would be nothing to complain of, in Dr. Macnamara's opinion, if the religious test were not denominational. Is this what he means? Does he believe in the wisdom and justice of religious tests at all? And if so, will he kindly explain how there can possibly be religious tests which are *undenominational*? It is really true that Dr. Macnamara applied a little logic to this problem.

Dr. Macnamara ended by warning religious bodies of all sorts that the direct result of continued squabbling would be the prompt and complete secularising of State education. Well, what harm would there be in that? Dr. Macnamara has publicly stated that English parents do not care a straw about the "religious instruction" which is the cause of this sectarian squabble. Why then does he affect to believe that Secular Education would, in some mysterious way, be a national misfortune?

We should really like to know how much religious belief Dr. Macnamara has *himself*. This is a point on which the public is entitled to information. No man has a moral right to discuss the value of religious education, and keep his own views up his sleeve. We invite Dr. Macnamara to indulge in a little honest self-revelation.

Dickens's humour is so extremely forcible that it generally seems out of just focus, so to speak, and perhaps nothing he ever wrote appears more so than his description of the society which sent moral pocket-handkerchiefs to the natives of Africa. That was half a century ago, but the facts of the missionary craze at the present are even more grotesque, as is shown by the following paragraph which appeared in the *Morning Post* of Nov. 27:

"LINKED IN FAITH.—The feature of a bazaar opened by Lady William Cecil in Scarborough yesterday in support of the funds of the Scarborough Church Missionary Society was the exhibition of an artistic patchwork quilt made by the ladies of the Scarborough Gleaners' Working Party to be presented to the young King David of Uganda, who has embraced the Christian Faith."

Pocket-handkerchiefs are absurd enough, but a *quilt*—a patchwork quilt—for a nigger at the equator, and that nigger a young fellow and, moreover, a king, and sent to him from a coast town on the east of the North of England, just as the English winter commences! This isolation of a State institution maintained at incredible cost in the teeth of an active minority of the nation by the dead-weight of the indifferent majority of the people, and this brilliant specimen of the love of Mother Church for her shivering children—of the Torrid Zone—was put forth under the auspices of a lady bearing the family name of the late Prime Minister. Linked in Faith! Linked by a patchwork quilt in Faith with a king of Uganda! Christians may make the Lord's ways as mysterious as they choose, but is it necessary they should be idiotic? After sending a quilt to a nigger at the equator from the North-east Coast at the beginning of December—what next?

It is reported, we know not with what truth, that Old Dowie has got himself into financial straits, and is appealing to his followers throughout the world for immediate aid, on the ground that Zion City is in danger of going under the

sheriff's hammer. Napoleon had his Moscow, and Old Dowie appears to have had *his*—at New York. His raid upon that unholy city was a dismal failure. Nobody was converted; and, worse still, the dollars trickled in instead of flowing. Poor Old Dowie!

Canon Strange has been standing up for the peppery old Athanasian Creed at Birmingham. He is in favor of retaining it, damnation clauses and all. He said it was a standard of divine truth, and men rejected it at their peril. God damned nobody; if the door was slammed on anybody, it was his own fault if he was on the wrong side of it. And so on, and so on. This amiable discourse was delivered to a select company at the Grand Hotel. Many ladies, as well as gentlemen, listened to it with great satisfaction. They thought themselves on the right side of the door; and perhaps they were right; but you can never be sure, you know.

We have more than once referred to the case of "Colonel" Lynch, the Australian Irishman, who is in prison for having quixotically fought for the Boers, and still more quixotically come to England and submitted himself to arrest. Perhaps he trusted to the generosity of England. If he did so, we regret to say that he was mistaken. England did one of the meanest things conceivable in imprisoning him. Technically, he had committed a crime; morally, he had proved the courage of his convictions; and a brave nation cannot afford to be hard with brave men, for it means a loss of self-respect. For our part, we should have said a great deal more on this subject, but Mr. Lynch is a Freethinker, and we were afraid that our advocacy might injure rather than assist him. We have asked, however, what the Irish party were doing. Were they content to let Mr. Lynch languish in an English prison because he was an "infidel" as well as a patriot? Fortunately, one member of the Irish party has plucked up resolution enough to address the Home Secretary. Mr. Swift MacNeill has pointedly asked why Mr. Lynch is alone exempted from the political amnesty extended to political offenders after the King's visit to Ireland? Was it because he was elected by Galway against a member of the Government? This is a shrewd thrust, and we are not surprised that Mr. Akers-Douglas has promised that the matter "shall receive his consideration." We venture to say that the King himself would have earned the applause of all but bigots if he had personally exercised his prerogative in this case. No one will thank him now, for the gracious moment has passed.

Carrie Nation, the Kansas saloon-smasher, is still going strong on the Christian temperance ticket. The other day she paid a visit to the White House and demanded to see President Roosevelt. Of course he was "not at home." She said she would wait, and she kept quiet for the astonishing space of half an hour. Then she broke out, and policemen had to drag her from the building. Subsequently she went over to the Senate Chamber and indulged in prohibition oratory from the public gallery. She had to be dragged out of that too. Evidently the poor woman is a bit touched. But that does not prevent her from being a very good Christian. Quite the contrary.

A man and woman have been arrested in British Guiana for throwing their infant into a pit of fire as a sacrifice to an offended deity who had afflicted the village with sickness. English Christians will applaud this arrest, and say that the father and mother who slew their child in that way were fiends. Yet these same English Christians worship a God to whom such sacrifices were common. The proof is to be found in the Old Testament. Even in the New Testament this same Jehovah, as God the Father, refuses to be pacified without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Christian Science has won a victory in America, which may ultimately have some influence on the treatment of Peculiar People in England. Sylvia Bishop and her husband were indicted for manslaughter in Ohio on a charge of refusing to call in a physician for their child, which died. They were acquitted, but the State filed exceptions to the verdict. These were overruled, however, by the Supreme Court. According to the report which reaches this country, the right of believers in Christian Science was upheld to refuse to call in a physician to treat minor complaints. Apparently the Lord may be trusted with small ailments, but serious cases require a doctor.

"General" Booth has been in Paris lately, presiding at a Congress of the European contingent of his world-wide "Army." We read that he "admits the slowness of the Army's efforts in France." Probably "efforts" should read "progress." And this, of course, is not surprising. France

is the last country in the world for the Salvation Army to succeed in. The French people have sometimes gone mad, but they never were imbecile.

Bishop Jayne, of Chester, had a warm reception lately at Birkenhead. The Kensitites practically broke up his meeting and waited for him outside. But not desiring to earn a martyr's crown of glory, his lordship executed a strategic retreat by the rear, and got away safely to his home. We beg pardon; his palace.

While expostulating with the Kensitites, the Bishop described them as a "reforming mob." The "mob" is certain, anyway; the "reform" is a matter of speculation.

The Bishop, however, has played the part of a mobsman himself before now. Did he not get up at a meeting in Chester, a good many years ago, and declare that the worst ill-users of children in this country were working-class Secularists? It was an infamous lie, although his lordship was backed up by the Rev. Mr. Waugh. Mr. Waugh has since unsaid the falsehood and apologised for it. Bishop Jayne is still impenitent. His motto is, "The lie I have told I have told." Yet a pious paper describes him as "the kindest of men."

Prebendary Reynolds has just got hold of a nice plum in the City of London—the rectory of St. Mary Aldermary, worth about £900 a year with free residence. Nevertheless he retains his former job as Chief Inspector of Schools in the Diocese of London. Yet men like this have the face to stand up in public and talk about the sorrows of the poor clergy. Why, in the name of common decency, don't they set the Church house in order from the inside?

Dr. R. A. Torrey, the American revivalist, who is at present on a soul-saving expedition to Great Britain, has written another letter to Mr. W. Cain, of Liverpool—the previous letters to whom have been noticed in our columns. Dr. Torrey says he has "a better use for his time" than replying to "attacks" on him in the *Freethinker*. This is mere humbug. We made no attack on Dr. Torrey. We replied to his own gratuitous attacks on Paine and Ingersoll. He declared, for instance, that Paine took another man's wife with him to France and lived with her there. We asked him for evidence of the truth of this declaration. He did not give it. He does not give it now. He cannot give it. And there is one short, sharp English word of four letters that properly describes him. He also made a statement about Colonel Ingersoll having been frightened out of a libel action by a Rev. Mr. Dixon. He now says he has "received the facts" from America, but "damaging as they are to Colonel Ingersoll" he will not use them, because he has "no desire to blacken his reputation, even though it could be justly done." This is viler humbug still. Dr. Torrey first makes the most odious charges against Ingersoll, and when he is taken to task he develops a sudden tenderness for Ingersoll's reputation. Ingersoll's reputation does not want Dr. Torrey's tenderness. Let this preacher cultivate a little tenderness for his own reputation. He says in this letter to Mr. Cain that he is "concerned with principles, not with men." Then how is it that he tells Christian audiences libellous lies about leading Freethinkers? And how is it that he only makes insolent faces and cowardly retreats when he is asked for proof?

Dr. Torrey has told more than one lie about Ingersoll. He has declared, for instance, that Ingersoll was concerned in sending indecent books through the American mails. On the face of it, this was a most absurd falsehood, for Ingersoll was not a publisher nor a bookseller. When off the Free-thought platform he was a distinguished lawyer. His own writings, which not even the biggest Christian liar in the world ever suggested were indecent, were published by Mr. Farrell. But there is more than *a priori* disproof of Dr. Torrey's libel on Ingersoll, as our readers will see when they read our leading article in the next *Freethinker*. We intended to write on the subject this week, but our time and space have been occupied by other matters which could not be postponed.

An English bishop owned a portable bath-tub, which he failed on one occasion to take with him on a pastoral visitation. When he returned he found that the housemaid had used the beloved tub. Calling her into his study, he said, kindly: "Mary, I do not so much mind your using my tub, but what I object to is, that you should do behind my back what you would not do before my face."

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Saturday, December 5, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester, at 8, "Progress and Breeding: with special reference to Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*."

Sunday, December 6, Leicester Secular Hall, at 6.30, "The Last Christian Statesman: a Candid Study of Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*."

To Correspondents.

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

W. ATKINSON.—Thanks for the references. It is no part of our business, however, to follow up Mr. Ballard's criticisms of Mr. Blatchford, who may well be left to take care of himself.

N. D.—Cuttings are always welcome.

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

E. CHAPMAN.—See paragraph.

F. HOWARD.—We have made an exception this time on the lecturer's account, but please note that we do not undertake to print lecture notices unless they come to us from some *bind jide* organisation.

BOSTON INVESTIGATOR.—You do not reach us as regularly as we should like—for you are one of our appreciated exchanges. We have received the number containing Mr. Washburn's nineteenth letter from England, but not the two numbers immediately preceding. We should esteem it a favor if you would see that those two numbers come along.

D. J. W.—What do you mean by saying "I was sorry to find the absence of your pen in last week's *Freethinker* through a cold?" Our own pen was responsible for about nine columns in that number. Thanks for the cuttings, including those from America.

CELSUS.—We cannot undertake to explain to you the "meaning of the phrase 'religious faculty.'" You must apply to someone who uses it. We are not even aware that there is such a faculty. Whether there can be religion without belief in a god is obviously a verbal question; that is, it all depends on the definition of religion.

RANK AND FILER.—You were mistaken about that chance meeting at Newcastle. We must have been hurrying to catch the train. We should be pleased to meet you anywhere. Why did you not speak to us at the Queen's Hall meeting.

M. B.—Thanks for cuttings. The "Musings" are just a little too slap-dash this time, and the political references somewhat gratuitous.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—Received with thanks.

A. E. Q.—Pleased to read your good opinion of Mr. Lloyd.

G. KERSLEY.—Thanks. We note your opinion, though we cannot agree that the *Freethinker* has suffered materially. We have not heard that its interest has diminished during the past twelve months.

J. J. WALKER hopes the *Pioneer* will continue, and intends to take six copies monthly for distribution amongst his work-mates. He thinks it a poor compliment to English intelligence that a paper like the *Pioneer* should want readers while certain papers that need not be named circulate by the hundred thousand.

T. CLARK.—Received with Thanks.

F. E. HUGHES.—See "Acid Drops."

H. A.—(1) We will look through the *Pall Mall Magazine* article on Mr. John Morley. We can hardly believe that he shakes hands seriously with his friends and says "God bless you." No change has been announced in Mr. Morley's opinions. He is not, and does not look, a changeable man. (2) Comte's philosophy did not receive a crushing blow from Dr. Martineau. The statement is absurd. Dr. Martineau was a small citizen of the Republic of Intellect in comparison with Comte.

E. R. WOODWARD.—See paragraph.

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

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

The Cohen Presentation.

I FIND it difficult, if not impossible, to add anything substantial to what I have already written on this subject. I have said many times, in varied language, that this Fund should have the generous support of the Freethought party. We ought to let Mr. Cohen see that we really value his past services to the movement, and that we sincerely trust he may continue them with unabated zeal and effectiveness. As a Secular advocate, he cannot possibly make a fortune; we know, indeed, that he must have found it hard to make a bare living. And although we cannot provide him a salary while he is working, and a pension when he is no longer able to work, we can at least give him a little practical encouragement. Moreover, our attitude in relation to this matter will probably influence other young men of ability when they are debating whether they shall devote their lives to the promotion of Freethought.

The Presentation is to be made to Mr. Cohen at the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on January 12. During the few intervening weeks I want the readers of this journal to make up the £200 which I ventured to mention as the figure which ought (at least) to be realised. Some £60 is still lacking. I ask those who have not already subscribed to make up that deficiency. Of course there may be some who have already subscribed, and would like to subscribe again. Let them do so, by all means; the more the better. But my appeal is to those who have not yet entered their names in the subscription list. I wish to hear from them, and I wish to hear from them soon. The Fund will be closed on January 11 for certain. That is my birthday. And if the £200 is made up for Mr. Cohen by then, I will regard it as (in a sense) a birthday gift to myself.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectures this week end at Leicester, both on Saturday and Sunday evenings. His subjects, which appear elsewhere, should prove attractive. The admission to both lectures is free, as usual at Leicester, with a collection in aid of expenses.

Mr. John Lloyd, on Sunday evening, delivered the last of the course of special Freethought lectures at South Shields. There was a good audience in the fine Empire Theatre, and Mr. Lloyd's originality of treatment and firmness of conclusion made a most favorable impression, especially on the local "saints," who are delighted to know that Freethought has won the support of such an advocate.

Two more lectures under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, have been arranged for at the Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell, on Sunday evenings, December 13 and 20. Mr. John Lloyd takes the first, his subject being "The Trial of Christianity." Mr. C. Cohen takes the second, his subject being "Atheism and the Creed of the Future."

There has been for some time a slight growing improvement in the circulation of the *Freethinker*, and last week's issue ran out of print. Any readers who were unable to obtain a copy should renew their orders. They will probably find that they can be supplied out of the "returns" from the trade.

We trust our friends in all parts of the kingdom, and indeed of the world, will continue to advertise the *Freethinker* in the cheap but effective manner of passing it round amongst their acquaintances, or otherwise introducing it to the notice of new readers. Very much good is done in this way at a very trifling cost.

This is not exactly a Sugar Plum, but such matters necessarily appear in this part of the *Freethinker*. Messrs. Pack, Gott, and Weir, who are prosecuted for "blasphemy" at Leeds, on account of a Cartoon and some letterpress in the *Truthseeker*, copied from an old (1888) number of the *Freethinker*, appeared in answer to their summons before the Stipendiary magistrate on Tuesday, November 24. Mr. Pack, on behalf of himself and his co-defendants, asked for a remand for a fortnight. The Stipendiary, who certainly did not show any special favor to the prosecution, and probably understood their motives, adjourned the case as requested.

The summons against Messrs. Pack, Gott, and Weir was issued at the instance of George Golborn Tarry, Chief Constable of Leeds. There is a Christian Evidence lecturer called Tarry. We hope the two Tarrys are not related.

Mr. E. Pack delivered his first lectures for the Birmingham Branch on Sunday. They were much appreciated. In the evening lecture he dealt with the Leeds prosecution. Afterwards he addressed a large open-air audience in the Bull Ring.

The Camberwell Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday. A resolution of sympathy, and a promise of financial support, was ordered to be sent to the three gentlemen who are being prosecuted by the Leeds police for "blasphemy."

Last week's *Reynolds'* contained a long report of a very interesting address by the editor, Mr. W. M. Thompson, to the Young Scots' Society at Leith. We judge that Mr. Thompson spoke frankly as a Freethinker as well as a Democrat. His peroration was an eloquent bit of Free-thought, anyhow. The same number of *Reynolds'* contained the Prize Essay on "The Riddle of the Universe" by Herbert J. Kemp.

We have received several letters in reply to "Man in the Street's" long epistle on "Why Freethought?" which we inserted for the sake of fair-play, although we were unable to see much in it. The letters in reply cannot appear this week for want of space. They will be printed in our next number.

We are always glad to find matter in our columns appreciated in America. Our admirable contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, prints Mr. G. L. Mackenzie's "Thank God" verses for the benefit of its own readers. Perhaps there was not room in the make-up to notify that the verses were reproduced from the *Freethinker*.

Mr. A. L. Lye contributed a long and most excellent letter on "Bible Teaching in Schools" to the *Coventry Herald* of November 27, largely in reply to the Rev. W. E. Blomfield. The editor favored Mr. Blomfield with a proof of this letter, and the reverend gentleman's rejoinder appears in the same issue. We are bound to say that we never read anything feebler than Mr. Blomfield's letter. He does not appear to see Mr. Lye's points, although they were put very plainly. Such a miserably poor defence of the Nonconformist position must be an eye-opener to many readers of the *Coventry Herald*. We congratulate Mr. Lye on having induced Mr. Blomfield to show the untenableness of his own position.

Mr. G. J. Warren had to leave the National Secular Society's Executive some time ago, on account of his absorption in local duties of a social and political character. Having been re-elected recently on the Borough Council, he has since been elected an Alderman, and we congratulate him on the honor. East-London would be very much the richer for a few more men like Mr. Warren.

The December number of the *Pioneer* is the twelfth. The paper is now a year old. Whether it will continue to live in the new year has yet to be decided. Meanwhile we may ask our friends to circulate the December number on its merits. It contains some good reading, and might be pushed round with benefit to the movement.

God Has No Defenders.

There are a great many men who feel called upon to defend God; they call it defending the truth, defending the Bible. What a shame it is that God cannot take care of himself, and his book is so weak and flat that it requires bolstering—and truth, has it fallen so low that it needs a champion to check suspicion!

Thousands of people claim to be in the service of the Almighty. How can a man rise to such awful heights and remain untainted with egotism is beyond my comprehension. It seems to me if all the wealth of the world was given into my hands, it would be as filthy rags compared to such an honor.

When we reflect that, through the mighty stretch of space, there strode a Being who spilt from his hands a billion worlds, sowed suns and stars everywhere in the fields of heaven in numbers that can never be counted—it seems to me the august dignity of defending such a Being, or his book, must lie beyond the circle of the most fantastic dream.

So I will believe that God has no defenders, the Bible is the book of man, and truth is not surrounded by a fort.

What has the Bible cost the world? What has been the price of a single line? "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Defenders of the book pointed to those fatal words; they did question them, no one would be fool enough to pick flaws with Holy Writ, they went to work to carry out the divine injunction. They never suffered a witch to live—you bet not—they entered into the spirit of it, they commenced to clean out witches. It was awful, the ghastly work continued; legislators enacted laws against witchcraft; Luther, Calvin, and Wesley were spreading destruction and desolation in every direction—burning witches was the order of the day. Seven thousand were burned in one city; people left their farms and rushed to the cities; city people sought shelter in the corn-fields; when a man went out he found people looking for him, there was business for all; one-half the people were busy keeping away from the other half, and they kept it up until some cool-brained infidels stood before these fools and knaves.

Bruno said there were other worlds than this, and that some of the stars were suns. Defenders of the Bible could not tolerate such damnable doctrine; they hunted him like a wild beast. Men of sense were scarce in those days; they never allowed one to escape if they could help it. They kept Bruno in a dungeon six years that he might have time to repent of such blasphemy; then they tried him and condemned him to be burned. It was brought out at the trial the rank heretic that he was. He said he could not believe the entire Trinity was embodied in the broken bread and cup of wine; he did not see how the Creator of the wealth and greatness of a million worlds could be swallowed down at a single gulp. And so they dragged the great philosopher to the stake.

When will men become wise enough to see what fools they are?

—*The Philosopher* (America).

There is scarce anything in nature more astonishing to a reflecting mind than the influence of one man's thought and feeling over another, and on thousands of his fellows. There are few voices in the world, but many echoes, and so the history of the world is chiefly the rise and progress of the thoughts and feelings of a few great men. Let a man's outward position be what it may—that of a slave or a king, or an apparent idler in a busy metropolis—if he have more wisdom, love, and religion than any of his fellow-mortals, their mind, heart, and soul are put in motion, even against their will, and they cannot stand where they stood before, though they close their eyes ever so stiffly.—*Theodore Parker*.

Prayer.—III.

(Concluded from page 757.)

On Sunday, October 19, 1908, at the morning service in St. John's, Westminster, Canon Wilberforce mentioned the case of Miss Hickman, and asked the congregation to join him to pray that the missing lady might be discovered dead or alive. According to the report in the newspapers, the Canon told the audience that he had no doubt the dynamic force of earnest, united prayer would solve the mystery. He prayed, and after, the congregation, with bowed heads, prayed in silence, for several minutes. On the Monday the news came that the body had been found, and this was said to be in answer to prayers at St. John's. As this is a typical case of ideas and practice of Christians, it may be useful to dwell a little upon it. One would think a Canon was capable of thinking and reasoning upon the matter, whether his congregation could think or not. Let us see. The Canon and his congregation prayed in the morning service. About three o'clock in the afternoon, some boys who were trespassing in Richmond Park, seeing a keeper coming after them, ran away, and one of them stumbled over the body of Miss Hickman. Terrified, he ran and climbed over the railings, went home and told his father what he had seen, and his father told the police. Was all this in answer to prayer? If it was, would any sane man have acted in the same way? If it was the work of God, was it not a roundabout and a very clumsy way of doing it? Did he know of the disappearance before the prayer told him of it? If he knew, why did he wait to make the discovery? Would any good man have acted that way? Was it God that prompted the boys to trespass in the park in order to make the discovery? If not, who did? Would it not have been more rational to reveal the secret to the father, or to the police, instead of to the trespassing boy? And would it not have been better to discover the tragedy at once? And, still better, prevent the calamity?

What a sad picture these praying Christians make of their God. I venture to say that a likeness of God, drawn according to the conception of an idolater, would not be a greater caricature monstrosity of a God than the idea and practice of Christians make of theirs. According to the Christian's belief, God is all-wise and knows everything, but you must tell him all you know in prayer; he is an all-loving father, father of all, and owns all wealth, yet, whilst keeping some of them in luxury, and clothing them in the best of garments and housing them in palaces, he allows thousands to starve, keeps a third of them continually on the verge of starvation, and lets them live in slums and hovels, where his rich children would not lodge a dog. He is almighty, and yet, according to a leading Christian, praying saints can by united prayer, create a dynamic force that will compel him to do what they want him to do. He is the same to-day as yesterday and for ever, without a shadow of a change, yet by prayer he is persuaded to change his mind and alter his plans and proceedings. If he listens to all the prayers made to him, he must be puzzled to know what to do, for he could not answer all without turning the universe into a chaos. He knows what his children want and what will do them good, but he will do nothing till they tell him in prayer what to do, how to do, and when to do. He sees the deadly disease coming, allows it to attack and kill his child, though he could prevent, cure and save, and the saints thank him in prayer. In a shipwreck nine men were drowned and one saved by God, and the saints give thanks. But if God saved the one he drowned the nine, and that surely does not deserve thanks. The nine were God's children as well as the one, he could have saved all had he liked, as well as the one, and if there was any merit in saving one, there was greater demerit in allowing the nine to perish. Suppose a man was to act

towards his children as God does, would any one call him a good man, a kind father? Surely not. A man that would allow his children to starve, neglect their health, and refuse to supply their needs, would be prosecuted for cruelty and lodged in prison as a punishment. All this, and much more, is done by God every day.

If Christians could be induced to think and reason a little, I think they would come to see that their praying and worship make a sad picture of their God. They make a regular mess of him and make him look like a clown. They make an ignoramus of him, imbecile and incapable, without the guidance and help of his worshipers. They make him into a cruel monster that will do nothing without being asked, urged, and flattered. And if the flattery, praise, and self-debasement of his worshipers be acceptable to him, he must be a conceited, vainglorious being. There is not a sane, intelligent man in the world that could stand and receive the deluge of laudation offered to him. And to crown all, the prayers of the saints make him an untrustworthy God, for they will not accept a gift from his hand without asking him to bless it, for fear he is giving them a curse or poison in disguise. And in every prayer they implore him not to lead them into temptation, as if he was a cruel father to do such a thing. And so little confidence have they in the goodness and wisdom of God, that they make themselves a model for his actions, when they continually pray, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. If there be a God, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that much of the praying and worshiping is little less, if any, than an insulting indignity to his being.

And if much of the praying and worshiping is derogatory to God, it is no less degrading to man. There is something very suggestive in the typical case under review. The canon closed his eyes, and prayed. Why did he close his eyes? Could he pray better with closed eyes than with eyes open? Or could he see something in the dark he could not see in the light? Or does God love darkness more than the light? Or is the silly practice a survival of the mode of approaching to royal presence in barbarous times? We are told the congregation bowed their heads and prayed in silence for several minutes, and, of course, like their priest, with closed eyes. What they said in their prayer is not told in the report. They could not tell anything but God knew, and what was the good of hundreds saying the same thing? If it was necessary to inform God of anything, one informant would have been as good as a million. The fact is plain—that the whole conception of worship is human in origin and most of it priestly in practice. When the same man was king, priest, and god, as was the case in the remote past, those who approached his majesty prostrated themselves on the ground, and dared not look on the face of the divinity. There is a suggestive illustration of this practice in the Old Testament. In Exodus xxxiii. there is a long report of an interview which Moses had with the Lord, and the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. It must have been a very friendly chat, and it made Moses bold enough to beseech the Lord to shew him his glory. But, like many more prayers, it could not be granted. The Lord answered Moses thus: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live. Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." In this account, there is evidently a key to explain the origin and meaning of closing the eyes and bowing the head in prayer. Both are a survival, a modified and refined continuation of prostrating the body on the ground, in the presence of the man-god, and daring not to look on his face. As he had the life and death of his subjects in his hand, they were compelled to observe the practice or lose their lives; still, the practice

degraded the body, mind, and morals of the people. The practice is not yet dead in some countries, and even among what is called civilised nations there are many surviving indications of its former existence. No one, I should think, would deny that the ceremony was degrading and demoralising to man, and I fail to see that a continuation of it in a modified and refined form is any less injurious to the reason of man, if not to his body. Prostrating the mind before a delusion is quite as degrading as prostrating the body before a mere man.

It is not a pleasant task to criticise what other people consider as sacred, but it is a task somebody must do, otherwise truth will never overcome error. And the more sacred the error is considered, the more difficult it is to remove it, and the more vigorous and persistent should be the attack. It is said that praying, even if it does no good, does no harm, and therefore it should be left alone. But that is a mistake. Some errors and practices are more harmful than others, but there is no wrong harmless, and no error should be spared when discovered.

I am deeply convinced that praying and worshiping, as carried on in the churches, are harmful individually and socially. They are, at the best, but survivals of past superstitions, and are nothing better themselves, even in their most refined and modified forms.

Prayer and worshiping powerfully tend to perpetuate superstitions in all their forms, and are the strongest support to the institution of priesthood, which is, like landlordism, a huge crushing burden on the vitals of the toilers. Whilst the people continue to pray there will be no chance to get rid of the priest.

Worship and prayer, imposed on the child, warps and twists his mind, and makes him, too often, a slave to ignorance and error all his life.

They are a barrier in the way of science, and they make their devotees hostile to the spread of knowledge.

Reason is muddled and the mind clouded by the practice. They fill the mind with erroneous ideas of the universe, and especially of the earth, our own world, so that there is no room for scientific knowledge, and no desire to have it. As long as men believe in a personal God who can be influenced to alter his plans and change the course of nature by prayer, they will never do justice to the needs of men or the possibilities of nature. What is being done in the way of progress in every direction is mostly being done by men who have discarded religion as a superstition.

Religion, which is mostly prayer, warps the judgment and colors the vision of its devotees. Good men, pioneers of progress and saviors of society, appear to them like demons, and there is no lie which they are not ready to invent and spread with a view to destroy their character and influence, as witnessed by the deliberate calumnies uttered about Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Charles Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and many others. A religion that produces such bitter and deadly fruit cannot be good.

They are a waste of time, talent, energy, and opportunities, to serve no useful purpose. Had half of them been devoted to improve the affairs of this world, the condition of society would have been very different to what it is to-day; and until they are got out of the way, or their influence destroyed, the mass of men will not move to make the best of the present world. The only comfort in the matter is the thought that sometimes we meet with good, noble-minded, and self-sacrificing men connected with all religions, as well as outside of all the creeds; and it is to be hoped that their number will increase, and that the conviction will gradually gain ground that the only good prayer is work and the only useful religion is the service of man.

R. J. DERFEL.

Atheism furnishes no man with arguments to be vicious; but superstition, or what the world means by religion, is the greatest possible encouragement to vice.—Lord Chatham.

Religion in the Schools.—II.

THE STATE HAS JURISDICTION OVER ONLY THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD.

(BY DR. MINOT J. SAVAGE.)

(Concluded from page 758.)

Let us come back, then, to the point of having the Bible out of the schools. Why? Years ago I fought for this in Massachusetts, for the sake of justice to the Catholic Church: that is what I was fighting for then. The Catholics have always objected to the reading of our translation of the Bible with Protestant comment, or with no comment at all; and their contention is right and just.

If a Catholic is sincere, he believes that the teaching his child his religion means the eternal welfare of that child. Can you expect him to sit down then patiently and calmly while you, without any warrant in justice, compel his children to submit themselves to an influence that threatens the eternal welfare of their souls? Is that fair? Would you like it yourselves?

Here in this city now are thousands and thousands of Jewish children attending the public schools. They are among our best scholars. Their parents object, and they have a right to object, to having thrust upon their children the consideration, the teaching of a religion which has stood as the symbol of persecution and horror for them for fifteen hundred years. Would you like it yourselves? Is it fair to the Jews?

There are in the city—not a great many of them, I suppose—Buddhists, Mohammedans; there are followers of Confucius; there are representatives of many of those faiths which we call Pagan. They are taxed to help support the public schools. Have we a right to thrust upon their children the teaching of that which they distinctly and definitely repudiate?

There are Agnostics, there are Atheists, I suppose, a few; but nobody doubts that the son of an Atheist, the son of an Agnostic, Mohammedan, Buddhist, Parsee, Hindu, Jew, can be a good citizen. And the only interest of the State is that he shall be a good citizen; and we have no business to thrust upon them as a part of their education that which has nothing to do with the matter of their being good citizens, and which at the same time violates the most sacred convictions of their souls.

If we could all agree on some religion; if everybody believed alike, worshiped the same God and in the same way, and had the same ideas of this world and the next—then, of course, nobody would complain; and, while it would not be the business of the State any more than it is now to teach religion, it might be taught without marked injustice. But it cannot be so taught to-day.

I believe then that, when the matter comes up for discussion and settlement—as come up it will—we ought to be ready to treat it from the broadest point of view in the interest of justice and right.

I would carry the matter further if I had my way. I believe that all strictly church property ought to be taxed. Why not? As it is to-day, there are millions of money invested in property dedicated simply to some particular form of religion and millions which are not taxed. You and I, who do not believe that religion at all, have to make up by our over-taxation for the deficit caused by this exemption.

I would have all strictly charitable institutions free. But I do not know why a Jew should be taxed to help support the Church of the Messiah; I do not know why I should be taxed to support the cathedral; I do not know why Catholics should be taxed to support the Brick church.

Let the people who believe, believe enough and care for their religious belief enough to pay for it, or else go without it. That seems to me the

fundamental principle of justice and right in the whole matter.

I believe in religion with all my soul. I am ready to say that I believe it is the very highest and deepest concern of man. The relation in which we stand to God, to each other, what our destiny shall be over yonder—these are the greatest questions that we can ask or answer. But the State, as State, has no business to touch them with the tip of its finger; let the State keep to its own affairs. Let the Church and the home, let the fathers and the mothers—if they are honest and if they believe anything—find ways of looking after these, the highest concerns of life.

And let us remember that equal justice is the basis of all good government.

I wish at the close to read you a word which I read as part of my lesson. It is remarkable when we remember when it was spoken and by whom. It is by King Asoka, a great Buddhist sovereign, who lived two hundred and fifty years before Christ. This is what he says: "A king who is beloved of the gods honors every form of religious faith. He considers no gift or honor so much as increase in the substance of religion. The root of religion is to reverence one's own faith, and never to revile that of others. The king's purpose is to increase the mercy, charity, truth, kindness, and piety of all mankind."

Let us as citizens, and filled by a spirit like this, look after the affairs of government as it concerns this world. Let us as churches, as fathers, as mothers, look after the higher and deeper things of the religious life.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Obituary.

THERE has just passed away in London, mourned by all who knew him, Mr. Henry J. Wright, aged 65, who to the end was a staunch Freethinker. He well knew the late Charles Bradlaugh when a Sunday-school teacher at St. Peter's, Hackney-road, and was a sturdy supporter of him after his conversion to Secularism. The many wreaths sent as a token of regard from his numerous friends, and the crowds that flocked to the roadside to pay their best respects to the deceased, were a sterling and glorious testimony to the esteem with which he was regarded by his fellows in his district, and were a grand refutation of the oft-repeated falsehood made by Christians that "infidels" are the most immoral, dissolute, and blackguardly people in existence." Mr. Wright was often a friend to those who were in need, and was what is commonly termed "a jolly good fellow"; and, like so many others in our cause, he was one who proved that Secularists practised what they preached—viz., liberty, equality, and fraternity for all.—H. W.

Correspondence.

THE VIVISECTION LIBEL CASE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I feel sure you, and many of your readers, will share the indignation I feel at the verdict in the recent "Vivisection Libel Suit."

Will you not open a fund in the *Freethinker* which, in helping in part to defray Mr. Coleridge's very heavy damages may, at the same time, be a proof that, in spite of Miss Frances Power Cobbe's opinion, it is not Atheists who countenance such barbarous practices?

The science we honor, and the truth for which we seek is that which shall make us free, and with us the humblest and most helpless of our brothers, even poor little brown dogs.

Trusting you will see your way to do this, I enclose my mite.

M. L.

[We cannot undertake just at present to *press* such a Fund in the *Freethinker*, although we will acknowledge any subscriptions that are sent to us and forward them to Mr. Coleridge. A Fund has already been started in the *Daily News*, and people of various shades of opinion (on other matters) seem to be subscribing.—EDITOR.]

THE VALUE OF SECULAR EDUCATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am most favourably impressed with R. J. Derfel's common-sense and forcible article entitled "Prayer," which all parents should read carefully. It is excellent.

That part of the article which says:—"It is no wonder the priests make such desperate efforts to perpetuate their control over the minds of children in the day schools, for they know, from long experience, if their doctrines are not instilled into the minds of children, it would be impossible when they grow to be men and women. It is high time that Freethinkers should copy the example of the priests in regard to children. In this matter they are, and always have been, very remiss. Children are left to themselves to become a prey to the nurse and the priest. There is no hope for the triumph of Freethought till the children are emancipated and protected from the priest. Not only must all priests be excluded from the schools, but science must be brought into every educational centre to replace the antiquated and superstitious priests' book called the Bible. When that is done, progressive thought will soon triumph over errors and superstition," is timely, and urges that which I have most strongly advocated for the past two years. As a certificated schoolmaster of fifteen years' experience, I should be only too glad if any opportunity, no matter how small, were offered me to give children a physical, mental, and moral education entirely on a secular and scientific basis.

Those who are in favor of my scheme, and desirous of helping to establish such a school, will please communicate with me.

W. A. VAUGHAN.

Office of the *Freethinker*.

SPIRITS.

"Who's there?" shouted the master of the house the other night as he thought he heard somebody in his bedroom.

There was no answer, and the queer noise stopped.

"Anybody there?"

No answer.

"It must have been a spirit," he said to himself. "I must be a medium. I will try." (Aloud): "If there is a spirit in the room it will signify the same by saying aye—no, that's not what I mean. If there is a spirit in the room, it will please rap three times."

Three very distinct raps were given in the direction of the bureau.

"Is it the spirit of my sister?"

No answer.

"Is it the spirit of my mother?"

Three very distinct raps.

"Are you happy?"

Nine raps.

"Do you want anything?"

A succession of very loud raps.

"Will you give me any communication if I get up?"

No answer.

"Shall I hear from you to-morrow?"

Raps very loud in the direction of the door.

"Shall I ever see you?"

He waited long for an answer, but none came, and he turned over and fell asleep.

Next morning he found the spirit of his mother had carried off his watch and purse, his trousers, and his great-coat downstairs in the hall.—*Tit Bits*.

CHANGING THE TUNE.

"Talking about trusting in Providence," remarked a Maine man, "there's an old fisherman down at my home who affords a unique example. When old Captain Eddy gets out in the swell of the heavy combers and feels his small boat tossing about roughly he will always pray:—

"'Poor old skipper, poor old boat; don't blow, good Lord, don't blow.'

"But Captain Eddy returning home and once safe in the shelter of the lea is another person. Then he straightens up, squirts tobacco juice over the trusty oars, and cries:—

"'Good old skipper, good old boat; blow, gol dern you, blow!'"

HIS OPINION.—"Do you believe that every man has his price?" "I won't discuss that," answered Senator Sorghum; "but I will say that the reason some men stay honest is because the price asked is so much higher than the price bid."—*Washington Star*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, Conversazione for Members and Friends.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, J. McCabe (late Father Antony, O.S.F.), "The Riddle of the Universe."

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

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

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 3.15 and 6.30, E. Pack. Monday, Dec. 6, at 7.30, Debate between James Rowney and Rev. John Tuckwell: subject, "The Story of the Creation and Fall."

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.80, Mr. Hume, "Cremation."

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane, Failsworth): Ernest Evans, "Production of Scenery." With lantern views.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. Mr. Allan, "Continuation of a Study in Elementary Botany"; 6.30, Vocal and Instrumental Concert.

LEEDS (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, George Weir, "Blasphemy."

LEEDS (Woodhouse Moor): 3, Henry Smith, "Who are the Blasphemers?"

LEEDS (Town Hall Square): 7, T. W. Kingham, "Christian Blasphemy."

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberston-gate): Saturday, Dec. 5, at 8, G. W. Foote, "Progress and Breeding: with special reference to Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*"; Sunday, at 6.30, "The Last Christian Statesman: a Candid Study of Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Christianity and the Slave Trade"; 7, "Is Blasphemy a Crime?" Monday, 8 p.m., Discussion Class.

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