

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXIII.—No. 52

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1908

PRICE TWOPENCE

*The man who devotes the larger wealth of the mind, reason, understanding, imagination, with all the treasures of culture and the graceful dignity of eloquence, to serve some noble cause, despised as yet, and sacrifices not money alone, but reputation, and takes shame as outward recompense for truth and justice and love—think you that he has less delight than the worldly man well gifted, cultivated well, whose mind lies a prostitute to the opinion of the mob, and is tricked off with the ornaments of shame?—THEODORE PARKER.*

## Turkey and Plum-Pudding.

It is amazingly odd—when you come to think of it—that Christians should celebrate what in fact is the supposed birthday of Jesus, and what in theory is the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation, by unlimited eating and drinking. Nineteen hundred and three years ago, they say, their God was born; not as a God, for he is eternal, but as a God-Man. His object in going through this strange performance was to save a world given over to sin and in peril of damnation. If he had not done this not a single human soul would have gone to heaven. Every one of them would have gone to hell. And it was to carry out this purpose that he went through nine months of gestation, and was finally born in a stable and cradled in a manger. Yes, the omnipotent God of this infinite universe went through all that astonishing experience in order to give those who could believe it a chance of escape from everlasting burnings. What a solemn idea—if it be true! How strange that it should be commemorated by eating roast turkey and boiled plum-pudding! And fancy washing these edibles down with beer, claret, burgundy, sherry, and other liquors; thus giving the whole function a spirituous instead of a spiritual character.

Many a family reunion will take place this Christmas, and relatives long divided will gather round the festive board. And if conversation were perfectly honest something like the following would occur. "Ah, my dear Mary," the old grandfather would say, "this is the birthday of God Almighty. Let me help you to another glass of port." "Tom, my boy," the father would say, "Christ came to save sinners today. Let us have another whiskey." And the jolly matron, with a fond eye for the hungry boy, would say, "Here, Billy, have another mince-pie—and think of the Savior."

These things, of course, will *not* be said. We only say they *might* be. And we add that Christians should think over the monstrous contradiction between their faith and their practice.

The truth is that Christmas festivities have nothing whatever to do with the real or fictitious birth of Christ. The association is accidental. Those festivities existed long before Christianity, and in all probability will long outlive it. They are relics of Sun-Worship; of that natural religion—not quite foolish, and not at all cheerless—which preceded the great "revealed religions."

The twenty-fifth of December was the birthday of all the ancient Sun-Gods, and was celebrated with dance, and song, and feasting, all over the pagan world. Behind the sun myths was the sun itself—shedding light and heat, and thus the lord and giver

of life. And its imperial splendor was more obvious in Asia, the great motherland of superstition, than in our milder and more sedate Europe. Hence, as religions all come, like the sun, from the East, the manufacturing Englishman goes on repeating observances that originated amongst the pastoral and agricultural tribes of the far-off Orient.

Christianity is no exception to the rule that religions come from the East. Its alleged founder was a Jew, born in Palestine, and his supposed ancestors, ages before, had come from the inland Asiatic plains. The Bible is an oriental book; and that fact is the one sure key to its interpretation. It was also from the East that Christianity borrowed its sun-mythology—its incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Not for ages after the date fixed as the birthday of Christ was he known, even by his most faithful followers, to have entered the world on that day. We have positive evidence that at Antioch, for instance, where it is said the Nazarenes were first called Christians, the twenty-fifth of December was not known as the birthday of Christ until about the year 365 of the Christian era. More than a generation, that is, after Christianity was made the state religion of the Roman Empire, and in the very age when it stooped to conquer, and converted the Pagans by paganising itself. Just as it took over the Sunday (the Sun's Day) and called it the Lord's Day, so it took over the great festival of the new birth of the Sun, and called it the birthday of Christ.

Rapid changes are only skin-deep. It is far easier to change shibboleths than to change customs. All the Church did was to alter words. Things remained as they were. The multitude used another *name*, but they kept the old *practices*. What they cared for they still retained. It was the jollification.

Now the jollification was all connected, originally, with Sun-Worship. The burning of Yule logs comes down to us from the Scandinavian worshippers of Thor and Woden. The holly and mistletoe are symbols of the eternal life of nature, in spite of winter's gloom and the all-covering shroud of snow. Yes, the sun is neither dead nor dying, and there is still a vital warmth in the bosom of mother earth. Spring will come again, with its sweet soft mantle of delicate green; and summer with its vines, and wheatfields, and sheep and oxen on the meadows; and autumn, with its purple grapes and golden sheaves. And the turning-point is the twenty-fifth of December—as you may see by looking at the Calendar. It is not a date in history, but a date in astronomy.

Christians who keep up Christmas are unconscious sun-worshippers. In theory they worship the invisible Christ; in fact they worship the visible lord of our solar-system. Now this worship, we repeat, is neither sad nor silly. In spite of much cant and glutony, there is a really humane side to these Christmas festivities. And in spite of much extravagant superstition, there is a sensible side to the adoration of the Sun. He is incontestably a benefactor—which is more than can be said of any member of the Trinity; and in him (so to speak), more than in any hidden deity, we live and move and have our being.

G. W. FOOTE.

## A Neglected Aspect of the Fiscal Question.

SOME amount of prejudice against this article may be avoided by my saying at the outset that I do not intend to discuss the fiscal policy of Mr. Chamberlain, as that policy is generally understood. The question may be an important one, but the *Freethinker* is not the place for its ventilation; and there are enough outlets in both press and platform, without allowing it to interfere with the legitimate objects of this journal. What I desire is to point out the way in which a certain section of the community has suffered from the "dumping" of foreign productions on our too hospitable shores, and how this class might have been helped, and might still be helped, by a policy that would allow only home-made products to circulate in the home markets. And, curiously enough, in all the discussions that have taken place, the effect of Free Trade on this class has been quite overlooked, even those who have suffered being, apparently, blind to its operation.

I refer to the clergy. If anyone examines the position of the clergy before and after the introduction of Free Trade he will discover that their position, both morally and financially, has deteriorated. Some people assure us that the era of Free Trade has been one of prosperity. Well, here is one class at least who can look back upon little else than disaster. The position is a serious one. Here is a body of men with whom rest the moral welfare of the English people, and therefore of the world. This we have upon the unimpeachable and disinterested testimony of men like the Bishop of London, Dr. Clifford, and Dr. Horton. And yet this class can be shown to have suffered both morally and financially by the free importation of foreign manufactures.

Before we point out *how* this has transpired, let us note one or two salient facts. Figures are difficult to get at; the recent Blue Book quite omits them in their bearing upon the position of the clergy; but if we take the incomes of some of the representative clergy in 1880 and 1903 respectively, we shall see at a glance how matters stand. For purpose of comparison I arrange the figures in parallel columns:—

	1880.		1903.
	£		£
Archbishop of Canterbury .....	22,000	.....	15,000
"    York .....	13,000	.....	10,000
Bishop of London .....	15,000	.....	10,000
"    Durham .....	21,900	.....	10,000
"    Ely .....	12,600	.....	5,000
"    Winchester .....	12,107	.....	6,500

These figures are striking. In the case of six of the leading firms in the most representative branch of this industry, the decrease in the annual income amounts to no less than £40,000. It is even more than this if we take it in connection with other matters. The standard of living is higher, motor cars and frequent excursions on the continent are essential to all who would show by their lives the genuineness of their devotion to the teachings of their master; there are increased calls for expenditures in numerous directions, and yet the actual income is lower. And in the case of the Bishopric of London, now held by a man who has told us over and over again with what heartrendings he tore himself from the East End and trams to undergo the martyrdom of carriages and life in the West End, the income of that office is actually only two-thirds of what it was before the inauguration of Free Trade. Nothing but an heroic devotion to duty, and a determination to stand by their country at all costs, can account for people keeping these offices alive, and undergoing the daily martyrdom of "genteel poverty" on such reduced incomes.

The decline in influence is also marked. Seventy or eighty years ago the clergy were far more powerful than at present. Education was almost wholly

in their hands; now they have to control it—so far as they may—in a surreptitious manner. Then they had still a voice in the interpretation of nature; now they are reduced to the position of playing second fiddle to scientific teachers, many of whom disclaim religious beliefs altogether. Then they still had the Bible as *their* book; now it is anybody's, everybody's, or nobody's. Then they interposed in public life in the name of religion; now they are compelled to feign an interest in social matters in order to get people to listen to their religious ministrations. From being everything, they are rapidly becoming nothing. After having been honored and feared above all other classes in the State, from being one of the most active organs in the body politic, they have become a mere rudimentary structure which a growing number would like to abolish altogether.

But what, says someone, has this to do with the Fiscal question? Well, just this: that nearly all the woes of the clergy can be traced to the unrestricted importation of foreign products, ideas, theories, etc., and that had there been a really protective tariff against these things, feelings and beliefs inimical to both the clergy and Christianity would not have flourished to the extent they have.

Go back to the end of the eighteenth century, and see what is to be found. For one thing there is the French Revolution with its damnable heresies of liberty of religious worship, equality of the sexes, abolition of slavery, human equality, and general education as a state function. Had these foreign notions been kept out of this country—surely there was enough of the home made articles—who can doubt that the position of the clergy would have gained thereby. Instead of that, their ideas were allowed free access, and our own heresies were thus made stronger and more daring by the contact. "The Rights of Man," "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," became watchwords with the lower orders, and the time-honored church teaching, that it was the duty of the people to conduct themselves lowly and reverently towards their masters and pastors, and be content in the place in which God and the landlord have been pleased to place them, ignored.

Then, again, there is the case of Biblical Criticism. Here, about the same period, the name most in evidence is that of Paine. Paine, it is true, was an Englishman; but as his *Age of Reason* was written in France, it may fairly be regarded as a foreign production. To be quite fair, some attempt was made in this case to keep the theological market free from foreign wares, but without success. Still, we are not concerned with the mere *endeavor* to crush foreign competition—only with the fact that it was not done. It came, it saw, it conquered; and the clergy found their influence being steadily undermined by a book born on French soil, and which was allowed to become naturalised on British. And later one need only name Strauss and Renan, and the batch of foreign writers in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, to prove how disastrous to our English clergy is the importation of these foreign goods.

It is the same with science. Consider the effect of the work of such foreigners as Laplace, Lamarck, Von Baer, Büchner, and Haeckel on the English theological industry. It is fair to assume that, although Lyell and Darwin and Spencer would have written in any case, still their work would not have been as crushing as it was had the importation from abroad been prohibited. And this importation might be either prevented or rendered harmless. For if the Legislature would only insist that all the writings of the kind named should be printed in Latin, and sold at not less than £2 per volume, their influence on the general thought of the country would be slight.

Meanwhile it is well to bear in mind that this enormous industry gives employment to many thousands of men, the majority of whom simply could not earn a living in any other direction. If the decay of the sugar industry, or of some other trade, where the workers *may* find employment elsewhere, calls for the

intervention of Government, how much more does it in a case like this? For we simply cannot keep the people religious if we are to allow teachings and theories from all parts of the civilised world to break in upon them. British Christianity can only be preserved so long as we can keep the mental market free from foreign intrusion. All history and all experience prove that the greatest danger to religious belief comes from freedom of intercourse. The man who knows of no other belief but his own will never be troubled by doubts concerning it; but let him find fresh beliefs, discover new ideas, and he is unsettled, his peace of mind is gone, and the clergy stand in danger of losing one more customer.

It must be borne in mind, too, that the decay of the clerical industry means a hampering of our Imperial expansion. If this industry goes, the missionary movement goes with it; and there are few things that have aided more in the acquisition of territory. Without the introduction of European goods, and traders, and rum, that have accompanied or followed the missionary; without the presence of the missionary among savage tribes, acquiring land or creating dissatisfaction, one-half of the reasons for making war and annexing territory would be wanting.

The case, then, for a prohibitive tariff of the kind specified seems to me a strong one. Why should this industry, which supports so large a body of men, which serves to keep people content who would otherwise be dissatisfied, be jeopardised by our free admission of foreign productions? I can conceive of only one rejoinder, and that is that Jesus Himself would not have been here had *all* foreign goods been excluded. But then, perhaps, this circumstance may be cited as a still further argument in favor of Protection.

C. COHEN.

### Christmas.

AT this season of the year, when our thoughts naturally turn to the past, it may be both interesting and instructive to carefully study the beginnings of the Christian Religion. As we all know, Christmas Day is a festival of the Christian Church, observed in memory and honor of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is the official birthday of the nominal Founder of Christianity, although no one is now prepared to affirm that it is his real natal day. Assuming for the moment that the Gospels are genuine, it is absolutely certain that the 25th of December is not the correct date, because at that time the rainy season in Palestine is at its height, which makes it impossible for shepherds to be out in the fields at night watching their flocks. The fact is that if Jesus lived at all, neither the day nor the year of his birth can be ascertained. This was fully admitted by the late Dean Farrar both in his *Life of Christ*, and in the article "Jesus," which he contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. In consequence of this, we find the early Church casting about for a suitable official date, and choosing now January 6, now April 24 or 25, and now May 25. It was not until the fifth century that the 25th of December was generally agreed upon. But what motive led to such an agreement? Many maintain that it was the Church's desire to supplant corrupt festivals, such as the *Saturnalia*, which were observed at this season. But was there not another and mightier motive at work? It is a singular coincidence that all the dates mentioned were sacred in most of the Pagan religions, and that the 25th of December was the most sacred of all. It was on this day that Mithra, Dionysus, Adonis, and Horus were born. The probability is, therefore, that the Christians, possessing no historical data on which to determine the day of their Savior's birth, fell into line with the other popular religions by adopting Christmas Day. But why did they wish to fall into line with older cults? Because they had gained a footing in the world and cherished the hope that their

religion would ere long supersede all others, and reign alone.

There is here a striking point of contact between the Christian Religion and numerous heathen cults. It was not by accident that the Church's choice fell on Christmas Day. It was not by accident that so many god-men, or man-gods, are reported to have been born on the same day of the same month, though in some cases separated from one another in time by many a hundred years. Nor was it by accident that the circumstances of their birth were so exceedingly similar. They nearly all had virgin mothers, were born in stables or caves, where animals as well as men and women, adored them and had great miracles performed either upon themselves or through them upon others. I do not now refer to Mithra, because it is still a disputed point as to whether Christianity borrowed from Mithraism or Mithraism from Christianity. I have my own opinion, but as it is nothing stronger than an opinion, it would not be fair to employ it as an argument. But so far as many other religions are concerned, there is now no doubt whatever but that Christianity did the borrowing. Take the birth of Buddha first, which antedates that of Christ by more than five hundred years. Like Christ, Buddha is represented as having pre-existed in heaven, where he ruled over the luminous spaces. Buddha too was born supernaturally, for his mother was a virgin at her conception. His birth had been announced to both king and queen. Afterwards the queen said to her husband: "Listen; I saw the three regions [heaven, earth, hell], with a great light shining in the darkness, and myriads of spirits sang my praises in the sky." The announcement made to the king was on this wise: "The spirits of the Pure Abode flying in the air, showed half of their forms, and hymned King Suddhodana thus—

Guerdoned with righteousness and gentle pity,  
Adored on earth and in the shining sky,  
The coming Buddha quits the glorious spheres  
And hies to earth to gentle Māyā's womb."

Do we not read of a similar double annunciation in the Gospels?

It was further predicted that the Flower-star would appear *in the East* when Buddha would be born; and we have read in the Gospel of the wise men who said: "We have seen his star in the East."

Like Christ, Buddha was born when his mother was on a journey. The First Gospel of the Infancy tells us that when in his cradle Jesus said to his mother: "I am Jesus, the Son of God, the Word whom thou didst bring forth according to the declaration of the angel Gabriel to thee, and my Father hath sent me for the salvation of the world." When the Buddha came he announced: "I am in my last birth. None is my equal. I have come to conquer death, sickness, old age. I have come to subdue the spirit of evil, and give peace and joy to the souls tormented in hell." As at the birth of Jesus, so at that of Buddha, the angels in the sky sang "their hymns and praises."

How exact the parallels are. And, remember, Buddha was born five hundred years before Christ, which proves that Buddhism could not have borrowed from Christianity.

Another series of parallels might be found in Egyptian mythology. Isis was a virgin; and yet she gave birth to Horus on the 25th of December; and he was a savior-god, and wrought many wonders. Egypt may have borrowed her conception of the virgin birth from India; and it is quite possible that the Christians derived theirs from Egypt.

These parallels are eminently suggestive, and no one can contemplate them without coming to the conclusion that all the virgin-born Savior-Gods must be put in the same category. In a recent sermon, delivered at the City Temple, the Rev. R. J. Campbell said: "I have never had any sympathy, though I have tried to be as broad-minded as I possibly could in endeavoring to get at the view-point of my fellows, with attempts to class Jesus with other people, and place him in purely human categories; the common-

sense as well as the spiritual instinct of the race repudiates that." Surely, Mr. Campbell could not have meant and believed just what he said. Do not Buddhists, who number 450 millions, belong to the race? Does he not recognise the Hindus, of whom there are 200 millions, and the Mohammedans, more than a million and a half strong, as members of the race? And where would he place the thousands upon thousands even in Christendom who disbelieve in Christ? Are all non-Christian people to be excommunicated from the race? It is ineffable nonsense to say that "the common sense of the race" repudiates the classification of Jesus with other people. But the object of this article is, not to "place Jesus in purely human categories," but to show that he is one of many god-men, or incarnate deities, and that he is just as mythical as the rest. Ethically, Buddhism is, to say the least, quite as exalted and noble as Christianity. On what ground, then, is Christ placed in a different category from Buddha? Were they not both supernaturally born? Did not each enjoy a pre-birth rulership in heaven? Was not the birth of each foretold by angels? What proof can Christians produce that Buddha was not as divine, or as human, or as mythical as Jesus? They usually present two arguments for the superiority of Jesus. The first is the wonderful success of Christianity. But that is no argument at all, because the success of Buddhism is much more wonderful. Buddhists outnumber Christians by seventy-five millions. The second argument is based on the claim that Christianity has developed a more excellent type of character than any other religion. But is this claim true to facts? Was there ever a more perfect and beautiful character than that developed by King Asoka? He loved righteousness and worked it. He believed in freedom, and granted it to all. He abolished slavery within his wide dominions, and was tolerant towards all who differed from him in opinion or in religion. It would be impossible to read his numerous rock-inscriptions without discovering that humanity under Buddhism is capable of producing the truest and noblest type of character conceivable. And yet we are all agreed that Buddhism is a purely human religion, the product of man's own genius. If Buddha ever lived, we are all of opinion that he was only a man. But why should Jesus be put in a different category? If he ever lived, which many scholars doubt, he was as truly a man as Buddha.

It would be a profitable Christmas Day occupation to engage in the comparative study of religions, for the purpose of seeing for ourselves how closely related they all are, and how they all can be traced back to a common origin. To the majority of Christians such a study is totally unknown. If they acquainted themselves with such books as the *Golden Bough*, *Buddha and Buddhism*, *Christianity and Mythology*, *Pagan Christs*, and the *Evolution of the Idea of God*, their eyes would be opened, and they would perceive that their faith in the divinity of the Christian Religion is like a house built upon the sand, and that their worship of Jesus as incarnate deity is pure idolatry. They would lose that air of superiority which is so objectionable to people of another religion, and which is always a sign of littleness, and not of greatness. They would realise that there are myriads of good people in the world who have never heard of Christ, and who worship nothing higher and nobler than their own nature. Well, is there anything higher and nobler than humanity? Some men are nobler, and better, and greater than others; but we are all men, whether high or low, great or small, noble or base. Our guiding star is within. Mr. Campbell gets an occasional glimpse of this truth. The other Sunday evening he said: "When you feel a grand stirring or a magnificent impulse toward a height of heroism that you never reached before, it is not yourself only; the soul of humanity is speaking through you; the Christ is there." Referring to Mr. Blatchford's noble record of work for the people, the City Temple orator delivered himself thus: "What is it that makes him

do it? You will probably be scandalised if I tell you. It is this irrepressible Divine within him, it is the word that will out, it is the Christ who is the secret of all nobleness." That is to say a man *does* good because he *is* good; and he is good because he has discovered and realised his humanity. But that is not Mr. Campbell's true position. In the last number of the *British Weekly* he writes thus: "It is instructive to note that interest in the name of Jesus to-day is interest in the Jesus of the New Testament, just as he was. We do not want him altered." These are strange words from a man who boasts that Christianity does not stand or fall with the Bible. The Christian critics who maintain that the Four Gospels have fallen, no longer believe in a Supernatural Christ, their contention being that those interesting documents are discredited because they are untrue, or only mythically true. If the Jesus of the New Testament be a myth, the Christ who is declared to be "the secret of all nobleness" is only a dream of the imagination, or else a sign or symbol of the soul of humanity, which is more or less consciously present in every human being.

The supernaturally born Babe of Bethlehem is a mere myth, a more or less exact reproduction or imitation of other Babe-Saviors whom Christians themselves characterise as mythical. The followers of Jesus cannot claim a monopoly of Christmas, because it is the common property of several religions, and has precisely the same meaning for all.

JOHN LLOYD.

## "Respectable."—II.

(Concluded from page 812.)

Mr. Chesterton is engaged in a controversy with Mr. Blatchford, and he conducts it in this manner. On Friday, November 20, he says in the *Clarion*: "You and I have, I hope, in the course of this delightful controversy, got beyond the need for such assurances.....serious compliments do not gain by repetition." Now, Mr. Blatchford prefers to call himself a Determinist, and, on Saturday, the very next day, in an article in the *Daily News* on Mr. Blatchford, he says: "She (Christianity) sees Determinism, not printed in a paper, the theoretic philosophy of Agnostics, but written across the face of history, the practical religion of cowards." He also says that Christianity is hardly aware of such Iconoclasts as Mr. Blatchford, but is keenly conscious of the "dismal procession of blackguards who forge signatures and say it is Destiny, and seduce women and say it is Nature. Who borrow money without repaying it, steal umbrellas, desert women and swindle their rivals," by using the very same arguments which Mr. Blatchford urges "in the noblest kind of innocence." The grotesque patronage of a young man for Mr. Blatchford's "noble innocence" is lost in its wretched thinness as a cloak for the old parrot insult that the use of reason is a mere pretext for licence. Now, again—what is the fact? Are the great forgers of the world adherents of Determinism? The greatest forgery ever perpetrated is that, which believing in an Omniscient God, put forth a collection of folk-lore and curses as the message of that God to the whole human race; and, not content with that, has forged innumerable interpolations to the fraud. Are the men who palm off the Bible on the ignorant, Determinists? Were the Churchmen who forged the Decretals, Determinists? Were Mahomet and Joseph Smith, Determinists—and are the Brahmins of India, Determinists? A priest of the Roman Church—one certainly behind the scenes—being no less than a member of the Society of Jesus: a Jesuit, Father Hardouin, who died in 1729, asserted that all the ancient works, except the Vulgate, Pliny, Herodotus, and a very small number of other authors are forgeries, and that one should not be sure of either the Hebrew or the Greek of the Bible! He told the world that no ecclesiastical document is

older than the Council of Trent, and that all the councils said to have been held before are nothing but fables.

There have been swindles in history with a vengeance. But which is the greatest of all swindles? That which claims the earth as a heritage. Who the great impostor? The man who divided all the unknown lands and nations of the globe between two of his friends. What is the modern Determinist who abstracts an umbrella—if such a man has existed out of Mr. Chesterton's own juvenile experience—to the Pope who by chicanery and falsehood stole twelve kingdoms: Innocent III.? And they betray women! Was Cardinal Manning a Determinist when he bribed a man to enter the Roman Church by telling him the marriages of Protestants were invalid, and then himself married him to another wife? And Cardinal Vaughan and his officials, in regard to the Murphy case, when a man was induced by a priest to keep a woman as his concubine instead of marrying her, and they gave him a sham certificate of marriage for five pounds? What of the teaching of the Roman Church that the seduction of a woman of inferior class is rectified by a money payment? What of the late Pope Leo XIII., who assured the Emperor of Austria that his son could not be in hell, seeing he was demonstrably insane, having fought a duel over a woman of an inferior class? Do all these whine about heredity or their environments? Not at all. They claim to be acting under immediate and personal impulses. They are inspired by God, or they are actually Deputy Gods; if they extenuate their acts they protest they were instigated by the Devil. Determinism is a very recent conception. What Christianity has looked on has been the fruit of its own dogmas—namely, the Christian, with a wicked, devil-worried soul, bound straight for heaven through the portal of the gallows; not a nineteenth-century Skimpole or Pecksniff!

The *Daily News* is the organ of respectability, and Mr. Chesterton is disquieted at the delightfully funny spectacle of men outside the atmosphere of his clique being respectable also. But why? Will they be so strong an object-lesson of the falsity of the conception of the unique moral power of smug Deism that the imposture will be exploded? If the thought of respectable Atheism is amusing, is the converse idea of Bohemian Christianity also "delightfully funny"? Logically it should be. But, then, what of its Founder and his *entourage*? What of the young gentlemen and the ladies constantly with him, and whom he, uninvited, introduced into the houses of his Pharisee patrons? Here are men who worship an artizan—a carpenter—as the Maker of the Universe: a man who said of himself that he was reputed to be a glutton and a wine-bibber; who called himself habitually by a dialect, or a slang word; "*vios*" (son) or *porker* (little pig) of man, who said of himself, "The foxes have holes, but the *vios of man* has not where to lay his head"; a young country fellow in the fulness of early manhood, who forsook his avocation and lived by wandering about in company of divers insane women, married and not married, "who ministered unto him of their substance" (Luke viii. 3). Here are men worshipping this person, and conceiving that an acceptance of him as an exemplar will produce the canister-hatted respectability of the middle class, and that an adherence to principles which result in an *opposition* to the conceptions which have produced the worship of this Asiatic, will inevitably *cause* that course of conduct: that general defiance of established conventions, which was *his own* boast, and was the characteristic practice of his followers for some hundreds of years!

The spectacle which should disquiet Christians is the "respectability" of Believers, not that of Atheists. Now Nonconformity not so long ago was not respectable—even now there are few dissenters who do not forsake "chapel" for "church" when they find themselves on the road to "get on." In fact Nonconformists exhibit much consciousness that there is a hitch in their "respectability." Mr. Campbell has

just assumed a cassock of a cross-breed pattern between that of a Romanist and an old-fashioned Anglican, while a man in Southwark has rigged out his Scripture Reader in a surplice and stole. A Methodist in St. Pancras calls his house a "Parsonage," which is mere ignorant folly—but they all give evidence that they conceive they are out of a status it is desirable to capture. The very manner in which the *Daily News* assumes its own unimpeachable respectability demonstrates this. It is so sure of the possession of this quality that it has put it in the market as an asset and advertises it for all it is worth—but this very action betrays a sense of uneasiness and newness. The special shade of Respectability claimed by the *Daily News* is "cleanness," a quality as much advertised as the discovery of an anonymous peer and his butler. Conceive the extent of the fall—an unnamed peer—merely as a peer put forth as a guarantee of the "cleanness" of the successors of the creator of Sir Leicester Deadlock! There is a special "cleanness" in the *Daily News*; it is freedom from offering inducements to bet. But the word "clean" conveys ideas not confined to the omissions to bet. In fact in the ordinary way it conveys so little of any idea in regard to betting that this paper itself carefully chronicles the King's doings at Newmarket.

This, then, is the journal which is disquieted by the prospect of the entrance of Atheists into its special cast of respectabilities, which implies that the men who created the Cause which has brought it into being lived in an outer darkness exterior to the walls of its own exclusive city. But this is not all—its special virtue is its uncontaminated resistance to betting. It is to be observed, though, it is not that gambling which stakes human lives; that which risks money on the unknown weather of future years, and its uncertain effects on the food supply of thousands of millions of human beings. On the unknown social convulsions which produce war, which it resists; or on the unknown contents of unexplored lands. It confines its "cleanness" to the ignoring of the risks of wagers on imaginary knowledge of the powers of certain horses, and on the evanescent and uncertain morals of jockeys. It has no "cleanness" for the daily variations in the price of the labor employed with reckless loss of life in grubbing for absurd gravel; and for the fantastic fluctuations in the prices of the stones themselves. On the contrary, it gives whole pages to the records of those and similar artificial inflations and depressions of the cost of the commodities of the world. In this very number it gives the variation in price of the shares of no fewer than two hundred and thirty gold or diamond or land companies—of which the greatest number are African or Australian gold or diamond mines. Now where is the difference in paying money for land which may or may not be found deficient in the substances or properties for which it is bought and which is useless if not possessing them, and in staking money on a horse that may be incapacitated to run? How is it more moral to lend money to an Oriental despot or a bankrupt South American Republic at an impossible interest, knowing thoroughly that neither interest nor principal will be recovered but by force of arms? How is it more moral, I will say, to engage in a trade dependent on the caprices of an adventurer in Venezuela, and by mere astuteness create an estate out of the lives of living men which shall make one's heirs the controllers of land and property worth a million and masters of the lives and conduct of tens upon tens of thousands of land serfs? How is it more moral to do this, than to win the land on which Belgravia is built at a game of cards, as an ancestor of the Duke of Westminster is said to have done? A man who has at his disposal the lives and labors of others beyond an exact equivalent of his own work, steals, no matter how or under what sophisms or social superstitions he obtains them.

It is only consistent in Mr. Chesterton that he has bracketed flighty priests with respectable Atheists as funny and disquieting. He, of course, is too juvenile to have had experience of any former

generation of priests; but there are innumerable memoirs and lives to be read, which would have informed him that fickleness and instability are the characteristics of all priests of all time. This gentleman sees the flightiness of the priesthood as a portentous novelty. No inversion of reality could be greater. Flightiness is the essential characteristic of the religious mind, and is seriously cultivated by the priesthood. It is the basis of the philosophy of Aristotle, which for six hundred years has been the ethic of Christianity, and which lays down that "the *undemonstrated* fact is the basis of a good moral training," and says—altogether too truly—"if the *undemonstrated* fact be sufficiently *evident* to a man he will *not* require a reason why." Moreover, "All reasoning on matters of practice must be in outline, and *not scientifically exact*;" and "the kind of reasoning *varies* with the subject in hand;" and, further, "in *practical* matters and questions of *expediency* there are *no* invariable laws." This most certainly is not the teaching calculated to build up a stable, trustworthy, truthful and honest character. But it is the morality drilled into Christian priests, and it has produced—the *priest*.

And not the "priest" alone. It has produced that perversion of all existing facts, that inversion of realities which is common in all religious minds—as, in this instance, sees the Benthamites disreputable and priests stable. It has produced that insolent perversity of ostentatious ignorance which is fanaticism, and which has never asserted itself with more imbecile patronage or more bombastic bravado than by this yet unfledged school of pantheistic convulsionaires.

GEORGE TREBELLS.

### Acid Drops.

Ingersoll was once asked to indicate one change he would make in the order of the universe if he had the power. He replied that he would make health catching instead of disease. It was a splendid impromptu, and it knocks the bottom out of the Design Argument.

Modern Theism is the most hopeless sentimentalism the world has ever seen. In spite of great names, like those of Parker and Martineau, one cannot speak of it with any intellectual respect. It simply shuts its eyes to the plainest facts when they tell against its assumptions. Even the old Hebrews, three thousand years ago, were more reasonable and sincere. They did not presume to whitewash their Deity. They told the truth as they saw it. They saw, for instance, that parents eat sour grapes and children's teeth are set on edge; and that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. They did not talk round this terrible truth for hours, hoping it would somehow or other change its complexion. They plainly said it was God's way of governing the world; and that it was not for men to like it or dislike it, but to accept it with submission. This was bowing before God's power as high and inscrutable. But the moment you try to justify it on grounds of human justice the trouble begins. It does not square with our notions of justice, and it never will. Civilised nations strive their utmost to undo it. They endeavour to rescue children from the evils of bad heredity; instead of leaving them, as God does, to suffer all the miserable consequences.

The darkest fact in the world, in view of the assumptions of Theism, is the fact that we are all liable to suffer for others' wrong-doing. This is not a rare fact, either, but one of the commonest facts of experience. Every man or woman who reads this paragraph may easily remember a dozen recent illustrations. But our own thoughts on the subject have just been stirred by a kind of public event. During the trial of Anthony Stanley Rowe at the Old Bailey for forgery and fraud, his wife sat with pale face and anxious eyes in view of him. When the sentence of ten years' penal servitude was passed upon him she uttered a gasping wail, turned as white as death, and clung to a friend for support. That must have been the heaviest blow of all to the prisoner. He stood rivetted to the spot. The warders touched him on the shoulder, he turned round mechanically, took one step towards the stairs, and then fell an unconscious heap on the floor.

Fancy ten years' penal servitude with a stricken wife's white face ever before your eyes, and her wail of sorrow ever sounding in your ears! Is there any crime a man can commit that calls for such punishment? And oh the poor women's hearts, wounded through their very love, and aching because of their tireless affection! Yet it may be that their impulse is as true as it is adorable, and that the wail of a stricken wife in the well of the court is nearer the heart of morality than the stern sentence of the judge upon the bench.

According to a *Daily Mail* report, Dr. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren") recently told some truth at Newcastle. He said it had been proved that the Bible was not a book handed down from heaven, but had come into existence through a process of spiritual evolution amongst the Jews. He did not understand how any man could say that the book of Ecclesiastes was inspired in the same sense as John's gospel. Ecclesiastes was written by a man who was practically an agnostic. Precisely so. That is what sceptics have said from the days of Celsus to the days of Renan. The truth is coming out at last.

Dr. Watson defined the Higher Criticism as an attempt to make the Bible acceptable to the modern mind. Excellent! We couldn't better that ourselves. It is the clergyman's last shift—or shirt, if he pleases.

Some of Mr. Masterman's friends in the late Dulwich election issued a sort of placard prayer headed "God." It was a very pious document. Some would call it blasphemous. God was asked in it to "look down on 13,000 Dulwich men, and fill their hearts and brains with light and love." Judging by the result of the election, in view of the obvious political opinions of the framers of this appeal, God must have looked down on the 13,000 Dulwich men, and given them up; or it may be that to fill them with light and love, in a few days, was too big a task even for Omnipotence. Anyhow, the gentleman on the other side got in.

Miss Marie Corelli's libel action over the Shakespeare squabble has not done her much good. She got a farthing damages, and has to pay her own costs. Considering how this pious lady loathes and despises the press—except when the notices are laudatory—it is amusing to read the evidence of Mr. George Boydon, editor of the *Stratford-on-Avon Herald*. He testified in the witness-box that Miss Marie Corelli had favored him with anonymous paragraphs relating to herself, and that he had thus assisted her in the noble art of self-advertisement.

We note the name of the Rev. G. Guthrie in connection with a recent Clerkenwell County Court case. We fancy we have seen his name in the same connection before. Mr. Guthrie is a canvasser for Messrs. Howell & Co., publishers, and gets orders for a certain Encyclopædia. He got an order for one from Albert E. Slade, a Great Eastern Railway detective, who found the book was of no use to him, as it did not contain the "valuable police information" he was led to expect. Judge Edge asked whether, as a detective officer, he believed all that people told him. "Well, not exactly," he replied, "but this was a clergyman." And all the people in court laughed. They understood the species better than the detective did. Judge Edge himself had to observe, "Well, even with clergymen in future you must use common sense." Most excellent advice. But if people all exercised their common sense "even with clergymen" would not the churches and chapels be deserted?

A clergyman lectured in Leeds on "the humblest members of the animal kingdom." A year later he delivered another interesting discourse, and a local gentleman moved a vote of thanks. In doing so he said that the former lecture had made a deep impression and that he could never see a donkey since without thinking of the reverend lecturer.

Sir Oliver Lodge has been telling an interviewer that he has *proofs* of a future life. He admits that they are not such that he could produce them before the Royal Society, but they are good enough for him—we suppose in his capacity as a mystical explorer. He even appears to believe that a *bond fide* communication has been received from the late F. W. Myers. Well, now, that *could* be submitted to the Royal Society; and why should it not be done immediately? Let us have a little more solid evidence, and a little less pretentious talk.

Sunday contracts are invalid. But a Philadelphia girl did not think of that. She brought an action for breach of

promise against her "beau," and it turned out that he proposed to her one fine Sunday evening while they were enjoying a lovers' stroll. Judge Beitler had to decide against her on the ground that, according to the laws of Pennsylvania, a contract made on a Sunday cannot be enforced, unless there is a subsequent recognition of the contract on a week-day. Yankee girls will probably note.

"The Sermon on the Mount in Journalism" is the description of Mr. Stead's new venture, *The Daily Paper*, which is to make its first appearance on January 4. Poor Jesus Christ! How he suffers from the uninvited attentions of his exploiters! Would he have volunteered for the Cross if he had foreseen Mr. W. T. Stead, Mr. Hall Caine, and Miss Mario Corelli?

The Jingo spirit is responsible for some strange things, even in this most Christian country. "Alien Coiner Sentenced" was the headline of a police news paragraph in a London morning paper. We suppose it would have been all right if the coiner had been an Englishman.

The coiner was an Italian, his age twenty-eight, and his name Mario Capacci. He was sentenced to five years' penal servitude. In sentencing him, the Common Sergeant at the Old Bailey made an extraordinary statement. He said that the prisoner had given himself the worst character he could in avowing that he was an Anarchist. Why, in the proper philosophical sense of the word, Herbert Spencer was an Anarchist; and, if we dare to believe the New Testament, Jesus Christ was an out-and-out Anarchist.

A striking instance of the power of superstition over vulgar minds is the following. The delayed Cunard steamer *Umbria* arrived at New York recently after experiencing terrible weather all the way from Queenstown. One night the storm reached its climax, and four hundred and fifty emigrants had to be locked in the steerage for their own safety. They cried, groaned, and howled without cessation, and some attempted to force their way on deck, where they would inevitably have been washed away by the tremendous seas that were breaking over the ship. At length, when all the efforts of the officers had failed to reassure the terrified emigrants, a white-haired German pastor went into the midst of the shrieking crowd. He knelt down and prayed long and fervently. And the women gradually left off wailing, and the men gradually calmed down after them; and, if there was no peace on the troubled waters—for the elements were not superstitious—there was peace in the *Umbria's* steerage. One white-haired old praying-machine was more effective with such people than all the common sense on board the vessel.

Mr. Hales, the *Daily News* war correspondent—perhaps taking the tip from his Christian employers—has revelled in describing the Turk as a coward. In doing this he has simply overreached himself. It is too well-known that the Turk is *not* a coward. He may be anything else, but he is not that. And the truth has leaked out very funnily even in the *Daily News*. Its Paris correspondent interviewed General Tzontcheff, the Macedonian insurgent leader, and M. Gologanoff, of Sofia, a leading member of the Macedonian Organising Committee. The latter, apparently, with the sanction of the former, spoke "in generous terms" of the character of the ordinary "unsophisticated" Turk as distinguished from the Turkish official. "The Turkish peasants," he said, "Turkish tradesmen and shopkeepers in the towns are also victims of misgovernment. In a free, well-governed Macedonia, Turks and Christians would get on perfectly well together. The half-million Mussulmans still living in Bulgaria are law-abiding loyal citizens." According to the interviewer, the General's "estimate of the Turkish regular soldier is a high one." "The Turkish regular," General Tzontcheff said, "is as brave as ever he was." If he ever got demoralised and ran away, it was because he was deserted by his officers—Turks who had been spoiled by the worst side of "western civilisation." "They would have followed their leaders through hell fire," the General admitted, "but there were no leaders to lead."

Yes, the Turk and other Mohammedans are not the contemptible cowards they are represented by Fleet-street Christians; as they will prove, if other Christians are foolish enough to act upon this theory.

The last vestige of hope that the Russian Government, in the person of M. Plehve, might allow something approaching justice to be meted out at Kischineff has vanished (says the *Morning Leader's* Vienna correspondent) with the retirement of advocates MM. Metaxa, Karabshevsky, and Kalmanovitch, who did not shrink from prophesying that after

such a mockery fresh excesses may be expected. M. Shmakoff, the mainstay of those who seek to burke the investigation, is back from Moscow, his appearance being hailed with delight. General Gleboff shook hands warmly with him, as did several of the judges. The chief interest in Wednesday's proceedings centred in the evidence of Rudi, a Jewish merchant universally respected, whose house, situated opposite the police station of the fifth district, was entirely wrecked, the plunderers working for thirteen hours under the eyes of the police to force a safe which contained valuables and money to the amount of £3,000. Rudi, now a beggar, ran to the Governor's house to implore protection. This was on the second day of the riots, but he was told that his Excellency never rose before ten in the morning.

Readers of the foregoing paragraph will be able to judge how much sincerity there is likely to be in Russia's protests addressed to the Sultan against the ill-treatment of the Christian population in his European dominions. Certainly two blacks do not make one white, but one black has hardly the right to lecture another on its nigrity. The Russian government is just as bad as the Turkish government, with the additional vice of hypocrisy.

We see it reported that a unique edifice has been erected in the Biblical Museum at Utrecht, Holland, in the shape of a reproduction of the tabernacle said to have been erected in the wilderness by Moses during the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to the Holy Land. The seven-branched candlestick, the incense altar, the table of shewbread, and the ark are all there. The only thing wanting is old Jah lying silent and bland inside the ark, or squatting on the Kapporeth (the cover) or Mercy Seat for a tête-à-tête with the High Priest.

The blood of St. Januarius has just liquefied again at Naples, amidst the pious plaudits of adoring myriads. Once a year the showmen of the Catholic Church in that beautiful city—"where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile"—bring out a bottle which is supposed to contain some gore of the aforesaid saint; they hold the bottle up in the sight of a superstitious mob, until the gore turns into ruddy fluid blood, and even bubbles to show its miraculous activity. Of course it is a trick, probably performed by chemical means; and we may be quite sure that the bottle will never be placed in the hands of independent chemical experts. Yes, in the twentieth century, after the death of Darwin, in the full blaze of scientific light, while men like Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge utter their "intellectual" tribute to the essence of the popular superstition, the Catholic priests stand up and boldly exploit it, with a solemn face for the worshipping multitude, and a sly wink for each other. The Catholic Church has the courage of its dogmas. It goes the whole hog, fools the crowd to the top of its bent, and drives a roaring trade on the yet volcanic bump of wonder. It is a splendid specimen of its kind; that is, of subtle fraud and unscrupulous imposture.

After reading of the 1903 fake with the St. Januarius bottle at Naples it is instructive to read that Dr. Bourne, the new Roman Catholic Archbishop at Westminster, is returning from Italy for his "enthronement" on December 29, which is going to be "most gorgeous." No wonder Carlyle called it the Great Lying Church.

"Without money, and without price." That is the prospectus of the Bread of Life Companies. But how different is the reality. Religion is one of the dearest things in the world. Thousands of able-bodied—and occasionally able-minded—fellows get a very good living by telling their neighbors how to go to heaven—without ever going there themselves as long as they can avoid it. There is nothing mercenary about them. Oh, dear no. They are the most disinterested people in the world. Such is the character they give themselves. But they are always after money. And in ninety-nine cases, at least, out of every hundred when they hear a "call" from the Lord it is to take a job with a bigger stipend. It doesn't matter whether you take the top or the bottom; all strata of the profession are alike with regard to the cash. In this respect they remind us of Coleridge's description of London porter. He said it was all froth from the top halfway down, and all dregs from the bottom halfway up.

Look at the new "Prisoner of the Vatican," and give a thought at the same time to the old one—now with God. Ever since Leo XIII. died his successor has been searching all over the "Prison" for the vast wealth that had been amassed by the deceased Fisher of Men—and other things. But, alas, there was no sign of the missing gold. According to the *Tribuna*, however, it has come to light in a most

astonishing manner. Cardinal Gotti had got it. He says it was handed to him by the late Pope, who told him that if he became Pope he was to employ those millions of francs as he pleased, and otherwise to give them to his successor, but not until four months after his death. Pope Sarto (in English, Pope Taylor) lays his hands, therefore, upon something like £1,800,000. A tidy little sum for the "without money, and without price" gentlemen. —

But that is not the end of this financial romance. It is reported that some workmen, removing the hangings from the room formerly occupied by Leo XIII., found a bag roughly tied with string. They called in some of the Papal attendants, and on further examination other bags were found concealed in the same way. They all contained money, and the cash in the Papal treasury was increased in a few minutes by about £370,000.

Now you can understand the Naples bottle trick, and all the other devices for trading on the bump of wonder. A lot of tricks will be worked, and a lot of lies will be told, for a couple of millions.

Bishop Gore has succeeded in his attempt, which we referred to last week, to get rid of the Rev. Charles Evans Beeby, the unorthodox Birmingham vicar. Mr. Beeby has written to the Bishop as follows:—"Your widely published letter, by your suggestion of want of honor on my part in remaining in office in the Church of England, places me in a position in the eyes of the clergy and laity of the diocese which I cannot tolerate, and my relations to your Lordship are of so strained and painful a character that it is impossible for me to contemplate longer the continuance of them. I therefore have resolved, after the most deliberate consideration, to resign my position, and I do now place my resignation in the hands of your Lordship."

No doubt a clergyman ought not to remain in the Church of England if he does not honestly believe its doctrines. But what puzzles us is this. Why should Bishop Gore, of all men, take to chasing out heretics? If it comes to a question of personal honor, there are many earnest Churchmen who believe that the editor of *Lux Mundi*, and author of the essay in that volume on "Inspiration," ought himself to stand outside the Church. Mr. Beeby is no farther off the orthodox view of the Virgin Birth than Bishop Gore is off the orthodox view of the Inspiration of the Bible. And if Mr. Beeby goes out, the Bishop should follow him.

It would be easy, indeed, to find quite a number of "heretics" in the Church, if we only went looking for them. The Manchester Branch of the Protestant League finds one in Archdeacon Wilson—in spite of his opposition to "infidelity." It appears that in a paper he read to the last Diocesan Conference he referred to the words "Christ descended into hell" and "sitteth on the right hand of God" as "metaphorical" and "provisional." But this is objected to by Mr. H. T. Birch, chairman of the M. B. of the P. L., who says it is "directly contrary to the teaching of the Articles of Religion, where the descent into hell, and the ascent into heaven, are spoken of as facts." To which Archdeacon Wilson replies by asking Mr. Birch whether, so to speak, he goes the whole hog, and believes that there is a physiological right-hand and left-hand of God in heaven. Mr. Birch, who is "able humbly and reverently to believe the statements of God's Word," answers in the affirmative. He believes that God has a right-hand. Of course, he must also believe that this right-hand has fingers and nails. Perhaps he will kindly state whether he believes that the nails are trimmed with scissors or a penknife.

The *Daily News* gives great space to the "martyrdom" of Mr. Samuel Wiles, a Wesleyan tailor, of 10, Station-terrace, Coombe-road, New Malden, who has been sent to prison for refusing to pay the Education rate. It appears that he has left behind him, to mind the shop, his wife, who is over sixty years of age, and badly crippled—and her son, who is the victim of a "distressing affliction." A very unfortunate family! But how can the magistrates help that? It was for Mr. Wiles to consider these matters before volunteering to do twenty-one days "for conscience sake." Somehow or other, it never occurs to these people that magistrates may have consciences too. These Passive Resistance "martyrs" seem to believe that they monopolise the commodity.

Now a word for the *Daily News*. Suppose a Freethinker, in some town where Church and Chapel jog along together on a common understanding, were to refuse to pay the Education rate "for conscience sake." Would the *Daily News* embrace him as a "martyr" and give him nearly a

column of its biggest type? We should much like to get this question answered—by the *Daily News*.

What humbugs these Free Church leaders are, to be sure! Here is the Rev. Dr. Horton telling the world, through the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience, that "Nonconformists feel it absolutely necessary to resist anything in the nature of a religious test for public officials or persons engaged by the State." Indeed! Let us take an illustration, and ask Dr. Horton a question. Suppose Churchmen and Dissenters came to an understanding, and settled down amicably on the basis of common Christian teaching—whatever that is: suppose all was harmony, as far as Churchmen and Dissenters were concerned, in the Provided Schools; would Dr. Horton then agree that masters or teachers known to be Atheists, Agnostics, Freethinkers, or Secularists, should have precisely the same opportunities as masters or teachers known to be Catholics, Anglicans, or Nonconformists—even in regard to religious instruction? This is a straight question, and it should have a straight answer. If Dr. Horton answers "Yes," he will say what he knows cannot be practically true. If he answers "No," what becomes of his opposition to "religious tests?" We pause for a reply—though we don't suppose we shall get it; for a guilty dog, invited to see something he doesn't want to recognise, is not in it with a Free Church leader in evading unpleasant consequences.

Dr. Clifford, on the whole, takes the cake as a Free Church charlatan. We mean, of course, in relation to this Education controversy. His last long letter (his letters are always long) to the *Daily News* lies before us as we write. He repeats the same old protestations, the same old platitudes, the same old pretences; in short, he performs the same old tricks. We note that he follows the *Daily News* in taking the name of the French Premier in vain. "It is the same battle," he says, "which is going on in Paris; and we say with M. Combes, 'We do not attack religion, but its ministers who would make of religion an instrument of domination.'" This perversion of facts is worthy of Dr. Clifford in his present avatar. He knows very well, of course, that M. Combes is not a Non-conformist, but a Freethinker, and that M. Combes's government would give as short shrift to Dr. Clifford's "Biblical instruction" as to the Archbishop of Canterbury's "Church Catechism." The battle in London, therefore, is not the same battle which is going on in Paris. Dr. Clifford is as well aware of this as we are. And the language we have quoted is simply the hypocritical chatter of his professional interests.

The late Henry Edward John Stanley, third Baron Stanley of Alderley, has been a liberal supporter of Christian churches, particularly in the neighbourhood of his Welsh estate at Penrhos, Anglesey, and it was supposed that he was a good Christian himself, like his ancestor, the famous Stanley, Bishop of Norwich, and his kinsman, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, the renowned Dean of Westminster. After his death, however, it transpired that he was not a Christian at all. He was buried, according to his own wishes, as a Mussulman. His wife, his two sons, and other relatives, were present at the funeral, which took place at a small plantation on his estate. There were also present Hamid Bey, Secretary to the Turkish Embassy, and Ridjay Effendi, Imani to the Turkish Embassy, who performed the Mohammedan service. It must be a terrible blow to that orthodox neighbourhood.

Mr. W. T. Paulin, of Mann, Crossman, and Paulin, the great firm of brewers, has just given a parish hall, near Enfield, costing £15,000. The building was opened by the Bishop of London, who did not say on this occasion that the Bible opposed the drinking of intoxicants.

There are a good many sidelights being thrown on the character of Macedonian Christians by the reports that appear in the *Daily News*, and these are all the more instructive as the *Daily News* is conducting a campaign on their behalf. According to one of the Macedonian leaders, now in London, Turkish soldiers are often accompanied by Greek Christians, who plunder the members of rival churches and sell the goods in their towns. In one case cited, a bishop accompanied the soldiers, and the villagers were ordered to be killed, and their houses burned, unless they agreed to enter the Greek Church. There is nothing surprising in such occurrences to anyone who knows the character of Eastern Christians. Travellers, like Freshfield and Palgrave, pointed out, years ago, that in any fair comparison of Christians and Mohammedans the latter came out an easy first. Still, it is rather surprising, in view of these revelations, that the question is not asked, "If the Turk is cleared out, who will preserve the peace among these amiable followers of Jesus?"



## Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(Suspended till after Christmas.)

### To Correspondents.

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

AUCHINTIBBER.—If you had been reading the *Freethinker*, as you say, you would have seen that your first question as to Colonel Ingersoll and the *Boston Journal* has been answered in our articles on "Torrey's Trashy Tales." Your second question we answer in the negative. Voltaire did not ask his doctor for six months' life, and say that he and the doctor would go to hell together when he found he couldn't get what he wanted. The story is so silly that we wonder how even a Christian could believe it; or, rather, we should wonder if we did not know from experience that many Christians are stupid enough to believe anything. You will find the facts about Voltaire's death in Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds*. Your third question about Haeckel's book is nonsensical. What the clergy have got to do is to answer it. Everything else is beside the point.

G. T. GRANGER.—We shall try to find time to write at length on the subject early in the new year.

C. CILWA.—Thanks for Jean de Bonnefon's article on "Fausses Reliques" in *Le Journal*, but the subject is far more adequately treated in our own chapter on "Pious Frauds" in the *Crimes of Christianity*.

F. S.—Accept our thanks for the useful cuttings.

J. RICHARDS.—We remember you quite well at Ryhope. It was years ago when the local Christians were "gone" on the unspeakable Walton Powell.

THE COHEN PRESENTATION FUND.—A. L. Coates 2s., Mrs. Liger 1s., T. Hindson 5s., Humanist 2s., W. C. Balfour (Liverpool) £1, J. C. Balfour (Liverpool) £1.

MERE MAN IN THE STREET.—We have carried fairness as far as it should go. You cannot expect us to make the *Freethinker* an arena for a game of hide-and-seek. If you do, you are mistaken. We cannot insert your fresh letter. It would be uninteresting to everyone but yourself.

H. MUSGRAVE READE.—Thanks for your letter. It arrives too late for insertion in this week's *Freethinker*. But it shall appear in our next—with our comments.

F. S. EDWARDS.—Every one of the cases has a very ancient and fish-like smell. What the Christian soul-savers should produce, but cannot, is a *Freethinker* of some importance just "rescued." Pleased to hear from you at any time.

F. S.—As we go to press earlier than usual, we have not been able to deal with your interesting cuttings this week. They will make useful pegs for a few paragraphs in our next.

E. H. JONES.—We are obliged to you for your letter. See who appears on the subject in next week's *Freethinker*.

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

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

This number of the *Freethinker* went to press early on account of the Christmas holidays, and the necessity of getting it into the provinces before the ordinary traffic practically stopped. That is why there are no lecture notices in the present issue.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, takes place at the Holborn Restaurant, as usual, on Tuesday, January 12. Dinner will be served at 7.30 p.m. sharp, and the diners are requested to be "on time." Mr. G. W. Foote is to preside, and there will be a few speakers, including Mr. John Lloyd, to a brief toast-list. The Presentation will also be made to Mr. Cohen in the course of the evening. The program will further include some good music, vocal and

instrumental, which is under the care of Miss Vance. The tickets, 4s. each, can be obtained at 2 Newcastle-street, or from any London Branch secretary. There ought to be a strong rally of metropolitan "saints," and perhaps a few from the provinces, on this festive occasion.

The *Secular Annual* for 1904, being somewhat later than usual, has been kept back a little longer still, in order to make its publication occur at a more favorable moment. It will be published now with next week's *Freethinker*—that is, on Thursday, December 31—the last day of the year, when it will be out of the hustle of annual publications. It will contain a special article by Mr. Foote on "Death and Westminster Abbey." Mr. F. J. Gould writes on "Lincoln Cathedral and the Hairy Ainus." Mr. Cohen contributes a study of "Lucretius." Miss M. Lovell deals with "Women's Religion." Mr. John Lloyd writes on "The Signs of the Times," and Chilperic on "The Sinlessness of Atheism," while Abracadabra takes for his subject "Moses Wrote of Me." There is also the usual official matter connected with the N. S. S., and particulars of Freethought organisation in other parts of the world. The price of the *Annual* is only sixpence.

All who have not yet subscribed to the Cohen Presentation Fund, but mean to do so, are warned that it closes on January 11 for certain. The Presentation will be made at the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on the following evening. The laggards, therefore, will have to hurry up to be in time. It will be ridiculous to blame anybody but themselves if they are too late. We may add that half of the second £100 is still needed. Some of the Branches might wake up at the last moment.

We have received some correspondence from, and about, Mr. Reade, the converted "infidel," who was paraded by Revivalist Torrey a few weeks ago on the St. James's Hall platform, Manchester. There is a Mr. Reade, and he is a converted "infidel" (for what he is worth), but he is not one of Revivalist Torrey's converts at all, having "found Jesus" some years ago. This puts Revivalist Torrey out of the case altogether. Next week our readers will see how the case stands with regard to Mr. Reade.

### A New Year's Gift for Freethought.

JANUARY is the month that Thomas Paine was born in, and the month that Charles Bradlaugh died in; it is also the first month of the year, following right upon the Christmas festivities, which are supposed to open people's hearts and purses; and for these reasons it seems to be a very suitable month in which to make an appeal to Freethinkers on behalf of Freethought.

I ask the readers of this journal to send me subscriptions during the month of January towards a New Year's Gift for Freethought. The sooner in the month they send the better, as giving early is often giving twice, because it encourages others who may be a little lukewarm or hesitating, or holding back to see what will happen before they "do anything" themselves.

The Secular Society, Limited, has a substantial balance at its bankers' just now, in consequence of having received two legacies during the autumn. And some will think that this is good enough to go on with. But I do not. It is not, in my judgment, wise or just, or even decent, if such strokes of good fortune are made an excuse for slackness and selfishness. Freethinkers who love Freethought will do something for it every year; and legacies would be a curse, rather than a blessing, if they extinguished ordinary sources of support. I think it would be better to keep the money at present in hand for exceptional occasions, and to call upon Freethinkers to meet the current expenses of the movement.

Perhaps my length of service entitles me to say that I am sadly conscious that Freethinkers do not

bestir themselves sufficiently in this direction. To put it plainly, they do not give enough. Partly, no doubt, owing to their being so scattered, and to the want of personal contact with their leaders, they have not cultivated the habit of giving something definitely (at least) every year. The generosity of some is beyond all praise: their names figure in every subscription that is going. But others appear rarely, and a great many never appear at all. Now this is not as it should be. I therefore make a special appeal to the rare subscribers: let them appear more frequently. And another special appeal to the non-subscribers: let them appear at least for once. Perhaps, if they make a beginning, they will like it, and get interested in it—and continue.

I do not wish to lose sight of the fact that the Cohen Presentation Fund is not yet closed. I should be sorry to divert a single shilling from that Fund. And if any reader meant to subscribe to that Fund, and has not yet done so, I hope he will not let that Fund suffer by sending his subscription to another Fund, but strictly carry out his original intention. The Cohen Presentation Fund, however, has been open a good while; I have made many strong and pointed appeals for it; and I do not think, nor do I believe others will think, that it should now stand in the way of any other effort.

Well then, with regard to this fresh Fund. In my opinion no one should send less than a shilling. If he cannot afford as much as that he should keep the money for his own necessities. The widow's mite may have been a very noble gift, but she had better have spent it on bread for herself or her children. On the other hand, there are readers of this journal who can afford to send several shillings, and some who can afford to send a good many shillings. Let them all—except the necessitous—give according to their opportunities. And if they do that we shall have (in the bulk) a very liberal subscription.

Now as to the disposition of the Fund. I propose to hand over one half of it to the National Secular Society—which can do good work with all the funds it is likely to obtain in the immediate future. I propose to devote the other half to a special effort I have in contemplation for promoting the circulation of the *Freethinker*—partly by advertising, and partly by other methods.

Perhaps the second object needs a little explanation. I have previously stated that the *Freethinker* was badly hit, like other advanced journals, by the South African war, and has never quite recovered from the blow, although its circulation has shown some decided improvement lately. The paper belongs, legally, to the Freethought Publishing Company; and some may say, "Let the Company look to it." But that is not a generous way of looking at the matter. The Company has lost money, and is still losing money; and a large part of the loss is incurred in maintaining the *Freethinker*, and keeping it up to a not unworthy level, during a period of adversity. Now for my part—and I hope the view will be generally shared—I do not think that the whole of this burden should fall upon the Shareholders in the Company, merely because they were generous enough to invest in the undertaking for the sake of the movement. The *Freethinker* is a flag of the whole movement, and should be kept flying by all the friends of the movement—as long as it requires their assistance.

Those who think otherwise, however, may stand by their own opinion, as far as I am concerned. Everyone shall be at liberty to let the whole of his

subscription go to either one of the two objects I have indicated. Subscriptions received without any such direction will go into the common Fund for equal division.

Cheques, Postal Orders, &c., should be made payable to G. W. Foote, and crossed for safety; and all subscriptions will be acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*. That is to say, each week's list of acknowledgments will include all subscriptions received up to Tuesday morning.

I now leave this matter with my readers; only begging them to remember that I, who pen this appeal, am probably the largest subscriber to the Freethought movement. I have given the movement my life. And this, translated into pounds, shillings, and pence, means that I have given all the difference between what I *have earned* in a hand to mouth existence and what I *might have earned* if I had devoted my energies to a more profitable calling. Not that I regret the loss—far from it; I am only pointing it out—just for once in my lifetime.

G. W. FOOTE.

---

### Is Life Worth Living?

THE question, "Is Life Worth Living?" is often asked, discussed and answered. It is asked from many points of view, between extreme pessimism and ultra optimism, and verbal and written answers are given from the same standpoints. There are some who consider it sinful to ask and discuss the question, and who look upon them that do as great sinners, but who, I have no doubt, at times inwardly discuss the question themselves. The perplexities, disappointments and calamities of life are so great and numerous that the inquiry as to the worth of life is bound to arise.

At the outset we must define our terms, and realise what we mean, where we start from, and the goal to arrive at. The word life is a general term including an infinite variety. All life is related one to the other. In a sense, life of every kind is all one, although it appears to us that there is an infinite difference between the value of some and the value of others. But we do not know. For anything we know to the contrary a life that we look upon as worthless may be as precious in the economy of the universe as the highest life we know. The highest life we know is the life of man here on earth. We talk very freely of angels and spirits, but we know nothing about them. We do not know that there are any angels or any spirits. As the life of man is higher than the life of a worm, there may be in the infinite universe, life immensely higher than the life of the highest man. But we do not know and have no right to parade our fancies as knowledge. Even theology is nothing more than speculative thought, and in no sense can it be called knowledge. All that has been written on the Being and attributes of God is nothing better than guesses, without a single atom of certain knowledge on the subject as a foundation.

Life may be divided into three kinds; vegetable life, animal life, and human life. But there is a sense in which the three are only one. There is a life which is prior to and is the parent of every life. Vegetable life is the second, and, apparently, the only life that derives its sustenance from inorganic matter. Animal life is sustained by food prepared for it by the vegetable. Every kind of life merges into one another in so gradual a degree that it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell where one ends and the other begins. There are vegetables, so called, that possess some qualities of animal life, such as catching flies and digesting them. And it is impossible to point out a division line between animal and human life. The highest point in human

life is consciousness. But we cannot say that it belongs exclusively to man. Along with intelligence possessed by some animals, it is highly probable a degree of consciousness is possessed as well.

The worth of life depends not on its worth by itself, but its use. It would be difficult to show that the living speck in the protoplasm is worth anything to itself, but apparently being the parent life it is worth everything to universal life. To itself, vegetable life, as far as one can see, is worthless; but to animals, including man, it is worth all, being the only means we know of to provide food to sustain their life. Of the millions of microbes, even in the human body, it is difficult to conceive that their life is worth living to themselves, and there are thousands of other creatures that it is difficult to see any worth in their lives to themselves or anybody else. But we do not know. The universe contains infinitely more than we can see. And in the things we can see outwardly there may be inwardly far more than is seen by the keenest eyes. So it is possible, if not probable, that the creatures which war against man, and man against them, may be of value, in the economy of nature, as a whole.

But the vital question is, Is the life of man worth living—is it worth living to the man himself? It is possible to conceive of a life to be worthless to an individual himself, and of value to others. There are thousands of such lives in every country. Men tortured day and night by incurable diseases, without hope of release from pain, or a happy rest outside the grave, what is life worth to them? There are thousands upon thousands engaged in business whose daily life is a death-struggle with famine, creditors, rate-collectors, and bankruptcy, and daily, some of them, consider their life so worthless, that they end it by suicide. And to thousands upon thousands, who would fling their life away if they had the nerve to do it, the price of life is misery and degradation. The imbecile idiots and incurable lunatics, who are a burden and a source of anxiety, day and night, it is difficult to conceive that life is worth living to them, or anybody else. In the slums of our large towns, thousands may be seen any time whose lives seem to be worthless to themselves or to anybody else. I do not blame them. But I blame society, whose social injustice has made them. Neither can I condemn utterly the incurable criminals and the immoral wretches who are a curse to society, because I believe society is responsible for their existence. At the same time, I cannot see that such life is worth living. Abundance of similar instances might be quoted, but it is useless to pursue that line of thought further.

The inquiry, Is life worth living? may be answered truthfully with a Yes and a No. As already indicated, there is a vast amount of life in the world that we cannot see any worth in, or any possibility of worth, to the possessor, or anybody else. On the other hand, there are many—very many—whose life is worth living to themselves and their relations, but is, at the same time, not only worthless, but ruinous, to others. The life of a tyrant, however valuable to himself and his, is worthless to the world, and an end of it would be a gain. There are crowds of such lives in the world, which the reader may discover and describe for himself.

Fortunately for the world, the life of the great majority is worth living, though many may at times feel a doubt that it is so. The man who, in the humblest walk of life, toils industriously to maintain himself and family, is of value to himself, his family, and society. So are teachers, organisers, inventors, skilled and unskilled workers, poets, authors, and investigators, and many more. And there are numerous persons, that it is difficult to classify. They are a kind of hybrids living a double life. They are good and bad. In one life their actions are beneficial, in the other life their doings are hurtful and ruinous. The man who corners the grain or cotton, and thereby brings millions of people to slow starvation, and many to death, is certainly a criminal of the worst possible type.

Morally, but not legally, he is a murderer; and, in this sense, his life is not worth living. On the contrary, an end of all such lives would be a gain to society. But the same man, who is so dead to the welfare of the public, and so cruel to the toiling masses, is a faithful husband, an affectionate father, a kind neighbor, a useful citizen, an orthodox Christian, a liberal contributor to charities and philanthropic institutions. He builds and endows churches, chapels, orphanages, colleges, and free libraries. In this respect, his life is worth living. But if we attempt to strike a balance between the loss and gain of his life, it is difficult to say on which side the balance lies. And there are multitudes of these lives in the world.

Nature seems to be prodigal in the production of what appears to be useless and worthless lives. I use the word "appears" because we do not know as a fact. There are depths and heights, breadths and lengths, in Nature that no man has, or ever can, fathom and map. There are secrets in infinite Nature that no finite can find out. Therefore, as long as the mysterious origin and ultimate end of things are hidden from us, we can only say of things seemingly or apparently. It is possible that things which seem to us worthless and useless may be the most useful and precious in the economy of nature. We do not know, and therefore must not be too positive and dogmatic.

At the same time, we can only use the tools in our possession, and deal with things as they appear to our present means of looking at them. The billions of animalculæ discovered by the microscope, and other billions that can be seen by the naked eyes—it is difficult to say that their lives are worth living. Of the countless number of living creatures in the seas, the land, and the air, devouring one another in order to live, is their lives worth living? And in the bodies of all living creatures—man included—living organisms exist in millions; is the life of these worth living? An incalculable number of lives—even human lives—are produced and destroyed before they are matured, or can be of any use to themselves or anybody else; and how can these be worth living? For millions of years this living and dying has been going on, and to human appearance the worthless lives have been as numerous as the valuable ones. How much of past life was, and how much of present life is, worth living no human being can possibly say.

Life, in its origin, its nature, and duration, is full of mystery. As a matter of fact, we do not know that life ever had an origin, or that it will have an ending. Something must have existed without a beginning, and why not life? If matter is indestructible, and therefore eternal, why not life? Is there anything in nature but matter and its attributes? And are the attributes not parts of matter? Is there any matter without attributes, or any attributes without matter? We are told, even by some scientists, that we do not know how, when, or whence matter got its attributes. That is true; but only a half truth. The whole truth is that we do not know that matter ever did get its attributes, any time, from anywhere. Something must be eternal, and why not matter and all its attributes? Shifting the mystery from matter to something underneath, beyond, or outside, does not solve the mystery; it only removes it to the something else, which is still denser and more unsolvable. I cannot see the necessity, or utility, of going beyond matter itself, as existing from eternity, and containing in itself all its potentialities. Theologians often taunt us with our ignorance and inability to solve the mysteries of nature. But is our ignorance to them a knowledge? Is our helplessness to them an ability? Can they see anything more than we can? Can they solve the problems of the universe any more, or better, than we can? Theology has never solved a single problem; and it has done its best or worst, in all ages and all countries, to prevent the solutions of science. But science has triumphed in spite of theology, and has succeeded to bring many mysteries to light and to solve many of the profoundest

problems. And what it has done in the past, and is doing in the present, is a sure foundation of faith in its future success.

The inquiry, Is life worth living? might with equal appropriateness be applied to anything else. We might ask, Is nature worth existing? But I feel that all such questions are vain. Nature does exist, and all our speculations about it will make no difference. And life exists, and we have to accept it and bear it, whether worth living or not. We have no choice in the matter. We were not consulted whether we would have life or not. We live because we must, and cannot help it. We live by compulsion, and so we must die. All must die, and die once only, as far as we know. But we do not know. Death is as great a mystery as life. Life and death are linked together, and are lost one in the other. Without life there would be no death, and apparently no life without death. Life seems to spring from death, and death seems to be only a change from one life to another. It is all change, and all a great mystery.

The great mystery of life is consciousness. The knowledge that we live transcends, it seems to me, every other problem of life, and is the most difficult to solve and explain. That there is life without consciousness we know from our own experience. A baby and a child live, but they are not conscious that they live. We live during sleep, but are not conscious that we live. In a sense we have lived and died thousands of times, in our ancestors, before we were born; but, as we have no consciousness of a previous life, that life for us is as a thing that never existed. That we shall live in some form or other after death is a certainty. But if not a conscious life for us it will be a non-existent life. No sane man would desire to have even an individual immortal life, if an unconscious one. The only charm in the doctrine of immortality is the supposed continuance of individual consciousness.

Speculations about life and death are very interesting, but very barren. The most they do is to show how helpless we are. We had no share in the processes that gave us being, and much less than we often suppose in the course of our existence. Our end, the mode, and time of it is as certain as our birth, and we have no more control over the finish than the beginning in a real way. Eternal inexorable law seems to be the order of the universe and everything in it. With clear thinking, one cannot see how anything could be different to what they are. If there is no effect without a cause, and no cause without an effect, how could man alter the course of Nature? At all events, if we grant the premises that Nature works by laws which are irresistible, it is very difficult to come to any other conclusion. And this conclusion need not deter or discourage anyone in his effort to improve himself and all around him. For there is nothing clearer than the fact that there is in Nature a power that works for improvement and righteousness. The contrary is also true. There is in Nature a power working for unrighteousness. There is an evolution of progress and improvement, and devolution for decay and retrogression, a life-giving and a death-giving power.

Our duty is to avail ourselves of all means within our reach to make life good and happy. A belief in determinism will not deter anyone from working for all that is good. Nature prompts the good to goodness. The good will have no joy in anything that is not holy and useful. He is an element in the evolution of progress. Believers in determinism work for man with energy and enthusiasm equal to any philanthropist. Robert Owen preached the doctrine that character was made for man and not by him, and no man ever worked harder to reform society and uplift the masses than he did. He was in the highest sense of the word a great philanthropist. Many living reformers hold the same belief as Robert Owen did, and, like him, they devote all their time and energy to uplift the suffering masses.

Whether life be worth living or not, it has to be

lived. We cannot help it. We have no choice in the matter. It is given to us by an irresistible force, and will be taken from us in the same way. As far as we know, we live a conscious life once only, and die only once. We have no consciousness of any previous life, and in all probability we shall have no consciousness of our present life after death.

Life is great, grand, and precious—like everything else in the wonderful cosmos. In itself, life is as wonderful and mysterious as the universe of which it is a part; but, to the individual, it is very unequal in quantity, quality, and worth. To some, life is a torture, worse than hard labor punishment, as long as it lasts. To many, death is a greater blessing than life. To many, again, life is so imperfect that it requires the services of the surgeon, doctor, and optician to keep it in repair. To millions, life is too limited in intelligence to enable them to enjoy and use it beneficially to themselves or anybody else, and it is difficult to see that such lives are worth living. But the life of the majority, with all its drawbacks and trials, is certainly worth having and living, and many of the shattered lives could have been happy and precious but for the faults and folly of their possessors. And it is not too much to say that millions upon millions of lives, that are a burden of misery, could be made into nobler and happier lives by a better social system. There cannot be a doubt, I think, that the unjust and chaotic order of society is responsible for most things that seem to make life worthless. It is man's inhumanity to man that drives thousands to fling their lives away by suicide. I cannot blame the poor man, out of work and unable to get any, for ending his life because he cannot bear the sight of his wife and children slowly starving for want of bread. I might suggest that it would be nobler and braver on his part to remain with his family and die with them, rather than leave them in their misery. But his case is a hard one, and I cannot blame him. Society murders him, and I condemn society for the tragedy.

Poverty at the bottom and wealth and idleness at the top are the cause of a great part of the ailments and sorrows of society. Riches and luxuries, without anything useful to do, often make life a burden, and even millionaires at times commit suicide to get rid of it. Thousands upon thousands whose wealth is drawn from the labor and sweat of the toilers, having nothing to do but killing time—a hard work—live a life that is not worth living, either to themselves or society. With a just social order, idlers would not be tolerated, and all would have to render some useful service to their fellows. But the great deprecator of life is poverty. In great poverty goodness and happiness are almost impossible. The bulk, or at least the greatest part, of all the immoralities, crimes, sins, degradation, and misery of the masses are traceable to poverty. Vagrancy, prostitution, dishonesty, deception, faithlessness, and untruthfulness have their chief source in poverty. A noble, healthy, vigorous, and a happy race can never be built up in the midst of destitution. If it is a fact—and I fear it is—that a third of our population live continually on the verge of starvation, it is an appalling fact. It augurs disaster to our country unless a remedy is speedily applied. Owing to poverty, the toilers crowd in the slums, where weak, unhealthy children are born, whose lives will never be worth living, and thus the race become deteriorated.

And there is no need for poverty to exist. It is caused, in the main, by the exploitation of the many by the few. There is wealth enough produced to place all in comfortable circumstances, if justly distributed; and it could be doubled and trebled by better methods, more efficient organizations of labor, and setting the idlers to work. Ill-health, accidents, and sorrows there will be, do what we will. Nothing men can do will altogether prevent them or avoid them. There will be lives not worth living always; but their number can be, and ought to be, reduced to a minimum. Under a wise and just order of society there would be no poverty to drive men to misery,

crime, prison, and suicide. If that is true—and it is true; its truth can be demonstrated—it is the duty of all reformers and advanced thinkers to unite and make an effort to establish a co-operative commonwealth where all may have a chance to live a healthy and a happy life, and, as far as men can make it, a life worth living for all.

R. J. DERFEL.

We shall surely die:  
Must we needs grow old?  
Grow old and cold,  
And we know not why?

O, the By-and-By,  
And the tale that's told!  
We shall surely die:  
Must we needs grow old?

Grow old and sigh,  
Grudge and withhold,  
Resent and scold?  
Not you and I?  
We shall surely die!

—W. E. Henley.

#### THE ORTHODOX HEAVEN.

The Heaven of this system is a grand pay-day, where Humility is to have her coach and six, forsooth, because she has been humble; the Saints and the Martyrs, who bore trials in the world, are to take their vengeance by shouting "Hallelujah! Glory to God!" when they see the anguish of their old persecutors, and "the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever." Do the joys of Paradise pall on the pleasure-jaded sense of the "Elect"? They look off in the distance to the tortures of the damned, where Destruction is naked before them, and Hell hath no covering; where the Devil with his angels stirreth up the embers of the fire which is never quenched; where the doubters, whom the Church could neither answer nor put to silence; where the great men of antiquity, Confucius, Buddha, Fo, Hermes, Zoroaster, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; where the great and gifted and glorious, who mocked at difficulty, softened the mountains of despair, and hewed a path amid the trackless waste, that mortal feet might tread the way of peace; where the great men of modern times, who would not insult the Deity by bowing to the foolish word of a hireling priest;—where all these writhe in their tortures, turn and turn and find no ray, but yell in fathomless despair; and when the Elect behold all this they say, striking on their harps of gold, "Aha! we are comforted, and thou tormented, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and our garments are washed white in the blood of the Lamb."—*Theodore Parker.*

Great is the facile conqueror;  
Yet haply he, who, wounded sore,  
Breathless, unhorsed, all covered o'er  
With blood and sweat,  
Sinks foiled, but fighting evermore,—  
Is greater yet. —William Watson.

All blessings on the man whose face was first illuminated by a smile! All blessings on the man who first gave to the common air the music of laughter—the music that for the moment drove fears from the heart, tears from the eyes, and dimpled cheeks with joy! All blessings on the man who sowed with merry hands the seeds of humor, and at the lipless skull of death snapped the reckless fingers of disdain! Laughter is the blessed boundary line between the brute and man.—*Ingersoll.*

Overhead, overhead  
Rushes life in a race,  
And the clouds the clouds chase;  
And we go,  
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,  
Even we,  
Even so. —George Meredith.

A summer night descending cool and green  
And dark on daytime's dust and stress and heat,  
The ways of Death are soothing and serene,  
And all the words of Death are grave and sweet.  
—W. E. Henley.

#### Gaieties.

##### NO HURRY.

Joaquin Miller, "The Poet of the Sierras," recently visited a friend in Boston whose literary tastes ran largely to Emerson, Browning, and Maeterlinck. This friend, says *Lippincott's Magazine*, found the venerable poet in the library one afternoon deeply absorbed in a book.

"What are you reading?" asked the Bostonian.

"A novel by Bret Harte," replied the poet.

The Hubbite sniffed. "I cannot see," said he, "how an immortal being can waste his time with such stuff."

"Are you quite sure," asked Miller, "that I am an immortal being?"

"Why, of course you are," was the unwary reply.

"In that case," responded the Californian grimly, "I don't see why I should be so very economical of my time."

##### IF THE POPE WERE IRISH.

Bishop Potter is telling a story, for after-dinner purposes, of an Irish cook who once served in his family.

"One day I heard this cook swearing at a great rate at an Italian gardener we had, and I rebuked her for it.

"'But, yer riverince,' she said, 'he is nothin' but an ole Dago, anyway.'

"'You should not speak that way of an Italian,' I protested. 'You know that your Pope is a Dago, as you call them, and you consider him infallible.'

"'Yis, I know that,' she answered. 'And as a Dago he is infallible, but if he were an Irishman he would be twice as infallible.'

WOULDN'T SPOIL THE IMPRESSION.—Polly's godmother gave her a Bible, and one day Polly's mother found her reading some passages in the Old Testament which were full of "hell-fire" and the "wrath of God," and other appalling things. The child looked up thoughtfully as her mother entered the room, and said, "Mamma, I have always had such a very pleasant impression of God, that I think I shall not read the Bible any more, if you don't mind."

THE LIMIT.—She is a stout, hearty dame, whose passion for the metaphysical seems altogether out of proper relation with her large and almost unwieldy figure. She has believed in ghosts, in mind cure, in Christian scientists, and in all sorts of abnormal people and things, with an easy and ingenious credibility as a child's. Her name came up in chat among friends the other day, "Would you believe it," said one, "Mrs. X—has turned Buddhist?" "I can believe it, and do," replied Madame; "I can believe her turning anything—except a somersault."

Brother Chauncey M. Depew says he is being "persecuted." Serves him right! When an old Protestant of seventy marries a young Roman Catholic woman of thirty, he deserves to be whipped. Apparently Rome has not wholly succeeded in capturing Chauncey, or the priests would not be hounding him. They accuse him of being married by a priest first and then by a Protestant minister. Why not! Rome holds that a marriage between a "heretic" and a Romanist is no marriage at all—that is, the Romanist is married (if by a priest) while the "heretic" is not. Hence Chauncey made a sure thing of it. He was not married the first time, but the woman was; but the second time he was married and she was not. Therefore it is to be hoped that both are now married.—*Boston Investigator.*

TOO MUCH HEAVEN.—"Died from eatin' too much 'possum," was what they told Brother Dickey of a late brother. "De goodness gracious!" he exclaimed. "Heaven on earth, en Heaven ahead er him!"—*Atlanta Constitution.*

WOULD WASTE NO SOAP.—"Now, Tommy," said an anxious mother to her son, "the minister will be here to dinner to-day, and you must be sure to wash your face clean." "All right, mamma," answered Tommy, "but suppose he doesn't come?"—*Cincinnati Enquirer.*

WHAT HE WAS PRAYING FOR.—This anecdote is told of one of the Naval Reserve men on one of the vessels in the Cuban fleet just when it was expected to engage in battle with Cervera's fleet. The young man was on his knees in the attitude of prayer, when one of the officers came up and asked if he was afraid. "No, I was praying," came from the sailor's lips. "Well, what were you praying for?" demanded the officer. "Praying that the enemy's shells may be distributed after the same manner that the prize money is, principally among the officers."

## Letters of a Chinaman

(AH SIN)  
TO ENGLISH READERS

ON  
CHINESE AND CHRISTIAN SUPERSTITIONS  
AND THE  
MISCHIEF OF MISSIONARIES.

Price One Penny.

THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, LTD.,  
2 NEWCASTLE STREET, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

## FACTS WORTH KNOWING.

A Handsome Pamphlet of Eighty Pages, containing valuable matter from the pens of leading American Freethinkers, including COLONEL INGERSOLL, L. K. WASHBURNE, H. O. PENTECOST, LOUIS MUELLER, and J. E. ROBERTS (Church of This World). Sent over for free distribution in this Country. A slight charge made to cover expenses. ONE SHILLING PER HUNDRED COPIES; carriage Sixpence extra, One Shilling extra in the Provinces. Special Terms to N. S. S. Branches and other Societies.

The Freethought Publishing Co., Ltd., 2 Newcastle-street,  
Farringdon-street, E.C.

## TWO SECULAR BURIAL SERVICES

A New Edition of the Form of Service to be read at the Burial of Freethinkers)

PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, LTD.,

## THE BEST BOOK

ON NEO-MALTHUSIANISM IS, I BELIEVE,

### TRUE MORALITY, or THE THEORY and PRACTICE OF NEO-MALTHUSIANISM.

By J. R. HOLMES, M.M.L., M.V.S., M.N.SS.

160 pages, with portrait and autograph, bound in cloth, gilt lettered.  
Price 1s., post free.

In order to bring the information within the reach of the poor, the most important parts of the book are issued in a pamphlet of 112 pages at ONE PENNY, post free 2d. Copies of the pamphlet for distribution 1s. a dozen post free.

The *National Reformer* of September 4, 1892, says: "Mr. Holmes's pamphlet.....is an almost unexceptional statement of the Neo-Malthusianism theory and practice.....and throughout appeals to moral feeling.....The special value of Mr. Holmes's service to the Neo-Malthusian cause and to human well-being generally is just his combination in his pamphlet of a plain statement of the physical and moral need for family limitation, with a plain account of the means by which it can be secured, and an offer to all concerned of the requisites at the lowest possible prices."

The Council of the Malthusian League, Dr. Drysdale, Dr. Allbutt, and others, have also spoken of it in very high terms.

Orders should be sent to the author,

J. R. HOLMES, HANNEY, WANTAGE, BERKS

NO FREETHINKER SHOULD BE WITHOUT THESE:—

### Just Arrived from America.

**Design Argument Fallacies.** A Refutation of the argument that Nature exhibits marks of having been designed by an Intelligent Being. By the Editor of the *New York Truthseeker*. Price 8d., postage 1d.

**Answers to Christian Questions and Arguments.** By D. M. Bennett. Price 1s., postage 2d.

**Sabbath Breaking.** Giving the Origin of Sabbath Ideas. A book brimful of good reasons why the Sunday Laws should be repealed. By John Remsburg. Price 1s., Postage 2d.

Freethought Publishing Co., Ltd., 2 Newcastle-st., London, E.C.

**LIGHT EMPLOYMENT**—Caretaking, or any capacity—wanted by a Freethinker, 20 years' member of N. S. S.: 15 years' character from last employer. Wife—good cook, &c., would join, if needed. Henderson, c/o 2 Newcastle-st, E.C.

## Gott's Guinea Parcels are all right

LOOK HERE!

1 pair Pure Wool Blankets  
1 pair Large Bed Sheets  
1 Beautiful Quilt  
1 Warm Bed Rug  
1 Bedroom Hearthrug  
1 pair Lace Curtains  
1 pair Turkish Towels  
1 Long Pillow Case  
1 pair Short Pillow Cases

ALL FOR

21s.

## 300 OVERCOATS

MEDIUM SHADE OF GREY, GOOD QUALITY,  
LATEST STYLE IN CUT,

ONLY 18s. EACH.

All sizes up to 44 inches chest over vest.

Give height, weight, chest over vest, and full length of sleeve from centre of back.

It almost makes me weep tears of blood to see these goods go at the price.

It will make you weep tears of joy to get them at the price.

J. W. GOTT, 2 & 4 UNION-STREET, BRADFORD.

## Pamphlets by C. COHEN.

An Outline of Evolutionary Ethics - 6d.

Foreign Missions: Their Dangers and

Delusions. Full of Facts and Figures. A Complete Exposure of the Missionary Movement - 9d.

What is the Use of Prayer - 2d.

Evolution and Christianity - 2d.

Pain and Providence - 1d.

The Decay of Belief - 1d.

Freethought Publishing Co., Ltd., 2 Newcastle-st., London, E.C.

## WHO WAS THE FATHER OF JESUS OF NAZARETH?

A PAMPHLET, in reply to Dean Fremantle's theory of Parthenogenesis, will be sent post-free to any applicant by

FRANCIS HAYDN WILLIAMS,

WHITBY.

Now Ready.

## Dietetic Hints for My Consultants

By SOPHIE LEPPELL.

The *Dietetic Hints* consists of nine leaflets, print and size of my pamphlets, printed on one side only on thick paper, lying in a folded case of thick paper, so that the leaflets can be taken out, and their contents compared for easy reference.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

1. General Health Rules and Directions. 1 p.
2. Vital Foods. 1 p.
3. Some Hints Concerning the Salty Elements on Specified Foods. 2 pp.
4. The Specific Value of Fatty, Sweet, and Starchy Foods. 1 p.
5. The Specific Value of Specified Vegetables. 2 pp.
6. Hints About the Excretory Organs. 2 pp.

Price 10s.

The Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

# THE SECULAR SOCIETY,

(LIMITED)

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office—2 NEWCASTLE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary—E. M. VANCE (Miss).

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

The liability of members is limited to £1. in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings. and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire (by ballot) each year,

but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with either of the five wills by which the Society has already been benefited,

The Society's solicitors are Messrs. Harper and Battcock, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C.

*A Form of Bequest.*—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—"I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy."

Friends of the Society who have remembered it in their wills, or who intend to do so, should formally notify the Secretary of the fact, or send a private intimation to the Chairman, who will (if desired) treat it as strictly confidential. This is not necessary, but it is advisable, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid, and their contents have to be established by competent testimony.

# THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

FOR  
FREETHINKERS AND INQUIRING CHRISTIANS

EDITED BY

G. W. FOOTE AND W. P. BALL

A New Edition, Revised, and Handsomely Printed

## CONTENTS:

Part I.—Bible Contradictions. Part II.—Bible Absurdities. Part III.—Bible Atrocities.  
Part IV.—Bible Immoralities, Indecencies, Obscenities, Broken Promises, and Unfulfilled Prophecies.

*Cheap Edition, in paper covers, 1s. 6d.; Best Edition, bound in cloth, 2s. 6d.*

"This is a volume which we strongly commend to all interested in the study of the Judaic-Christian Scriptures. It is edited by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball, and Published by the Freethought Publishing Company, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C., price 1s. 6d. Indeed, we cannot conceive any Christian as having a faith worth regarding unless he has studied this remarkable volume. Teachers in Sunday and elementary schools will find it of special value as an aid to the exposition of the Christian religion from a thoughtful and critical standpoint. It is a perfect army of facts and comparisons. Since 1888 it has been the standard volume of the subject with which it deals, and its popularity is emphasised by the fact that the public have demanded a new edition."—*Reynolds's Newspaper.*

THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING CO., LTD., 2 NEWCASTLE ST., FARRINGDON ST., E.C.

THE SAFEST AND MOST EFFECTUAL CURE FOR  
INFLAMMATION OF THE EYES.

## Thwaites' Celandine Lotion.

Cures inflammation in a few hours. Neglected or badly doctored cases. 3 or 4 days is sufficient time to cure any case. For sore and Inflamed Eyelids. Nothing to equal the Lotion for Dimness of Sight. Will remove Skin or Film that sometimes grows on the Eye. As the eye is one of the most sensitive organs of the body, it needs the most careful treatment.

Callpeper says in his Herbal Book that if the virtues of Celandine were generally known it would spoil the spectacle-makers' trade. 1s. 1½d. per bottle, with directions; by post 14 stamps.

G. THWAITES,  
HERBALIST, 2 CHURCH ROW, STOCKTON-ON-TEES.

## Protection or Free Trade

By HENRY GEORGE.

Special Reprint. Authorised Shilling Edition. 360 Pages.  
Large Print.

Half Price, Sixpence. Postage 2½d.

The Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-st., Farringdon-st., London, E.C.

Send a 5s. or 10s. P.O. for a Parcel of

## CHRISTMAS HEALTH FOODS

TO

J. O. BATES,

HEALTH FOOD STORES,

42 VICTORIA STREET, GLOUCESTER.

Agent to the Freethought Publishing Co., Ltd.

## FLOWERS OF FREETHOUGHT.

By G. W. FOOTE.

First Series, cloth . . . . . 2s. 6d.  
Second Series, cloth . . . . . 2s. 6d.

Contains scores of entertaining and informing Essays and Articles on a great variety of Freethought topics.

The Freethought Publishing Co., Ltd., London.

# The Pioneer

A POPULAR PROPAGANDIST ORGAN  
OF  
ADVANCED IDEAS.

THE DECEMBER NUMBER CONTAINS:

The Coleridge Libel Case  
The Temple of Peace  
International Amenities  
Lord Rosebery in London  
The Macaulay Tablet  
Thanksgiving Day.

Justice Grantham on Unbelief  
Shocking Fecundity  
The Worship of Poverty  
Religion and Cruelty  
Blasphemy  
Judicial Torture

The Ethics of Vivisection  
Thus Saith the Lord  
Yankee Evangelists  
Sabbatarianism  
Questions for Women  
Ingersoll on Sport

PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 NEWCASTLE STREET, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

## LONDON FREETHINKERS' ANNUAL DINNER

(UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY)

AT THE

### HOLBORN RESTAURANT

ON

TUESDAY EVENING, JANUARY 12, 1904, at 7.30.

CHAIRMAN: MR. G. W. FOOTE

SUPPORTED BY: C. COHEN, JOHN LLOYD, "CHILPERIC," ETC.

Toasts, Songs, and Instrumental Music.

TICKETS 4s.

Obtainable at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

MISS E. M. VANCE—Secretary.

## FROM CHRISTIAN PULPIT TO SECULAR PLATFORM

A MENTAL HISTORY

BY

JOHN LLOYD (ex-Presbyterian Minister)

Best Edition, in handsome cover, 6d.

Popular Edition, 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 NEWCASTLE STREET, FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.

NOW IN STOCK.

## A Further Consignment from America

NOT OTHERWISE OBTAINABLE

### VOLTAIRE'S ROMANCES

"Voltaire was the greatest man of his country, and did more to free the human race than any other of the sons of men."

**CHINESE CATECHISM.** Dialogues between a disciple of Confucius and a Chinese Prince, before the Christian era. Paper covers 1s., postage 2d.

**IGNORANT PHILOSOPHER, The.** Containing portraits of René Descartes and Benedict Spinoza.—As entertaining as a French Comedy. Paper covers 1s., postage, 2d.

**LETTERS ON THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.** With comments on the writings of the most eminent authors who have been accused of attacking Christianity. Paper covers 1s., postage 2d.

**MAN OF FORTY CROWNS.** Dialogues on National Poverty; Adventures with a Carmelite, etc. Illustrated. Paper covers 1s., postage 2d.

**MICROMEGAS.** A Voyage to Planet Saturn. By a native of Sirius; and Twelve others. Illustrated. Paper covers 1s., postage 2d.

**PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY.** With portraits of The Empress Catherine and of Voltaire. Paper covers 1s., postage 2d.

**POCKET THEOLOGY.** Witty and Sarcastic Definitions of Theological Terms. Paper covers 1s., postage 2d.

**THE SAGE AND THE ATHEIST.** The Princess of Babylon. Adventures of a Young Englishman, etc. Illustrated. Paper covers 1s., postage 2d.

**ZADIG: or, Fate.** The White Bull; The Blind of One Eye, etc. Illustrated. Paper covers 1s., postage 2d.

When ordering, a second choice should be given, to prevent disappointment